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RICHARD BAXTER.

1615 - 1691.

There are two familiar portraits of Baxter : one painted in his fifty-fifth year, and the other, which is here reproduced, evidently taken at an earlier age. The original painting may be seen in Dr. Williams's Library, Gordon Square, W.C. The publisher is indebted to the Trustees for their kind permission to reproduce it.

572 THE SAINTS'
EVERLASTING REST

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OR

A TREATISE OF THE BLESSED STATE OF THE
SAINTS IN THEIR ENJOYMENT OF
GOD IN GLORY

BY

RICHARD BAXTER

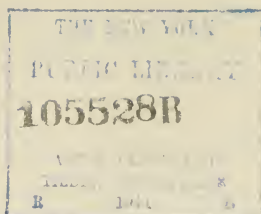
TEACHER OF THE CHURCH OF KIDDERMINSTER IN WORCESTERSHIRE

A NEW EDITION, EDITED BY

WILLIAM YOUNG, B.A.

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“You need not fear any danger from hence of being influenced for or against any party of Christians; for in all his writings you will find the evidences of a large and truly Christian spirit, too great to be confined to the narrow limits of one or other party; and that noble Catholic temper is what he everywhere labours to infuse into his readers; a temper not only most pleasant to the persons themselves in whom it has its place, but which at last must heal all the unhappy differences in the Christian world, if ever God have so much mercy for us.”

[Prefatory note to the folio edition of Baxter's Practical Works, signed by thirty-four eminent men of their day.]

C.D. THORNTON FEB 1 - 1941

EDITOR'S PREFACE

RICHARD BAXTER was born in 1615 and died in 1691. Momentous events in the history of our country were crowded into the intervening years. That strange, stirring time saw the first Charles governing England for eleven years without a Parliament; John Hampden's resistance to the illegal levying of ship-money; the "Petition of Right" and the "Grand Remonstrance"; the iniquitous proceedings of the Star Chamber and High Commission and Council of York; the meeting and varied fortunes of the Long Parliament; the indictment and execution of Strafford and Laud; the Civil War; the abolition of Episcopacy; the vigorous rule of the great Protector; the abdication of the Protectorate by his feeble successor; the Restoration of monarchy and Episcopacy; the inglorious reign of Charles the Second; the Act of Uniformity with its fateful results; the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London; the death of Charles and the accession of his brother; the butcheries of the infamous Chief-Justice Jefferies; the flight and dethronement of James the Second; and the Revolution of 1688 which issued in the accession of William and Mary.

Baxter's lifetime was associated also with some of the most famous names in English Literature. When Baxter was born, Shakespeare was still living at Stratford-on-Avon. Baxter was three years of age when Sir Walter Raleigh was beheaded. When Baxter was a boy of

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eleven years, Bacon's great works, "The Advancement of Learning" and the "Novum Organum," were still new and fresh, and their author was still alive. When Baxter was a youth of twenty-two, "rare Ben Jonson" was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey. About two years after Baxter's short educational residence at Ludlow Castle, Milton's "Comus" was presented there; while Baxter was a chaplain in the army of the Parliament, the "Areopagitica" was published; and the "Paradise Lost" may have come into his hands in his country home at Acton, whither he had retired when his preaching had been made a crime, and "in order," as he says, "that I might give myself to writing and to do what service I could for posterity and live, as much as possibly I could, out of the world." Bunyan's immortal allegory, "The Pilgrim's Progress," three editions of which were called for within a year, was published in 1678 when Baxter had returned to London, enfeebled by age and ill-health, and was being persecuted by fine and imprisonment, and forbidden to preach even in the chapel at Oxendon Road which he had built at his own expense. Baxter was thirteen years older than Bunyan and survived him three years; but though they were contemporary, and must have been sometimes near to one another, there is no evidence that they ever met.

Baxter was one of the great men of that great time. How large a space he filled in the religious life and literature of England it is difficult for us now to realise. The Rev. William Orme in his "Life and Times of Richard Baxter" gives a chronological list of Baxter's works to the number of one hundred and sixty-eight, and many of them were large folio and quarto volumes. Baxter's "Practical Works" alone fill four thick folio volumes closely printed. The foreword given on a previous page was copied from the Preface to that edition

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in the vestry of the "New Meeting" at Kidderminster where Baxter's pulpit is preserved. Orme's edition of Baxter's "Practical Works" (1830) extends to twenty-three goodly octavo volumes. What are called his "Practical Works" are but a fraction of what he wrote and published. "After a familiarity of many years with his writings, we must avow," says Sir James Stephen,¹ "that of the one hundred and sixty-eight volumes comprised in the Catalogue of his printed works, there are many which we have never opened and many with which we can boast but a slight acquaintance. These, however, are such as (to borrow a phrase from Mr. Hallam) have ceased to belong to men, and have become the property of moths. From the recesses of the library in Red Cross Street they tower, in the sullen majesty of the folio age, over the pigmies of this duodecimo generation—the expressive, though neglected, monuments of occurrences, which can never lose their place or their interest in the history of theological literature."²

But not only were Baxter's writings voluminous, they were also of an exceptionally high order. Many testimonies might be quoted. Let the following suffice. Dr. Barrow said: "His practical writings were never mended and his controversial ones seldom confuted." Dr. Wilkins, bishop of Chester, believed that "if Baxter had lived in the primitive time, he would have been one of the Fathers of the Church"; and that "it was enough for one age to produce such a man as Richard Baxter." "Perhaps no thinker," says a writer in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," "has exerted so great influence on Nonconformity as Baxter has done, and that not in one direction only, but

¹ "Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography," vol. ii. p. 24.

² The allusion is to Dr. Williams' Library, formerly housed in Red Cross Street, now in Gordon Square, London, W.C. My indebtedness to the Librarian for kind attention and help is gratefully acknowledged.

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in every form of development, doctrinal, ecclesiastical, and practical. He is the type of a distinct class of the Christian ministry ; that class which aspires after scholarly training ; prefers a broad to a sectarian theology, and adheres to rational methods of religious investigation and appeal. The rational element in him was very strong.”¹ “Baxter,” says another writer, “was one of the giants of the Commonwealth. He was to its theology what Cromwell was to its politics, what Milton was to its liberties, and what Owen was to its nonconformity.”² “Whatever may have been the faults,” says Sir James Stephen, “or whatever the motives of the Protector, there can be no doubt that under his sway England witnessed a diffusion, till then unknown, of the purest influence of genuine religious principles. . . . To this result no single man contributed more largely than Baxter himself by his writings and his pastoral labours.”³

It is not easy to define in a word Baxter’s ecclesiastical position. He is the great Catholic of Puritanism. He and all his relatives, though Puritans, were conformists. But though ordained by a prelate he was thoroughly opposed to prelacy, and declined to be a bishop either in England or in Scotland. He was, perhaps, nearer to the Presbyterians than to any of the other denominations of his day ; but when in 1672 he took advantage of the King’s declaration dispensing with the penal laws against Nonconformists, and sought a licence for preaching, it was on condition that he might have it without the title of Presbyterian, Independent, or any other party, but only as a Nonconformist. Through a very wide course of

¹ “*Encyclopædia Britannica*,” ninth edition.

² Thomas W. Jenkyn, D.D., F.G.S. *Essay on the Life, Ministry, and Theology of Baxter.*

³ “*Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography*,” vol. ii. p. 9.

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reading, which was almost his only education, he groped his way to conclusions which were not exactly those of any of the sects. The study of Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity" had reconciled him to episcopal ordination, but further reading and observation weakened his attachment to the established discipline and ritual. He was profoundly dissatisfied with the practice of indiscriminate communion, with compulsory subscription to articles of faith, and with the sign of the cross in baptism. He objected to the surplice, and never wore one. While he himself felt free to receive the sacred elements kneeling, he would not refuse them to those who conscientiously objected to assume that posture. And he worshipped and communicated in the Church of England even when he was suffering persecution at her hands. In fact, as Sir James Stephen says, "Baxter was opposed to every sect and belonged to none. He can be properly described only as a Baxterian—at once the founder and the single member of an eclectic school, within the portals of which he invited all men, but persuaded none, to take refuge from their mutual animosities."¹

Yet he had intimate friends, and was himself personally honoured and esteemed by many, in all the denominations. He recognised, as few in his day seemed capable of doing, special excellences in each. His ideal Church would have been a blend of them all; and more than any man that ever lived he laboured long and painfully to bring them all together in the unity of a national Church, which should be a powerful bulwark of Protestantism and a disseminator of the blessings of the Gospel among all the people.

None of the Protestant Churches, therefore, can make good an exclusive claim to Baxter. The relics of this

¹ "Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography," vol. ii. p. 28.

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saint are not to be found at one shrine only. During a visit to Kidderminster last year, this was found to be strikingly illustrated. Three denominations in different ways cherish his memory, and the town itself is, in a sense, his monument. The town is, of course, greatly changed since Baxter's time, but some of the older parts give a good idea of what it was when he was its "teacher" and discharged among the inhabitants of its "Borough and Foreign"¹ the duties of his famous pastorate. The large and beautiful parish church of St. Mary is externally what it was in his day, but the interior has been greatly changed. The five galleries which were added to accommodate the crowds attracted by his preaching are no longer there; but the spacious interior justifies his appreciative remark: "the church itself being very capacious, and the most commodious and convenient that ever I was in." The pulpit from which he preached is no longer in its place. The only relic of Baxter which the church contains is an ancient oak chair used by him in his study, and now reverently placed within the Communion rails. It bears the well-known initials of some of his friends, from whom perhaps it was a gift. The quaint Jacobean pulpit from which he preached was, with the old pews and other woodwork, sold by auction more than a hundred years ago. It was afterwards presented by an admirer to the Presbyterians worshipping in the "New Meeting" (now a Unitarian chapel), and is preserved

¹ This designation is still used at Kidderminster. The "Borough" comprised that part which in mediæval times the Lord of the Manor kept in his own hands as a sort of home farm; and the "Foreign" all the outlying district which was either assigned to his Villeins for cultivation or left waste for hunting ground.

The name Kidderminster seems to be derived from a monastery named after St. Chad (*Ceadda*), Bishop of Mercia, who died in 672 "Ceadda Minster" would easily be corrupted into "Kederminster," as Baxter spelled it, and then into "Kidderminster."

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not for use but as a relic in the lecture hall or vestry. It is of octagonal form. On the panels are carved flowers painted in different colours, and some gilding still remains. There is a large sounding-board surmounted by a crown upon a cushion. Around the top is inscribed: "And call upon His name, declare His works among the people." It seems to have been presented to the church by a lady about twenty years before Baxter went to Kidderminster.¹ A modern Congregational Church, formerly known as the "Old Meeting," perpetuates the connection of Baxter with the evangelical nonconformity of the town by its name, "Baxter Church."

In the "Bull Ring,"² in the centre of the town and close to the house in which Baxter lived, stands an excellent statue by Brock. It was fitly inaugurated in 1875 by Dr. Stanley, Dean of Westminster, and Dr. Stoughton, an eminent nonconformist, who delivered addresses on the occasion. It bears the following inscription:—

"Between the years 1641 and 1660
this town
was the scene of the labours of
RICHARD BAXTER,
Renowned equally for his Christian learning
and his pastoral fidelity.
In a stormy divided age he advocated unity
and comprehension, pointing the way to
'the Everlasting Rest.'
Churchmen and Nonconformists united to raise
this Memorial A.D. 1875."

The house in which Baxter lived is in High Street.

¹ Orme, "Life and Times," vol. i. p. 169.

² The place where the bull was fastened when baited by dogs for sport in former days.

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He never occupied the Vicarage though legally entitled to do so; for he was kindly unwilling to eject the worthless incumbent of the parish who had, for good reason, been superseded by the ecclesiastical authorities of the Commonwealth. The house is now a confectioner's shop and is called "Baxter House."

It was while living in this house that Baxter witnessed the incident connected with the civil war which he has thus graphically described: "Kidderminster being but eleven miles from Worcester, the flying army passed, some of them through the town and some by it. I had nearly gone to bed when the noise of the flying horses acquainted us with the overthrow; and a piece of one of Cromwell's troops that guarded Bewdley Bridge, having tidings of it, came into our streets, and stood in the open market-place before my door, to the surprise of those that passed by. So when many hundreds of the flying army came together, and the thirty troopers cried 'Stand,' and fired at them, they either hastened away or cried quarter, not knowing in the dark what number it was that charged them. Thus as many were taken there as so few men could lay hold on; and till midnight the bullets flying towards my door and windows, and the sorrowful fugitives hastening by for their lives, did tell me the calamitousness of war."¹

Baxter's theology, like his church polity, was of an eclectic character. Extreme Calvinists wrote against his Arminianism; extreme Arminians denounced his Calvinism. His theology was a blend of both. He saw what was excellent and scriptural in each, and he did not hesitate to combine them even at the risk of appearing to believe in contradictories. In our day he would be regarded as a moderate Calvinist who proclaimed the sovereignty of God in a way that was not incompatible

¹ *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*, Part i. p. 110.

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with fervent appeals to the wicked to forsake their way, and to unrighteous men to forsake their thoughts, and to turn to the Lord that He might have mercy upon them. It was this feature in Baxter's theology and presentation of the Gospel that moved Archbishop Usher to importune him to write such books as "The Call to the Unconverted," of which Baxter himself wrote :

"God hath blessed it with unexpected success beyond all the rest that I have written, except the 'Saints' Rest.' In a little more than a year there were about twenty thousand of them printed by my own consent, and about ten thousand since, besides many thousands by stolen impression, which poor men stole for lucre's sake. 'Through God's mercy, I have had information of almost whole households converted by this small book, which I set so light by; and as if all this in England, Scotland, and Ireland were not mercy enough to me, God, since I was silenced, hath sent it over on His message to many beyond the seas.'"¹

Much more might be told of this eminent ecclesiastic and saintly man of God: of his fame as a preacher; of the results of his wonderful pastorate; of the strange vicissitudes and experiences of his life; of his interviews with Cromwell and with Charles II., before both of whom he preached; of the severe and long-continued persecutions which he suffered on account of his nonconformity; and of the almost incredible bodily infirmities which made him feel that death was ever near, and spurred him on to increased ardour and diligence in his work as a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. But enough, I trust, has been said to awaken the interest of those to whom

¹ *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*, Part i. p. 115.

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the subject is new and to lead them to a further study of Baxter's life and works.

"The Saint's Everlasting Rest," some parts of which are reproduced in the following pages, was the first of Baxter's literary efforts, and one of the most popular religious books ever published.

He has himself given us the genesis of the book. When serving as chaplain in the army, he was taken seriously ill, and being far from home and friends and having little expectation of recovery, he turned his thoughts to the "Everlasting Rest" into which he seemed about to enter. "While I was in health," he says, "I had not the least thought of writing books or of serving God in any more public way than preaching, but when I was weakened with great bleeding and left solitary in my chamber at Sir John Cook's in Derbyshire, without any acquaintance but my servant about me, and was sentenced to death by the physicians, I began to contemplate more seriously on the everlasting rest, which I apprehended myself to be just on the borders of. That my thoughts might not too much scatter in my meditation, I began to write something on that subject, intending but the quantity of a sermon or two; but being continued long in weakness where I had no books and no better employment, I followed it on till it was enlarged to the bulk in which it is published. The first three weeks I spent on it was at Mr. Nowel's house at Kirkby Mallory in Leicestershire; a quarter of a year more, at the seasons which so great weakness would allow, I bestowed on it at Sir Thomas Rou's in Worcestershire, and I finished it shortly after at Kidderminster."¹

¹ *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*, p. 108.

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What he wrote first was almost entirely devotional, and is contained in the first and fourth parts.¹

The first edition was licensed in 1649 and published in 1650. Copies of it are now rare. It was considerably shorter than the later editions. It was dedicated, as a whole, to his "dearly beloved friends the inhabitants of the Burrough and Forreign of Kederminster both Magistrates and people." The first part was dedicated to Sir Thomas and Lady Jane Rous.

The second edition, 1651, was carefully revised and considerably enlarged. It contains a long "Premonition," in which the author explains the alterations and additions. Though he could have found in his heart, he says, to have supplied divers other defects, yet he forbears, because the Stationer persuaded him that it would be an offence to those that had bought the first edition. He added one chapter (the ninth) in the second part, which, being promised in the beginning in the method propounded, was forgotten. Also he "added the eleventh chapter in the third part, containing a more exact inquiry into the nature of sincerity and the use of marks." He added also a "Preface" to the second part, "both for defence and fuller explication of the doctrine there contained." This Preface is directed (1) to Unbelievers and Anti-Scripturists, (2) to Papists, and (3) to the Orthodox. It extends to thirty-five pages of small and closely printed type. Lastly, he "added many marginal quotations, especially of the Ancients," in order to free himself, as he says, "from the charge of singularity."

That edition contained three new Dedications. The second part thus: "To my dearly beloved Friends the inhabitants of Bridgnorth, both Magistrates and People, Richard Baxter devoteth this Part of this Treatise, in testimony of his unfeigned love to them, who were the

¹ See Appendix IV.

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first to whom he was sent (as fixed) to publish the Gospel." The third part thus: "To my dearly beloved friends the inhabitants of the City of Coventry, both Magistrates and People, especially Col. John Barker and Col. Thos. Willoughby, late Governors, with all the Officers and Soldiers of their garrison, Richd. Baxter devoteth this part of this Treatise in thankful acknowledgment of their great affection toward him and ready acceptance of his labours among them (which is the highest recompence, if joined with obedience, that a faithful Minister can expect)." And the fourth part thus: "To my dearly beloved friends in the Lord, the inhabitants of the town of Shrewsbury, both Magistrates, Ministers, and People, as also of the neighbouring parts, Richard Baxter devoteth this practical part of this Treatise, as a testimony of his love to his native soil, and to his many godly and faithful friends there living."

The third edition, which was the same as the second, was published in 1652. The text of that edition has been carefully followed in this book.

Almost yearly, new editions continued to appear.

The eighth in 1659 is marked by the omission of the names of Lord Brooke, Pym, and Hampden, from the distinguished place of honour which they held in the previous editions.¹ This is Baxter's account of it: "The need which I perceived of taking away from before such men as Dr. Jane anything which they might stumble at, made me blot out the names of Lord Brooke, Pym, and Hampden in all the impressions of the book which were since 1659; yet this did not satisfy. But I must tell the reader that I did it not as changing my judgment of the persons, well known to the world; of whom Mr. John Hampden was one whom friends and enemies acknowledged to be most eminent for prudence, piety, and

¹ See p. 121.

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peaceable counsels; having the most universal praise of any gentleman that I remember of that age.”¹

The twelfth edition in 1688 was the first to appear with a portrait of the author taken in his fifty-fifth year.

Other editions continued to appear at somewhat longer intervals. Baxter died in 1691, but his book lived on, and still holds a high place in the religious literature of his country.

Sixty-seven years after Baxter's death the Rev. Benjamin Fawcett, minister at Kidderminster “published,” says Mr. Orme, “an excellent abridgment of it. It makes no alteration on the sense or even language of the author,² but diminishes the bulk of the work by omitting many digressions, controversial discussions, together with the prefaces, dedications, and other things of a temporary or local nature. . . . Those, however, who wish to do full justice to Baxter will not be satisfied with anything but the original.”³ Since that time reprints of the abridgment, or of parts of it, have often appeared.

In 1830 a handsome and complete edition of Baxter's Practical Works was published in twenty-three volumes, carefully edited by the Rev. William Orme. The “Saints' Rest” fills the last two volumes. Mr. Orme's “Life and Times of Richard Baxter,” in two volumes, and largely in Baxter's own words, is a fascinating biography.

In 1887 an edition of the “Saints' Rest,” in two volumes, was published by Messrs. Griffith, Farran & Co. in their “Ancient and Modern Library of Theological Literature,” but there is nothing to indicate which of the earlier editions it reproduces. This is the latest edition of the work which I know.

¹ *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*, Part iii. p. 177.

² It may not alter the sense, but a patchwork of the words and sentences used by Baxter cannot be regarded as his unaltered language.

³ Orme, “Life and Times,” vol. ii. p. 411.

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The present edition is unlike any other which has been published, and will, it is hoped, fill a place which has long been vacant. It has some features which ought to commend it to those who would like to see a great religious classic treated with the same consideration and scrupulous care as any other famous literary work. For many years most readers of "The Saints' Everlasting Rest" have had to be satisfied with editions which were only an abstract or condensation of the original work, and yet without anything to indicate that fact, or to show how much or how little of the original was really given. Sometimes even a further condensation of such an abstract has been published as "Baxter's Saints' Rest," without any indication of its real character. The motive of such publications is, of course, pure enough, viz., a desire to do good. Not less good, however, would have been done if, in a few prefatory words, the real nature of the publication had been given; and no one would then have been led to believe that he was reading Baxter's original work. Even a good end ought not to be held to justify what is, after all, a literary deception.

The present edition does not contain the whole of "The Saints' Everlasting Rest," yet it is neither a condensation nor an abstract of it. In the exhaustive treatment of his subject followed by Baxter, after the manner of his time, he was led into the discussion of topics which are not indicated by the title but which he considered germane to the subject. These discussions in his copious hands grew into treatises and might have been published as distinct and separate works. If the reader will glance at Appendix IV. he will have no doubt of this. For example, Chapter VIII. in the First Part is really a treatise which might be entitled "The People of God Described." Seven chapters in the Second Part make up an elaborate treatise on "Scripture Proved to be the

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Word of God." The Third Part, which embraces fourteen chapters and extends to the size of a goodly volume, contains a treatise on "The Sinner's Everlasting Misery"; another on "Self-Examination and Assurance of Faith"; another on "The Afflictions of the Saints in this Life"; and yet another on "The Duty of Christians towards the Unsaved."

These have been omitted bodily from this edition. What is left pertains immediately and directly to the subject of "The Saints' Everlasting Rest"; and is practically what Baxter first intended, and what he originally wrote. A glance at the full table of contents drawn up by Baxter himself, and given in Appendix IV., will show in detail what has been omitted, and perhaps will also indicate why it has been omitted. But what is given is in Baxter's own words and exactly as he wrote it. If any word has been inserted it is enclosed in square brackets; if words or sentences have been omitted, asterisks reveal the fact.

But Chapters IV., VII., and IX., in the Fourth Part, have been reluctantly omitted for another reason. Those chapters treat directly of "The Saints' Everlasting Rest," and would have been included had it not been considered necessary to limit this volume to its present size. Something had to be sacrificed, and the omission of the matter contained in those chapters seemed to inflict on the book the smallest amount of injury.

In this edition the spelling and punctuation have been modernised; the numerals indicating divisions and subdivisions, sometimes quite bewildering, have been almost entirely omitted; Biblical references have been retained only when passages are quoted in proof of the author's statements, or when the allusion might not be recognised by the general reader; antique or obsolete words have not been altered when their meaning is perfectly obvious; and the

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mode of breaking up the chapters into conspicuous sections, which was adopted by Baxter in the early editions, has, with great advantage in regard to appearance, been strictly followed. The numerous marginal notes and quotations, mostly in Latin and often from authors now little known, were not in the first edition and are not here reproduced.

With the following striking appreciation by the late Archbishop Trench¹ this introduction to the book may fitly close. "Let me mention here," he says, "before entering into deeper matters, one formal merit which 'The Saints' Everlasting Rest' eminently possesses. I refer to that without which, I suppose, no book ever won a permanent place in the literature of a nation, and which I have no scruple in ascribing to it—I mean its style. A great admirer of Baxter has recently suggested a doubt whether he ever recast a sentence or bestowed a thought on its rhythm and the balance of its several parts; statements of his own make it tolerably certain that he did not. As a consequence he has none of those *bravura* passages which must have cost Jeremy Taylor, in his 'Holy Living and Dying' and elsewhere, so much of thought and pains, for such do not come of themselves and unbidden to the most accomplished masters of language. But for all this there reigns in Baxter's writings, and not least in 'The Saints' Rest,' a robust and masculine eloquence; nor do these want from time to time rare and unsought felicity of language which once heard can scarcely be forgotten. In regard, indeed, of the choice of words, the book might have been written yesterday. There is hardly one which has become obsolete, hardly one which has drifted away from the

¹ "Companions of the Devout Life: Baxter and the Saints' Rest," quoted in an article by Dr. A. B. Grosart in the "Dictionary of National Biography."

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meaning which it has in his writings. This may not be a great matter, but it argues a rare insight, conscious or unconscious, into all which was truest, into all which was furthest removed from affectation and untruthfulness in the language, that after more than two hundred years so it should be; and one may recognise here an element, not to be overlooked, of the abiding popularity of the book."

The passage on page 436, where Baxter describes a football field in words that bring it before us as we know it to-day, affords a striking confirmation of Trench's appreciation; and in the sustained tide of eloquence that rolls like a broad river through the last sixty pages of the volume we recognise the voice, not only of the passionate mystic and Puritan saint, but also of one of the greatest masters of English prose.

W. Y.

BRAMHALL, CHESHIRE,

August 7, 1907.

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THE SAINTS' EVERLASTING REST

"THERE REMAINETH THEREFORE A REST TO THE PEOPLE
OF GOD."—*Heb. iv. 9.*

CHAPTER I

THE TEXT EXPLAINED

I

It was not only our interest in God and actual fruition of Him which was lost in Adam's covenant-breaking fall, but all spiritual knowledge of Him and true disposition towards such a felicity. Man hath now a heart too suitable to his estate, a low state, and a low spirit. And (as some expound that of Luke xviii. 8) when the Son of God comes with recovering grace, and discoveries and tenders of a spiritual and eternal happiness and glory, He finds not faith in man to believe it. But as the poor man that would not believe that any one man had such a sum as an hundred pounds, it was so far above what he possessed, so man will hardly now believe that there is such a happiness as once he had, much less as Christ hath now procured. When God would give the Israelites His Sabbaths of rest, in a land of rest, He had more ado to make them believe it than to overcome their enemies, and procure it for them. And when they had it, only as a small intimation and

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earnest of a more incomparably glorious rest through Christ, they stick there, and will yet believe no more than they do possess, but sit down and say, as the glutton at the feast, "Sure there is no other Heaven but this." Or if they do expect more by the Messiah, it is only the increase of their earthly felicity. The apostle bestows most of this Epistle against this distemper, and clearly and largely proves unto them: That it is the end of all ceremonies and shadows to direct them to Jesus Christ the substance, and that the rest of Sabbaths and Canaan should teach them to look for a further rest, which indeed is their happiness. My text is his conclusion after divers arguments to that end, a conclusion so useful to a believer, as containing the ground of all his comforts, the end of all his duty and sufferings, the life and sum of all Gospel promises and Christian privileges, that you may easily be satisfied why I have made it the subject of my present discourse. What more welcome to men under personal afflictions, tiring duty, successions of sufferings, than rest! What more welcome news to men under public calamities, unpleasing employments, plundering losses, sad tidings, &c. (which is the common case), than this of rest! Hearers, I pray God your attentions, intention of spirit, entertainment and improvement of it, be but half answerable to the verity, necessity, and excellency of this subject; and then you will have cause to bless God while you live that ever you heard it; as I have, that ever I studied it.

II

The text is, as you may see, the apostle's assertion in an entire proposition with the concluding illative. The subject is "Rest"; the predicate, "It yet remains to the people of God." It is requisite we say somewhat,

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briefly, for explication of the terms, and of the subject of them.

“Therefore,” *i.e.* it clearly follows from the former argument. “There remains,” in order of speaking, as the consequence follows the antecedent, or the conclusion the premises; so there remains a rest, or it remains that there is another rest. But rather in order of being; as the bargain remains after the earnest, the performance after the promise, the anti-type after the type, and the ultimate end after all the means, so there remains a rest. “To the people of God.” God hath a twofold people within the Church; one His only by a common vocation, by an external acceptation of Christ and covenanting, sanctified by the blood of the covenant so far as to be separated from the open enemies of Christ and all without the Church; therefore not to be accounted common and unclean in the sense as Jews and Pagans are, but holy, and saints in a larger sense, as the nation of the Jews and all proselyted Gentiles were holy, before Christ’s coming. These are called branches in Christ not bearing fruit, and shall be cut off, for they are in the Church and in Him by the foresaid profession and external covenant, but no further. There are in His kingdom things that offend and men that work iniquity which the angels at the last day shall gather out, and cast into the lake of fire. There are fishes good and bad in His net, and tares with wheat in His field. The “son of perdition” is one of those given to Christ by the Father, though not as the rest.¹ These be not the “people of God” my text speaks of. But God hath a peculiar people that are His by special vocation, cordial acceptation of Christ, internal, sincere covenanting, sanctified by the blood of the Covenant, and the Spirit of Grace, so far as not only to be separated

¹ John xvii. 12.

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from open infidels, but from all unregenerate Christians ; being branches in Christ bearing fruit : and for these remains the Rest in my text.

To be God's people by a forced subjection, *i.e.* under His dominion, is common to all persons, even open enemies, yea, devils: this yields not comfort.

To be His by a verbal covenant and profession and external call, is common to all in and of the visible Church, even traitors and secret enemies. Yet hath this many privileges, as the external seals, means of grace, common mercies, but no interest in this Rest.

But to be His by election, union with Christ, and special interest (as before-mentioned), is the peculiar property of those that shall have this Rest.

III

But is it to a determinate number of persons by name, or only to a people thus and thus qualified, viz. persevering believers, without determining by name who they are?

I purpose in this discourse to omit controversies ; only in a word thus: It is promised only to persevering believers, and not to any particular persons by name. It is purposed, with all the conditions of it and means to it, to a determinate number, called the Elect, and known by name ; which evidently followeth these plain propositions.

There are few will deny that God foreknows from eternity who these are and shall be, numerically, personally, by name.

To purpose it only to such, and to know that only these will be such, is in effect to purpose it only to these.

Especially if we know how little "knowledge" and "purpose" in God do differ.

However, we must not make His knowledge active and

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His purpose idle, much less to contradict each other, as it must be, if from eternity He purposed salvation alike to all and yet from eternity knew that only such and such should receive it.

To purpose all persevering believers to salvation, and not to purpose faith and perseverance absolutely to any particular persons, is to purpose salvation absolutely to none at all. Yet I know much more is necessary to be said to make this plain, which I purpose not (at least here) to meddle with.

IV

Is it to the people of God upon certainty, or only upon possibility? If only possible, it cannot thus be called theirs.

While they are only elect, not called, it is certain to them (we speak of a certainty of the object) by Divine purpose; for they are ordained to eternal life first, and therefore believe;¹ and not first believe, and therefore elected.

When they are called according to His purpose, then it is certain to them by a certainty of promise also, as sure as if they were named in that promise; for the promise is to believers, which they may, though but imperfectly, know themselves to be; and though it be yet upon condition of overcoming, and abiding in Christ, and enduring to the end, yet that condition being absolutely promised, it still remaineth absolutely certain upon promise. And indeed, if glory be ours only upon a condition, which condition depends chiefly on our own wills, it were cold comfort to those that know what man's will is, and how certainly we should play the prodigals with

¹ Acts xiii. 48.

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this as we did with our first stock. But I have hitherto understood that in the behalf of the elect Christ is resolved, and hath undertaken for the working and finishing of their faith, and the full effecting His people's salvation; and not only gives us a feigned sufficient grace, not effectual, leaving it to our wills to make it effectual, as some think. So that though still the promise of our justification and salvation be conditional, yet God having manifested His purpose of enabling us to fulfil those conditions, He doth thereby show us a certainty of our salvation, both in His promise and His purpose. Though God's eternal purpose gives us no right to the benefit (whatsoever some lately say to the contrary, it being the proper work of God's law or covenants to confer right or due), yet the event, or futuration of it, is made certain by God's unchangeable decree; His eternal willing it being the first and infallible cause that in time it is accomplished or produced.

CHAPTER II

THIS REST DEFINED

I

Now let us see, what this rest is; what these people of God, and why so called; the truth of this from other Scripture arguments; why this rest must yet remain; why only to this people of God; what use to make of it.

And though the sense of the text includes in the word "rest," all that ease and safety which a soul, wearied with the burden of sin and suffering, and pursued by law, wrath, and conscience, hath with Christ in this life, the "rest" of grace; yet because it chiefly intends the "rest" of eternal glory, as the end and main part, I shall therefore confine my discourse to this last.

Rest is the end and perfection of motion. The saints' rest, here in question, is the most happy estate of a Christian having obtained the end of his course. Or, it is the perfect endless fruition of God by the perfected saints, according to the measure of their capacity to which their souls arrive at death; and both soul and body most fully after the resurrection and final judgment.

II

I call it the "estate" of a Christian (though perfection consists in action, as the philosopher thinks), to note both the active and passive fruition wherein a Christian's

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blessedness lies, and the established continuance of both. Our title will be perfect and perfectly cleared; ourselves, and so our capacity, perfected; our possession and security for its perpetuity perfect; our reception from God perfect; our motion or action in and upon Him perfect; and therefore our fruition of Him, and consequently our happiness, will then be perfect. And this is the estate which we now briefly mention, and shall afterwards more fully describe and open to you; and which we hope by Jesus Christ very shortly to enter upon, and for ever to possess.

III

I call it the “most happy estate,” to difference it not only from all seeming happiness which is to be found in the enjoyment of creatures, but also from all those beginnings, foretastes, earnest, first-fruits, and imperfect degrees which we have here in this life, while we are but in the way. It is the chief good which the world hath so much disputed, yet mistaken or neglected; without which the greatest confluence of all other good leaves a man miserable; and with the enjoyment of which all misery is inconsistent. The beginnings in our present state of grace, as they are a real part of this, may also be called a state of happiness. But, if considered disjunctly by themselves, they deserve not that title except in a comparative sense, as a Christian is compared to men out of Christ.

IV

I call it the estate of “a Christian,” where I mean only the sincere, regenerate, sanctified Christian, whose soul, having discovered that excellency in God through Christ

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which is not in the world to be found, thereupon closeth with Him, and is cordially set upon Him. I do not mean every one that being born where Christianity is the religion of the country, takes it up as other fashions, and is become a Christian he scarce knows how or why; nor mean I those that profess Christ in words but in works deny Him. (I shall describe this Christian to you more plainly afterward.) It is an estate to which many pretend, and that with much confidence; and because they know it is only the Christian's, therefore they all call themselves Christians. But multitudes will at last know, to their eternal sorrow, that this is only the inheritance of the saints; and only those Christians shall possess it who are not of the world and therefore the world hates them; who have forsaken all for Christ and, having taken up the cross, do follow Him with patient waiting till they inherit the promised glory.

V

I add, that this happiness consists in obtaining "the end," where I mean the ultimate and principal end, not any end *secundum quid*, so called, subordinate or less principal. Not the end of conclusion in regard of time, for so every man hath his end; but the end of intention which sets the soul a work and is its prime motive in all its actions. That the chief happiness is in the enjoyment of this end I shall fully show through the whole discourse, and therefore here omit. Everlasting woe to that man who makes that his end here (to the death) which, if he could attain, would not make him happy. Oh! how much doth our everlasting state depend on our right judgment and estimation of our end.

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VI

But it is a great doubt with many, whether the obtaining of this glory may be our end? nay, concluded, that it is mercenary; yea, that to make salvation the end of duty is to be a legalist, and act under a covenant of works, whose tenor is, "Do this and live." And many that think it may be our end, yet think it may not be our ultimate end; for that should be only the glory of God. I shall answer these particularly and briefly.

It is properly called mercenary when we expect it as wages for work done; and so we may not make it our end. Otherwise it is only such a mercenariness as Christ commandeth. For consider what this end is; it is the fruition of God in Christ; and if seeking Christ be mercenary, I desire to be so mercenary.

It is not a note of a legalist neither. It hath been the ground of a multitude of late mistakes in divinity to think that, "Do this and live," is only the language of the covenant of works. It is true in some sense it is; but in other not. The law of works only saith, "Do this" (that is, perfectly fulfil the whole law) "and live" (that is, for so doing); but the law of grace saith, "Do this and live," too; that is, believe in Christ, seek Him, obey Him sincerely as thy Lord and King, forsake all, suffer all things, and overcome, and by so doing, or in so doing, as the conditions which the Gospel propounds for salvation, you shall live. If you set up the abrogated duties of the law again you are a legalist; if you set up the duties of the Gospel in Christ's stead, in whole or in part, you err still. Christ hath His place and work; duty hath its place and work too; set it but in its own place, and expect from it but its own part, and you go right. Yea, more (how unsavoury soever the phrase may

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seem), you may, so far as this comes to, trust to your duty and works, that is, for their own part; and many miscarry in expecting no more from them (as to pray, and to expect nothing the more) that is, from Christ in a way of duty. For if duty have no share why may we not trust Christ as well in a way of disobedience as duty? In a word, you must both use and trust duty in subordination to Christ, but neither use it nor trust it in co-ordination with Him. So that this derogates nothing from Christ; for He hath done and will do all His work perfectly, and enableth His people to [do] theirs. Yet He is not properly said to do it Himself; He believes not, repents not, &c., but worketh these in them; that is, enableth and exciteth them to do it. No man must look for more from duty than God hath laid upon it; and so much we may and must [look for].

VII

If I should quote all the Scriptures that plainly prove this, I should transcribe a great part of the Bible. I will bring none out of the Old Testament, for I know not whether their authority will here be acknowledged; but I desire the contrary minded, whose consciences are tender of abusing Scripture and wresting it from the plain sense, to study what tolerable interpretation can be given of these following passages, which will not prove that life and salvation may be, yea, must be the end of duty: "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life."¹ "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."² "Strive to enter in at the strait gate."³ "Work out your salvation with fear

¹ John v. 39, 40.

² Matt. xi. 12.

³ Matt. vii. 13; Luke xiii. 24.

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and trembling.”¹ “To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life. Glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good,” &c.² “So run that ye may obtain.”³ “A man is not crowned, except he strive lawfully.”⁴ “If we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him.”⁵ “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.”⁶ “That they do good works, laying up a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”⁷ “If by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead. I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling,” &c.⁸ “Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and enter in by the gates into the city.”⁹ “Come ye blessed of my father, inherit,” &c., “for I was hungry, and ye,” &c.¹⁰ “Blessed are the pure in heart,” &c., “they that hunger and thirst,” &c. “Be glad and rejoice, for great is your reward in heaven.”¹¹ “Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.”¹² Yea, the escaping of hell is a right end of duty to a believer. “Let us fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”¹³ “Fear him that is able to destroy both soul and body in hell; yea (whatsoever others say), I say unto you, fear him.”¹⁴ “I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.”¹⁵ Multitudes of Scriptures and Scripture arguments might be brought, but these may suffice to any that believe Scripture.

¹ Phil. ii. 12.

⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 5.

⁷ 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19.

¹⁰ Matt. xxv.

¹³ Heb. iv. 1.

² Rom. ii. 7, 10.

⁵ 2 Tim. ii. 12.

⁸ Phil. iii. 14.

¹¹ Matt. v.

¹⁴ Luke xii. 5.

³ 1 Cor. ix. 24.

⁶ 1 Tim. vi. 12.

⁹ Rev. xxii. 14.

¹² Luke xi. 28.

¹⁵ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

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VIII

For those that think this Rest may be our end, but not our ultimate end, which must be God's glory only; I will not gainsay them. Only let them consider, what God hath joined man must not separate. The glorifying Himself and the saving of His people, as I judge, are not two decrees with God but one decree, to glorify His mercy in their salvation; though we may say, that one is the end of the other. So I think they should be with us together intended; we should aim at the glory of God not alone considered without our salvation, but in our salvation. Therefore I know no warrant for putting such a question to ourselves, as some do, whether we could be content to be damned, so God were glorified? Christ hath put no such questions to us, nor bid us put such to ourselves. Christ had rather that men would enquire after their true willingness to be saved than their willingness to be damned. Sure I am, Christ Himself is offered to faith in terms for the most part respecting the welfare of the sinner, more than His own abstracted glory. He would be received as a Saviour, Mediator, Redeemer, Reconciler, Intercessor, &c. And all the precepts of Scripture being backed with so many promises and threatenings, every one intended of God as a motive to us, do imply as much. If any think they should be distinguished as two several ends, and God's glory preferred; so they separate them not asunder, I contend not. But I had rather make that high pitch, which Gibieuf and many others insist on, to be the mark at which we should all aim, than the mark by which every weak Christian should try himself.

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IX

In the definition, I call a Christian's happiness the end of "his course," thereby meaning, as Paul,¹ the whole scope of his life. For as salvation may, and must be our end; so not only the end of our faith (though that principally), but of all our actions; for, as whatsoever we do must be done to the glory of God, whether eating, drinking, &c., so must they all be done to our salvation. That we may believe for salvation some will grant, who yet deny that we may do or obey for it. I would it were well understood, for the clearing of many controversies, what the Scripture usually means by faith. Doubtless the Gospel takes it not so strictly as philosophers do, but in a larger sense, for our accepting Christ for our King and Saviour. To believe in His name, and to receive Him, are all one;² but we must receive Him as King as well as Saviour; therefore believing doth not produce heart subjection as a fruit but contains it as an essential part; except we say that faith receives Christ as a Saviour first, and so justifies before it take Him for King (as some think); which is a maimed, unsound, and no Scripture faith. I doubt not but the soul more sensibly looks at salvation from Christ than government by him in the first work; yet, whatever precedaneous act there may be, it never conceives of Christ, and receives him to justification, nor knows Him with the knowledge which is eternal life, till it conceive of Him and know Him and receive Him for Lord and King. Therefore there is not such a wide difference between faith and Gospel obedience or works as some judge. Obedience to the Gospel is put for faith, and disobedience put for unbelief, oftentimes in the New Testament. But of this I have spoken more fully elsewhere.

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 7.

² John i. 12.

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Lastly, I make happiness to consist in this "end obtained," for it is not the mere promise of it that immediately makes perfectly happy, nor Christ's mere purchase, nor our mere seeking, but the apprehending and obtaining which sets the crown on the saint's head ; when we can say of our work, as Christ of the price paid, " It is finished " ; and as Paul, " I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course ; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of salvation." ¹ Oh that we did all heartily and strongly believe that we shall never be truly happy till then. Then should we not so dote upon a seeming happiness here.

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

CHAPTER III

WHAT THIS REST PRESUPPOSETH

I

FOR the clearer understanding yet of the nature of this rest, you must know there are some things necessarily presupposed to it; some things really contained in it.

All these [twelve] things are presupposed to this Rest:

A person in motion seeking rest. This is man here in the way. Angels and glorified spirits have it already. And the devils and damned are past hope.

II

An end toward which he moveth for rest, which end must be sufficient for his rest, else when it is obtained it deceiveth him. This can be only God, the chief good. He that taketh anything else for his happiness is out of the way the first step. The principal damning sin is to make anything besides God our end or rest. And the first true saving act is to choose God only for our end and happiness.

III

A distance is presupposed from this end, else there can be no motion towards it. This sad distance is the woful case of all mankind since the fall. It was our God that

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we principally lost, and were shut out of His gracious presence. Though some talk of losing only a temporal, earthly felicity, sure I am, it was God we fell from, and Him we lost, and since are said to be without Him in the world. And there would have been no death but for sin; and to enjoy God without death is neither an earthly nor temporal enjoyment; nay, in all men at age, here is supposed not only a distance from God but also a contrary motion; for sin hath not overthrown our being, nor taken away our motion, but our well-being and the rectitude of our motion. When Christ comes with regenerating, saving grace, He finds no man sitting still, but all posting to eternal ruin, and making haste toward hell; till, by conviction, He first bring them to a stand; and, by conversion, turn first their hearts, and then their lives sincerely to Himself. Even those that are sanctified and justified from the womb are yet first the children of Adam, and so of wrath; at least in order of nature, if not in time.

IV

Here is presupposed a knowledge of the true ultimate end and its excellency, and a serious intending it. For so the motion of the rational creature proceedeth; an unknown end is no end; it is a contradiction. We cannot make that our end which we know not: nor that our chief end which we know not, or judge not, to be the chief good. An unknown good moves not to desire or endeavour. Therefore, where it is not truly known that God is this end and containeth all good in Him, there is no obtaining rest in an ordinary known way;¹ whatsoever may be in ways that by God are kept secret.

¹ I speak all this of men of age converted by the Word, not of those sanctified in infancy.

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V

Here is presupposed not only a distance from this rest but also the true knowledge of this distance. If a man have lost his way and know it not, he seeks not to return. If he lose his gold and know it not, he seeks it not. Therefore they that never knew they were without God, never yet enjoyed Him; and they that never knew they were naturally and actually in the way to hell did never yet know the way to heaven.¹ Nay, there will not only be a knowledge of this distance and lost estate but also affections answerable. Can a man be brought to find himself hard by the brink of hell and not tremble? or to find he hath lost his God and his soul, and not cry out, "I am undone"? Or can such a stupid soul be so recovered? This is the sad case of many thousands, and the reason why so few obtain this rest, they will not be convinced or made sensible that they are, in point of title distant from it, and in point of practice contrary to it. They have lost their God, their souls, their rest, and do not know it; nor will believe him that tells them so. Who ever travelled towards a place which he thought he was at already; or sought for that which he knew not he had lost? "The whole need not the physician, but they that are sick."

VI

Here is also presupposed a superior moving cause and an influence therefrom; else should we all stand still, and not move a step forward toward our rest; no more than the inferior wheels in the watch would stir if you take

¹ I mean those that were converted at years of discretion and received not holiness insensibly in their infancy, as I doubt not but many thousands do.

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away the spring or the first mover. This *Primum Movens* is GOD. What hand God hath in evil actions, or whether He afford the like influence to their production, I will not here trouble this discourse and the reader to dispute. The case is clear in good actions; if God move us not we cannot move. Therefore it is a most necessary part of our Christian wisdom, to keep our subordination to God and dependence on Him, to be still in the path where He walks, and in that way where His Spirit doth most usually move. Take heed of being estranged or separated from God, or of slacking your daily expectations of renewed help, or of growing insensible of the necessity of the continual influence and assistance of the Spirit. When you once begin to trust your stock of habitual grace, and to depend on your own understanding or resolution for duty and holy walking, you are then in a dangerous declining state. In every duty remember Christ's words: "Without Me ye can do nothing."¹ And 2 Cor. iii. 5: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God."

VII

Here is presupposed an internal principle of life in the person. God moves not man like a stone, but by enduing him first with life, not to enable him to move without God, but thereby to qualify him to move himself in subordination to God the first mover. What the nature of this spiritual life is, is a question exceeding difficult: whether, as some think (but, as I judge, erroneously), it be Christ Himself in person or essence; or the Holy Ghost personally; or as some will distinguish (with what sense I know not), it is the person of the Holy Ghost but not personally; whether it be an

¹ John xv. 5.

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accident or quality; or whether it be a spiritual substance as the soul itself; whether it be only an act, or a disposition, or a habit, as it is generally taken; whether a habit infused, or acquired by frequent acts, to which the soul hath been morally persuaded; or whether it be somewhat distinct from a habit, *i.e.* a power; viz. *potentia proxima intelligendi, credendi, volendi, &c., in spiritualibus*, which some think the most probable and that it was such a power that Adam lost, and that the natural man is still devoid of; whether such a power can be conceived which is not reason itself; and whether reason be not the soul itself; and so we should make the soul diminished and increased as bodies; whether spirits have accidents as corporeal substances have. A multitude of such difficulties occur, which will be difficulties while the doctrine of spirits and spirituals is so dark to us; and that will be while the dust of mortality and corruption is in our eyes. This is my comfort, that death will shortly blow out this dust, and then I shall be resolved of these and many more. In the meantime I am a sceptic, and know little in this whole doctrine of spirits and spiritual workings, further than Scripture [has] clearly revealed; and think we might do well to keep closer to its language.

VIII

Here is presupposed before rest, an actual motion; rest is the end of motion; no motion, no rest. Christianity is not a sedentary profession and employment, nor doth it consist in mere negatives. It is for not feeding, not clothing, &c., that Christ condemns. Not doing good is not the least evil; sitting still will lose you heaven as well as if you run from it. It is a great question, whether the elicit acts of the Will are by motion, or by subitaneous mutation? But it is a logo-

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machy. I know when we have done all we are unprofitable servants; and he cannot be a Christian that relies upon the supposed merit of his works in proper sense; but yet he that hides his talent shall receive the wages of a slothful servant.

IX

Here is presupposed also, as motion, so such motion as is rightly ordered and directed toward the end. Not all motion, labour, seeking, that brings to rest. Every way leads not to this end, but He whose goodness hath appointed the end hath in His wisdom and by His sovereign authority appointed the way. Our own invented ways may seem to us more wise, comely, equal, pleasant; but that is the best key that will open the lock, which none but that of God's appointing will do. Oh, the pains that sinners take, and worldlings take, but not for this rest! Oh, the pains and cost that many an ignorant and superstitious soul is at for this rest, but all in vain! How many "have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge; who being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God"; nor known, "that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."¹ Christ is the door, the only way to this rest. Some will allow nothing else to be called the way lest it derogate from Christ. The truth is, Christ is the only way to the Father; yet faith is the way to Christ; and Gospel obedience, or faith and works, the way for those to walk in that are in Christ. There be (as before) many ways requisite in subordination to Christ, but none in co-ordination with Him. So, then, it is only God's way that will lead to this end and rest.

¹ Rom. x. 2-4.

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X

There is supposed also, as motion rightly ordered, so strong and constant motion, which may reach the end. If there be not strength put to the bow the arrow will not reach the mark; the lazy world, that think all too much, will find this to their cost one day; they that think less ado might have served do but reproach Christ for making us so much to do. They that have been most holy, watchful, painful to get faith and assurance do find, when they come to die, all too little; we see daily the best Christians, when dying, repent their negligence. I never knew any then repent his holiness and diligence. It would grieve a man's soul to see a multitude of mistaken sinners lay out their wit and care and pains for a thing of nought, and think to have eternal salvation with a wish. If the way to heaven be not far harder than the world imagines, then Christ and His apostles knew not the way, or else have deceived us; for they have told us, "that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence; that the gate is strait, and the way narrow; and we must strive, if we will enter; for many shall seek to enter, and not be able (which implies the faintness of their seeking and that they put not strength to the work); and that the righteous themselves are scarcely saved." If ever souls obtain salvation in the world's common, careless, easy way, then I will say there is a nearer way found out than ever God in Scripture hath revealed to the sons of men. But when they have obtained life and rest in this way, let them boast of it; till then, let them give us leave (who would fain go upon sure grounds in point of eternal salvation) to believe that God knows the way better than they, and that His word is a true and infallible discovery thereof.

I have seen this doctrine also thrown by with contempt

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by others, who say, "What, do you set us a-working for heaven? Doth our duty do anything? Hath not Christ done all? Is not this to make Him a half Saviour, and to preach law?"

It is to preach the law of Christ; His subjects are not lawless; it is to preach duty to Christ; none a more exact requirer of duty, or hater of sin, than Christ. Christ hath done, and will do, all His work, and therefore is a perfect Saviour; but yet leaves for us a work too. He hath paid all the price and left us none to pay; yet He never intended His purchase should put us into absolute, immediate personal title to glory in point of law, much less into immediate possession. What title (improperly so called) we may have from His own and His Father's secret counsel is nothing to the question. He hath purchased the crown to bestow, only on condition of believing, denying all for Him, suffering with Him, persevering, and overcoming. He hath purchased justification to bestow, only on condition of our believing, yea, repenting and believing. That the first grace hath any such condition, I will not affirm; but following mercies have; though it is Christ that enableth also to perform the condition. It is not a Saviour offered, but received also, that must save; it is not the blood of Christ shed only, but applied also, that must fully deliver; nor is it applied to the justification or salvation of a sleepy soul; nor doth Christ carry us to heaven in a chair of security. Where He will pardon He will make you pray: "Forgive us our trespasses"; and where He will give righteousness He will give hungering and thirsting. It is not through any imperfection in Christ that the righteous are scarcely saved; no, nor that the wicked perish, as they shall be convinced one day. In the same sense, as the prayer of the faithful, if fervent, availeth for outward mercies; in the same sense it prevaieth for salvation also; for Christ

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hath purchased both. And as baptism is said to save us, so other duties do; our righteousness, which the law of works requireth, and by which it is satisfied, is wholly in Christ, and not one grain in ourselves. Nor must we dare to think of patching up a legal righteousness of Christ's and our own together; that is, that our doings can be the least part of satisfaction for our sins, or proper merit. But yet ourselves must personally fulfil the conditions of the New Covenant, and so have a personal evangelical righteousness; or never be saved by Christ's righteousness. Therefore say not, it is not duty but Christ, for it is Christ in a way of duty. As duty cannot do it without Christ so Christ will not without duty. But of this enough before.

And as this motion must be strong, so constant, or it will fall short of rest. To begin in the spirit and end in the flesh will not bring to the end of the saints. The certainty of the saints' perseverance doth not make admonition to constancy unuseful. Men as seemingly holy as the best of us have fallen off. He that knew it impossible in the foundation to deceive the elect, yet saw it necessary to warn us that he only that endureth to the end shall be saved. Read but the promises, Rev. ii. and iii., "To him that overcometh." Christ's own disciples must be commanded to continue in His love, and that by keeping His commandments; and to abide in Him, and His Word in them, and He in them. It will seem strange to some that Christ should command us that "He abide in us."¹

XI

There is presupposed, also, to the obtaining of this rest, a strong desire after it. The soul's motion is not that which we call violent or constrained (none can force

¹ John xv. 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and viii. 31; 1 John ii. 24, 28.

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it), but natural, *viz.* according to our new nature. As everything inclines to its proper centre, so the rational creature is carried on in all its motion with desires after its end. This end is the first thing intended, and chiefest desired, though last obtained. Observe it and believe it, whoever thou art, there was never soul that made Christ and glory the principal end, nor that obtained rest with God, whose desire was not set upon Him, and that above all things else in the world whatsoever. Christ brings the heart to heaven first, and then the person. His own mouth spoke it: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." A sad condition to thousands of professed Christians. He that had truly rather have the enjoyment of God in Christ than anything in the world, shall have it; and he that had rather have anything else shall not have this except God change him. It is true, the remainder of our old nature will much weaken and interrupt these desires, but never overcome them. The passionate motion of them is oft strongest towards inferior sensible things; but the serious, deliberate will or choice, which is the rational desire, is most for God.

XII

Lastly, here is presupposed painfulness and weariness in our motion. This ariseth not from any evil in the work or way; for Christ's yoke is easy, His burthen light, and His commands not grievous, but from the opposition we meet with; the contrary principles still remaining in our nature, which will make us cry out, "Oh, wretched man"; from the weakness of our graces, and so of our motion. Great labour where there is a suitable strength is a pleasure; but to the weak, how painful! With what panting and weariness doth a feeble man ascend that hill which the sound man runs up with ease! We are all,

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even the best, but feeble. An easy, dull profession of religion that never encountereth with these difficulties and pains is a sad sign of an unsound heart. Christ, indeed, hath freed us from the impossibilities of the covenant of works, and from the burthen and yoke of legal ceremonies, but not from the difficulties and pains of Gospel duties. Our continued distance from the end will raise some grief also; for desire and hope, implying the absence of the thing desired and hoped for, do ever imply also some grief for that absence; which all vanish when we come to possession.

All these twelve things are implied in a Christian's motion, and so presupposed to this rest. And he only that hath the prerequisite qualifications shall have the crown. Here, therefore, should Christians lay out their utmost care and industry. See to your part, and God will certainly see to His part; look you to your hearts and duties, in which God is ready with assisting grace, and He will see that you lose not the reward. Oh how most Christians wrong God and themselves with being more solicitous about God's part of the work than their own, as if God's faithfulness were more to be suspected than their unfaithful, treacherous hearts. This rest is glorious, and God is faithful. Christ's death is sufficient, and the promise is universal, free, and true. You need not fear missing of heaven through the deficiency or fault of any of these. But yet, for all these, the falseness of your own hearts, if you look not to them, may undo you. If you doubt of this, believe the Holy Ghost: "Having a promise left us of entering into His rest, let us fear lest any of you should seem to come short of it."¹ The promise is true, but conditional. Never fear whether God will break promise, but fear lest you should not truly perform the condition; for nothing else can bereave you of the benefit.

¹ Heb. iv. 1.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT THIS REST CONTAINETH

BUT all this is only the outward court, or at least not the holiest of all. Now we have ascended these steps, may we look within the veil. May we show what this rest containeth as well as what it presupposeth? But, alas! how little know I of that whereof I am about to speak. Shall I speak before I know? But if I stay till I clearly know I shall not come again to speak. That glimpse which Paul saw, contained that which could not, or must not be uttered, or both.¹ And if Paul had had a tongue to have uttered it, it would have done no good, except his hearers had ears to hear it. If Paul had spoke the things of heaven in the language of heaven, and none understood that language, what the better? Therefore I will speak, while I may, that little, very little which I do know of it rather than be wholly silent. The Lord reveal it to me, that I may reveal it to you; and the Lord open some light, and show both you and me His inheritance; not as to Balaam only, whose eyes the vision of God opened to see the goodliness of Jacob's tents and Israel's tabernacles, where he had no portion, but from whence must come his own destruction; not as to Moses, who had only a discovery instead of possession, and saw the land which he never entered. But as the pearl was revealed to the merchant in the Gospel, who rested not till he had sold all he had, and bought it; and

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 4.

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as heaven was opened to blessed Stephen, which he was shortly to enter, and the glory showed him which should be his own possession.

I

There is contained in this rest, a cessation from motion or action; not of all action, but of that which hath the nature of a means, and implies the absence of the end. When we have obtained the haven, we have done sailing; when the workman hath his wages, it is implied he hath done his work; when we are at our journey's end, we have done with the way. All motion ends at the centre, and all means cease when we have the end. Therefore prophesying ceaseth, tongues fail, and knowledge shall be done away; that is, so far as it had the nature of a means and was imperfect. And so faith may be said to cease; not all faith, for how shall we know all things past, which we saw not but by believing? how shall we know the last judgment, the resurrection of the body, beforehand, but by believing? How shall we know the life everlasting, the eternity of the joys we possess, but by believing? But all that faith which as a means referred to the chief end shall cease. There shall be no more prayer, because no more necessity, but the full enjoyment of what we prayed for. Whether the soul pray for the body's resurrection, for the last judgment, &c., or whether soul and body pray for the eternal continuance of their joys, is to me yet unknown. Otherwise we shall not need to pray for what we have; and we shall have all that is desirable. Neither shall we need to fast and weep and watch any more, being out of the reach of sin and temptations. Nor will there be use for instructions and exhortations; preaching is done; the ministry of man ceaseth; sacraments useless; the

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labourers called in because the harvest is gathered, the tares burned, and the work done; the unregenerate past hope; the saints past fear for ever. Much less shall there be any need of labouring for inferior ends, as here we do, seeing they will all devolve themselves into the ocean of the ultimate end, and the lesser good be wholly swallowed up of the greatest.

II

This rest containeth a perfect freedom from all the evils that accompanied us through our course, and which necessarily follow our absence from the chief good. Besides our freedom from those eternal flames and restless miseries which the neglecters of Christ and grace must remedilessly endure; an inheritance which, both by birth and actual merit, was due to us as well as to them. As God will not know the wicked so as to own them; so neither will heaven know iniquity to receive it: “for there entereth nothing that defileth, or is unclean”; all that remains without. And doubtless there is not such a thing as grief and sorrow known there; nor is there such a thing as a pale face, a languid body, feeble joints, unable infancy, decrepit age, peccant humours, dolorous sickness, griping fears, consuming care, nor whatsoever deserves the name of evil. Indeed a gale of groans and sighs, a stream of tears accompanied us to the very gates and there bid us farewell for ever. “We did weep and lament, when the world did rejoice; but our sorrow is turned into joy, and our joy shall no man take from us.” God were not the chief and perfect good if the full fruition of Him did not free us from all evil. But we shall have occasion to speak more fully of this in that which follows.

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III

This rest containeth the highest degree of the saints' personal perfection, both of soul and body. 'This necessarily qualifies them to enjoy the glory and thoroughly to partake the sweetness of it. Were the glory never so great, and themselves not made capable by a personal perfection suitable thereto, it would be little to them. There is necessary a right disposition of the recipient to a right enjoying and affecting. This is one thing that makes the saints' joys there so great. Here, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, what God hath laid up for them that wait for Him. For the eye of flesh is not capable of seeing it, nor this ear of hearing it, nor this heart of understanding it; but there the eye, and ear, and heart are made capable; else how do they enjoy it? The more perfect the sight is, the more delightful the beautiful object. The more perfect the appetite, the sweeter the food. The more musical the ear, the more pleasant the melody. The more perfect the soul, the more joyous those joys, and the more glorious to us is that glory. Nor is it only our sinful imperfection that is here to be removed; nor only that which is the fruit of sin, but that which adhered to us in our pure naturals. Adam's dressing the garden was neither sin nor the fruit of sin; nor is either to be less glorious than the stars, or the sun in the firmament of our Father; yet is this the dignity to which the righteous shall be advanced. There is far more procured by Christ than was lost by Adam. It is the misery of wicked men here, that all without them is mercy, excellent mercies; but within them a heart full of sin shuts the door against all, and makes them but the more miserable. When all is well within, then all is well indeed. The near good is the best, and the near evil and enemy

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the worst. Therefore will God, as a special part of His saints' happiness, perfect themselves as well as their condition.

IV

This rest containeth, as the principal part, our nearest fruition of God, the chiefest good. And here, reader, wonder not if I be at a loss, and if my apprehensions receive but little of that which is in my expressions. If to the beloved disciple that durst speak and enquire into Christ's secrets, and was filled with His revelations, and saw the New Jerusalem in her glory, and had seen Christ, Moses, and Elias, in part of theirs, if it did not appear to him what we shall be, but only in general, that when Christ appears we shall be like Him; no wonder if I know little. When I know so little of God, I cannot know much what it is to enjoy Him. When it is so little I know of mine own soul, either its quiddity or quality, while it is here in this tabernacle, how little must I needs know of the infinite majesty, or the state of this soul, when it is advanced to that enjoyment? If I know so little of spirits and spirituals; how little of the Father of Spirits? Nay, if I never saw that creature which contains not something unsearchable; nor the worm so small which afforded not matter for questions to puzzle the greatest philosopher that ever I met with; no wonder then if mine eye fail when I would look at God, my tongue fail me in speaking of Him, and my heart in conceiving! As long as the Athenian superscription doth so too well suit with my sacrifices, "*to the unknown God*"; and while I cannot contain the smallest rivulet, it is little I can contain of this immense ocean. We shall never be capable of clearly knowing, till we are capable of fully enjoying, nay, nor till we do actually enjoy Him. What strange conceivings hath a man born blind, of the sun

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and its light; or a man born deaf, of the nature of sounds and music; so do we yet want that sense by which God must be clearly known.

I stand and look upon a heap of ants, and see them all with one view, very busy to little purpose; they know not me, my being, nature, or thoughts, though I am their fellow-creature; how little then must we know of the great Creator, though He with one view continually beholds us all. Yet a knowledge we have, though imperfect, and such as must be done away. A glimpse the saints behold, though but in a glass, which makes us capable of some poor, general, dark apprehensions of what we shall behold in glory. If I should tell a worldling but what the holiness and spiritual joys of the saints on earth are, he cannot know it; for grace cannot be clearly known without grace; how much less could he conceive it should I tell him of this glory. But to the saints I may be somewhat more encouraged to speak, for grace giveth them a dark knowledge and slight taste of glory.

As all good whatsoever is comprised in God, and all in the creature are but drops of this ocean; so all the glory of the blessed is comprised in their enjoyment of God; and if there be any mediate joys there they are but drops from this. If men and angels should study to speak the blessedness of that estate in one word, what can they say beyond this, that it is the nearest enjoyment of God. Say, they have God, and you say they have all that is worth the having. Oh the full joys offered to a believer in that one sentence of Christ's! I would not for all the world that one verse had been left out of the Bible; "Father, I will, that those whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me";¹ every word full of

¹ John xvii. 24.

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life and joy. If the Queen of Sheba had cause to say of Solomon's glory, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants that stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom"; then sure they that stand continually before God, and see His glory and the glory of the Lamb, are somewhat more than happy; to them will Christ "give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God"; and "to eat of the hidden manna." Yea, "He will make them pillars in the temple of God, and they shall go no more out; and He will write upon them the name of His God, and the name of the city of His God, New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of Heaven from God, and His own new Name." Yea more, if more may be, "He will grant them to sit with Him in His Throne." "These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. And the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." And may we not now boast with the spouse, "This is my Beloved, O daughters of Jerusalem!" And this is the glory of the saints.

O blind deceived world, can you show us such a glory? "This is the city of our God, where the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God"; "The glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face, and His Name shall be in their foreheads. These sayings are faithful and true,

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and these are the things that must shortly be done." And now we say, as Mephibosheth, "Let the world take all besides, if we may but see the face of our Lord in peace." If the Lord lift up the light of His countenance on us here, it puts more gladness in our hearts than the world's increase can do; how much more, when in His light we shall have light without darkness; and He shall make us full of joy with His countenance. "Rejoice, therefore, in the Lord, O ye righteous"; and shout for joy all ye that are upright of heart; and say with His servant David, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance; the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage; I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved; therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope; for He will not leave me in the grave, nor suffer me, for ever, to see corruption. He will show me the path of life, and bring me into His presence, where is fulness of joy, and at His right hand where are pleasures for evermore." "Whom therefore have I in heaven but Him, or in earth that I desire besides Him? My flesh and my heart have failed, and will fail me; but God is the strength of my heart and will be my portion for ever; He shall guide me with His counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory; and as they that are far from Him perish, so is it good, the chief good for us to be near to God."

The advancement is exceeding high. What unreverent damnable presumption would it have been, once to have thought or spoke of such a thing, if God had not spoke it before us? I durst not have thought of the saints' preferment in this life, as Scripture sets it forth, had it not been the express truth of God. What vile unmannerliness, to talk of "being sons of God"; speaking to Him; having fellowship and communion with Him;

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dwelling in Him, and He in us; if this had not been God's own language? How much less durst we have once thought of being brighter than the sun in glory, of being co-heirs with Christ, of judging the world, of sitting on Christ's throne, of being "one with Him," if we had not all this from the mouth, and under the hand of God! But hath He said it, and shall it not come to pass? Hath He spoken it, and will He not do it? Yes, as true as the Lord God is true, thus shall it be done to the man whom Christ delights to honour. "The eternal God is their refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and the beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him, and the Lord shall cover them all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders." "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow them all the days of their lives, and then they shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

O Christians, believe and consider this. Is sun, and moon, and stars, and all creatures called upon to praise the Lord? What then should His people do? Surely they are nearer Him, and enjoy more of Him than the brutes shall do. "All His works praise Him, but, above all, let His saints bless Him." Oh "let them speak of the glory of His kingdom, and talk of His power; to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom"; "let His praise be in the congregation of His saints; let Israel rejoice in Him that made Him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King; let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud upon their beds; let the high praises of God be in their mouth; for the Lord taketh pleasure in His people, and will beautify the meek with salvation." "This is the light that is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Yea, "this honour have all His saints." If the estate of the devils before

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their fall were not much meaner than this (and perhaps lower than some of their fellow-angels) surely their sin was most accursed and detestable. Could they yet aspire higher, and was there yet room for discontent? What is it then that would satisfy them? Indeed the distance that we sinners and mortals are at from our God leaves us some excuse for discontent with our estate.

The poor soul out of the depth cries, and cries aloud, as if his Father were out of hearing; sometimes he chides the interposing clouds, sometimes he is angry at the vast gulf that is set between, sometimes he would have the veil of mortality drawn aside, and thinks death hath forgot his business; he ever quarrels with this sin that separates, and longs till it be separated from the soul, that it may separate God and him no more. Why, poor Christian, be of good cheer; the time is near when God and thou shall be near, and as near as thou canst well desire. Thou shalt dwell in His family, is that enough? It is better to be a door-keeper in His house than enjoy the portion of the wicked. Thou shalt ever stand before Him, about His throne, in the room with Him, in His presence-chamber. Wouldst thou yet be nearer? Thou shalt be His child, and He thy Father; thou shalt be an heir of His kingdom; yea, more, the spouse of His Son; and what more canst thou desire? Thou shalt be a member of the body of His Son, He shall be thy Head; thou shalt be one with Him who is One with the Father. Read what He hath desired for thee of His Father: "That they all may be one, as Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us, and the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one, that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me."

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What can you desire yet more, except you will, as some do, abuse Christ's expression of oneness to conceive of such a union as shall deify us; which were a sin one step beyond the aspiring arrogancy of Adam, and, I think, beyond that of the devils. A real conjunction (improperly called union) we may expect; and a true union of affections; a moral union (improperly still called union), and a true relative union, such as is between the members of the same politic body and the head; yea, such as is between the husband and the wife, who are called one flesh; and a real communion, and communication of real favours, flowing from that relative union. If there be any more, it is acknowledged unconceivable, and consequently unexpressible, and so not to be spoken of. If any can conceive of a proper real union and identity, which shall neither be a unity of essence, nor of person with Christ, as I yet cannot, I shall not oppose it; but to think of such a union were high blasphemy. Nor must you think of a union, as some do, upon natural grounds, following the dark mistaking principles of Plato and Plotinus. If your thoughts be not guided and limited by Scripture in this, you are lost.

But how is it we shall enjoy God? That is the fifth and last we come to.

V

This rest containeth a sweet and constant action of all the powers of the soul and body in this fruition of God. It is not the rest of a stone, which ceaseth from all motion when it attains the centre. The senses themselves, as I judge, are not only passive in receiving their object, but partly passive and partly active. Whether the external senses, such as now we have, shall be continued and employed in this work is a great doubt. For some of

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them, it is usually acknowledged they shall cease ; because their being importeth their use, and their use implieth our estate of imperfection ; as there is no use for eating and drinking, so neither for the taste. But for other senses the question will be harder ; for Job saith, "I shall see Him with these eyes."

But do not all senses imply our imperfection ? If Job did speak of more than a redemption from this present distress (as it is like he did), yet certainly these eyes will be made so spiritual, that whether the name of sense, in the same sense as now, shall befit them, is a question. This body shall be so changed that it shall no more be flesh and blood (for "that cannot inherit the kingdom of God"), but "a spiritual body." "That which we sow, we sow not that body that shall be ; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body." As the ore is cast into the fire a stone but comes forth so pure a metal that it deserves another name, and so the difference betwixt it and the gold exceeding great ; so far greater will the change of our bodies and senses be ; even so great as now we cannot conceive. If grace make a Christian differ so much from what he was, that the Christian could say to his companion, "*Ego non sum ego*, I am not the man I was" ; how much more will glory make us differ ? We may then say much more, This is not the body I had, and these are not the senses I had. But because we have no other name for them, let us call them senses, call them eyes and ears, seeing and hearing. But thus much conceive of the difference, that as much as a body spiritual, above the sun in glory, exceedeth these frail, noisome, diseased lumps of flesh or dirt that now we carry about us, so far shall our sense of seeing and hearing exceed these we now possess ; for the change of the senses must be conceived proportionable to the change of the body. And, doubtless, as God advanceth our sense, and

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enlargeth our capacity, so will He advance the happiness of those senses, and fill up with Himself all that capacity. And certainly the body should not be raised up and continued if it should not share of the glory; for as it hath shared in the obedience and sufferings, so shall it also do in the blessedness; and as Christ bought the whole man, so shall the whole partake of the everlasting benefits of the purchase. The same difference is to be allowed for the tongue. For though, perhaps, that which we now call the tongue, the voice or language, shall not then be; yet with the forementioned unconceivable change it may continue. Certain it is, it shall be the everlasting work of those blessed saints to stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, and to praise Him for ever and ever. As their eyes and hearts shall be filled with His knowledge, with His glory, and with His love, so shall their mouths be filled with His praises.

Go on, therefore, O ye saints, while you are on earth, in that Divine duty. Learn, oh learn that saint-beseeming work, for in the mouths of His saints His praise is comely. Pray, but still praise; hear and read, but still praise. Praise Him in the presence of His people, for it shall be your eternal work; praise Him while His enemies deride and abuse you. You shall praise Him, while they shall bewail it and admire you. Oh blessed employment! to sound forth for ever: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive honour, glory, and power"; and "worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing; for He hath redeemed us to God by His blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hath made us unto our God, kings, and priests"; "Alleluia, salvation, and honour, and glory, and power unto the Lord our God; praise our God all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, small and great; Alleluia;

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for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." O Christians, this is the blessed rest; a rest without rest; for, "they rest not day nor night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Sing forth His praises now ye saints. It is a work our Master Christ hath taught us. And you shall for ever sing before Him the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, thou King of Saints."

VI

And if the body shall be thus employed, oh, how shall the soul be taken up? As its powers and capacities are greatest, so its actions strongest, and its enjoyments sweetest. As the bodily senses have their proper aptitude and action, whereby they receive and enjoy their objects, so doth the soul in its own action enjoy its own object; by knowing, by thinking, and remembering, by loving, and by delightful enjoying; this is the soul's enjoying. By these eyes it sees, and by these arms it embraceth. If it might be said of the disciples with Christ on earth, much more [of those] that behold Him in His glory, "Blessed are the eyes that see the things that you see, and the ears that hear the things that you hear; for many princes and great ones have desired (and hoped) to see the things that you see, and have not seen them."

Knowledge of itself is very desirable, even the knowledge of some evil, though not the evil itself. As far as the rational soul exceeds the sensitive, so far the delights of a philosopher, in discovering the secrets of nature and knowing the mystery of sciences, exceed the delights of the glutton, the drunkard, the unclean, and of all voluptuous sensualists whatsoever, so excellent is all

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truth. What then is their delight who know the God of truth? What would I not give, so that all the uncertain questionable principles in logic, natural philosophy, metaphysics, and medicine were but certain in themselves, and to me; and that my dull, obscure notions of them were but quick and clear. Oh, what then should I not either perform or part with to enjoy a clear and true apprehension of the most true God? How noble a faculty of the soul is this understanding. It can compass the earth; it can measure the sun, moon, stars, and heaven; it can foreknow each eclipse to a minute, many years before; yea, but this is the top of all its excellency, it can know God, who is infinite, who made all these; a little here; and more, and much more hereafter.

Oh, the wisdom and goodness of our blessed Lord! He hath created the understanding with a natural bias and inclination to truth as its object; and to the prime truth as its prime object; and lest we should turn aside to any creature, He hath kept this as His own divine prerogative not communicable to any creature, viz. to be the prime truth. And though I think not, as some do, that there is so near a close between the understanding and truth as may produce a proper union or identity; yet doubtless, it is no such cold touch or disdainful embrace, as is between these gross earthly heterogeneous. The true, studious, contemplative man knows this to be true; who feels as sweet embraces between his intellect and truth, and far more, than ever the quickest sense did in possessing its desired object. But the true, studious, contemplative Christian knows it much more, who sometime hath felt more sweet embraces between his soul and Jesus Christ than all inferior truth can afford. I know some Christians are kept short this way, especially the careless in their watch and walking, and those that are ignorant or negligent in the daily actings of faith, who

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look when God casts in joys, while they lie idle and labour not to fetch them in by believing.

But for others, I appeal to the most of them: Christian, dost thou not sometime when, after long gazing heavenward, thou hast got a glimpse of Christ, dost thou not seem to have been with Paul in the third heaven, whether in the body or out, and to have seen what is unutterable? Art thou not, with Peter, almost beyond thyself, ready to say, "Master, it is good to be here"? Oh, that I might dwell in this mount. Oh, that I might ever see what I now see! Didst thou never look so long upon the Son of God till thine eyes were dazzled with His astonishing glory; and did not the splendour of it make all things below seem black and dark to thee when thou lookedst down again? Especially in thy day of suffering for Christ (when He usually appears most manifestly to His people), didst thou never see one walking in the midst of the fiery furnace with thee like to the Son of God? If thou do know Him, value Him as thy life, and follow on to know Him; and thou shalt know incomparably more than this. Or if I do but renew thy grief, to tell thee of what thou once didst feel, but now hast lost, I counsel thee to "Remember whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works," "and be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain"; and I dare promise thee (because God hath promised) thou shalt see and know that which here thine eye could not see, nor thy understanding conceive. Believe me, Christians, yea, believe God; you that have known most of God in Christ here, it is as nothing to that you shall know; it scarce, in comparison of that, deserves to be called knowledge. The difference betwixt our knowledge now, and our knowledge then, will be as great as that between our fleshly bodies now and our spiritual glorified bodies then. For as these bodies, so that knowledge, must cease that

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a more perfect may succeed. Our silly, childish thoughts of God, which now is the highest we reach to, must give place to a manly knowledge. All this saith the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 8-12: "Knowledge shall vanish away; for we know in part, &c. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know, even as also I am known."

Marvel not, therefore, Christian, at the sense of that place of John xvii. 3, how it can be life eternal to know God and His Son Christ. You must needs know that to enjoy God and His Christ is eternal life, and the soul's enjoying is in knowing. They that savour only of earth, and consult with flesh, and have no way to try and judge but by sense, and never were acquainted with this knowledge of God, nor tasted how gracious He is, these think it is a poor happiness to know God; let them have health and wealth, and worldly delights, and take you the other. Alas, poor men! they that have made trial of both do not grudge you your delights, nor envy your happiness, but pity your undoing folly, and wish, oh! that you would come near, and taste and try as they have done, and then judge. Then continue in your former mind, if you can. For our parts we say with that knowing apostle (though the speech may seem presumptuous), "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness; and we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ: this is the true God, and eternal life."¹ Here one

¹ 1 John v. 19, 20.

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verse contains the sum of most that I have said. "The Son of God is come" to be our head and fountain of life, "and so hath given us an understanding" that the soul may be personally qualified and made capable "to know Him" (God) "that is true" (the prime truth), "and we are" brought so near in this enjoyment, that "we are in Him that is true," not properly by an essential or personal union, but we are in Him, by being "in His Son Jesus Christ: this" we have mentioned "is the" only "true God" and so the fittest object for our understanding, which chooseth truth, and this knowing of Him, and being in Him, in Christ "is eternal life."

VII

And doubtless the memory will not be idle or useless in this blessed work. If it be but by looking back to help the soul to value its enjoyment. Our knowledge will be enlarged, not diminished; therefore the knowledge of things past shall not be taken away. And what is that knowledge but remembrance? Doubtless from that height the saint can look behind him and before him. And to compare past with present things must needs raise in the blessed soul an unconceivable esteem and sense of its condition. To stand on that mount whence we can see the wilderness and Canaan both at once; to stand in heaven, and look back on earth, and weigh them together in the balance of a comparing sense and judgment, how must it needs transport the soul, and make it cry out: Is this the purchase that cost so dear as the blood of God? No wonder, O blessed price, and thrice blessed love that invented and condescended! Is this the end of believing? Is this the end of the Spirit's workings? Have the gales of grace blown me into such a harbour? Is it hither that

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Christ hath enticed my soul? O blessed way, and thrice blessed end! Is this the glory which the Scriptures spoke of, and ministers preached of so much? Why now I see the Gospel indeed is good tidings, even tidings of peace and good things, tidings of great joy to all nations! Is my mourning, my fasting, my sad humblings, my heavy walking, groanings, complainings come to this? Is my praying, watching, fearing to offend come to this? Are all my afflictions, sickness, languishing, troublesome physic, fears of death, come to this? Are all Satan's temptations, the world's scorns and jeers, come to this?

And now, if there be such a thing as indignation left, how will it here let fly? O vile nature, that resisted so much and so long such a blessing! Unworthy soul, is this the place thou camest so unwillingly towards? Was duty wearisome? Was the world too good to lose? Didst thou stick at leaving all, denying all, and suffering anything for this? Wast thou loath to die, to come to this? O false heart, that had almost betrayed me to eternal flames, and lost me this glory! O base flesh, that would needs have been pleased, though to the loss of this felicity? Didst thou make me to question the truth of this glory? Didst thou show me improbabilities, and draw me to distrust the Lord? Didst thou question the truth of that Scripture which promised this? Why, my soul, art thou not now ashamed that ever thou didst question that love that hath brought thee hither; that thou wast jealous of the faithfulness of thy Lord; that thou suspectedst His love, when thou shouldst only have suspected thyself; that thou didst not live continually transported with thy Saviour's love; and that ever thou quenchedst a motion of His Spirit? Art thou not ashamed of all thy hard thoughts of such a God; of all thy misinterpreting of, and grudging at, those providences, and repining at those ways that have such an end? Now

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thou art sufficiently convinced that the ways thou calledst hard, and the cup thou calledst bitter, were necessary; that thy Lord hath sweeter ends, and meant thee better than thou wouldst believe; and that thy Redeemer was saving thee as well when He crossed thy desires, as when He granted them; and as well when He broke thy heart as when He bound it up. Oh no thanks to thee, unworthy self, but shame, for this received crown; but to Jehovah and the Lamb be glory for ever!

Thus, as the memory of the wicked will eternally promote their torment, to look back on the pleasures enjoyed, the sin committed, the grace refused, Christ neglected, and time lost; so will the memory of the saints for ever promote their joys. And as it is said to the wicked, "Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things"; so will it be said to the Christian: "Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thine evils; but now thou art comforted, and they are tormented." And as here the remembrance of former good is the occasion of increasing our grief: "I remembered God, and was troubled; I called to remembrance my songs in the night"; so there the remembrance of our former sorrows addeth life to our joys.

VIII

But oh, the full, the near, the sweet enjoyment is that of the affections, love and joy. It is near, for love is of the essence of the soul, and love is the essence of God, "for God is love." How near therefore is this blessed closure! The Spirit's phrase is, "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." The acting of this affection, wheresoever, carrieth much delight along with it; especially when the object appears

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deserving, and the affection is strong. But oh, what will it be, when perfected affections shall have the strongest, perfect, incessant actings upon the most perfect object, the ever blessed God! Now the poor soul complains; oh, that I could love Christ more, but I cannot, alas, I cannot; yea, but then thou canst not choose but love Him; I had almost said, forbear if thou canst. Now thou knowest little of His amiableness, and therefore lovest little; then thine eye will affect thy heart, and the continual viewing of that perfect beauty will keep thee in continual ravishments of love. Now thy salvation is not perfected, nor all the mercies purchased yet given in; but when the top-stone is set on, thou shalt with shouting cry, "Grace, Grace." Now thy sanctification is imperfect, and thy pardon and justification not so complete as then it shall be. Now thou knowest not what thou enjoyest, and therefore lovest the less; but when thou knowest much is forgiven, and much bestowed, thou wilt love more. Doth David, after an imperfect deliverance, sing forth his love: "I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice and supplications." What think you will he do eternally! And how will he love the Lord, who hath lifted him up to that glory! Doth he cry out, "Oh how I love Thy law!" "My delight is in the saints on earth, and the excellent." How will he say then, "Oh how I love the Lord, and the King of saints, in whom is all my delight!" Christians, doth it now stir up your love to remember all the experiences of His love; to look back upon a life of mercies; doth not kindness melt you; and the sunshine of divine goodness warm your frozen hearts? What will it do then, when you shall live in love, and have all in Him, who is all? Oh, the high delights of love, of this love! The content that the heart findeth in it; the satisfaction it brings along with it! Surely love is both work and wages.

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And if this were all, what a high favour that God will give us leave to love Him ; that He will vouchsafe to be embraced by such arms that have embraced lust and sin before Him. But this is not all. He returneth love for love ; nay, a thousand times more ; as perfect as we shall be, we cannot reach His measure of love ; Christian, thou wilt be then brimful of love ; yet love as much as thou canst, thou shalt be ten thousand times more beloved. Dost thou think thou canst over-love Him ? What, love more than love itself ? Were the arms of the Son of God open upon the cross, and an open passage made to His heart by the spear, and will not arms and heart be open to thee in glory ? Did He begin to love before thou lovedst, and will not He continue now ? Did He love thee an enemy ; thee a sinner ; thee who even loathedst thyself ; and own thee when thou didst disclaim thyself ? And will He not now unmeasurably love thee a son ; thee a perfect saint ; thee who returnest some love for love ? Thou was wont injuriously to question His love ; doubt of it now if thou canst.

As the pains of hell will convince the rebellious sinner of God's wrath, who would never before believe it : so the joys of heaven will convince thee thoroughly of that love which thou wouldst so hardly be persuaded of. He that in love wept over the old Jerusalem near her ruin ; with what love will He rejoice over the new Jerusalem in her glory ? Oh, methinks I see Him groaning and weeping over dead Lazarus, till He force the Jews that stood by to say, "Behold how He loved him." Will He not then much more by rejoicing over us and blessing us, make all (even the damned if they see it) to say, Behold how He loveth them ? Is His spouse, while black, yet comely ; is she His love, His dove, His undefiled ? Doth she ravish His heart with one of her eyes ? Is her love better than wine ? O believing soul, study a little, and tell me what

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is the harvest which these first-fruits foretell; and the love which these are but the earnest of?¹ Here, oh, here is the heaven of heaven! 'This is the saints' fruition of God; in these sweet, mutual, constant actings and embracements of love doth it consist. To love, and be beloved. "These are the everlasting arms that are underneath." "His left hand is under their heads, and with His right hand doth He embrace them."

Reader, stop here and think a while what a state this is. Is it a small thing in thine eyes to be beloved of God; to be the son, the spouse, the love, the delight of the King of glory? Christian, believe this, and think on it; thou shalt be eternally embraced in the arms of that love which was from everlasting, and will extend to everlasting; of that love which brought the Son of God's love from heaven to earth, from earth to the cross, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to glory; that love which was weary, hungry, tempted, scorned, scourged, buffeted, spit upon, crucified, pierced; which did fast, pray, teach, heal, weep, sweat, bleed, die; that love will eternally embrace thee. When perfect created love, and most perfect uncreated love meet together, oh the blessed meeting! It will not be like Joseph and his brethren, who lay upon one another's necks weeping; it will break forth into a pure joy, and not such a mixture of joy and sorrow as their weeping argued; it will be loving and rejoicing, not loving and sorrowing: yet will it make Pharaoh's (Satan's) court to ring with the news that Joseph's brethren are come; that the saints are arrived safe at the bosom of Christ, out of the reach of hell for ever.

Neither is there any such love as David's and Jonathan's, shutting up in sorrows, and breathing out its last into sad lamentations for a forced separation; no, Christ is the

¹ Cant. i. 5, and v. 2, and vi. 9, and iv. 9, 10, &c.

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powerful attractive, the effectual loadstone who draws to it all like itself. All that the Father hath given Him shall come unto Him; even the lover, as well as the love, doth He draw; "and they that come unto Him He will in no wise cast out." For know this, believer, to thy everlasting comfort, that if these arms have once embraced thee, neither sin, nor hell can get thee thence for ever. The Sanctuary is inviolable, and the Rock impregnable, whither thou art fled, and thou art safe locked up to all eternity. Thou hast not now to deal with an inconstant creature, but with Him with whom is no varying nor shadow of change, even the immutable God. If thy happiness were in thine own hand, as Adam's, there were yet fear; but it is in the keeping of a faithful Creator. Christ hath not bought thee so dear, to trust thee with thyself any more. His love to thee will not be as thine was on earth to Him, seldom and cold, up and down, mixed, as aguish bodies, with burning and quaking, with a good day and a bad.

No, Christian, He that would not be discouraged by thine enmity, by thy loathsome hateful nature, by all thy unwillingness, unkind neglects, and churlish resistances; He that would neither cease nor abate His love for all these; can He cease to love thee when He hath made thee truly lovely? He that keepeth thee so constant in thy love to Him, that thou canst challenge "tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword, to separate thy love from Christ if they can"; how much more will Himself be constant? Indeed He that produced these mutual embracing affections will also produce such a mutual constancy in both, that thou mayest confidently be persuaded, as Paul was before thee, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate

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us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And now are we not left in the Apostle's admiration, "What shall we say to these things?" Infinite love must needs be a mystery to a finite capacity. No wonder, if angels desire to pry into this mystery, and if it be the study of the saints here, to know the height, and breadth, and length, and depth of His love, though it passeth knowledge. This is the saints' rest in the fruition of God by love.

IX

Lastly, the affection of joy hath not the least share in this fruition. It is that which all the rest lead to, and conclude in; even the unconceivable complacency which the blessed feel in their seeing, knowing, loving, and being beloved of God. The delight of the senses here cannot be known by expressions as they are felt. How much less this joy! This is the "white stone, which none knoweth but he that receiveth"; and if there be any joy which the stranger meddleth not with, then surely this, above all, is it. All Christ's ways of mercy tend to and end in the saints' joys. He wept, sorrowed, suffered that they might rejoice; He sendeth the Spirit to be their comforter; He multiplieth promises, He discovers their future happiness that their joy may be full. He aboundeth to them in mercies of all sorts; He maketh them lie down in green pastures, and leadeth them by the still waters; yea, openeth to them the fountain of Living Waters, that their joy may be full, that they may thirst no more, and that it may spring up in them to everlasting life.

Yea, He causeth them to suffer that He may cause them to rejoice; and chasteneth them that He may give them rest; and maketh them, as He did Himself,

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“to drink of the brook in the way, that they may lift up the head.” And lest, after all this, they should neglect their own comforts, He maketh it their duty, and presseth it on them, commanding them to “rejoice in Him alway, and again to rejoice.” And He never brings them into so low a condition wherein He leaves them not more cause of joy than of sorrow. And hath the Lord such a care of our comfort here, where the Bridegroom being from us, we must mourn? Oh, what will that joy be, where the soul being perfectly prepared for joy, and joy prepared by Christ for the soul, it shall be our work, our business, eternally to rejoice! And it seems the saints’ joy shall be greater than the damned’s torment; for their torment is the torment of creatures, prepared for the devil and his angels; but our joy is the joy of our Lord; even our Lord’s own joy shall we enter. “And the same glory which the Father giveth Him, doth the Son give to them.” And “to sit with Him in His throne, even as He is set down on His Father’s throne.”

What sayest thou to all this, O thou sad and drooping soul? Thou that now spendest thy days in sorrow, and thy breath in sighings, and turnest all thy voice into groanings; who knowest no garments but sackcloth, no food but the bread and water of affliction; who minglest thy bread with tears, and drinkest the tears which thou weepest, what sayest thou to this great change? From all sorrow to more than all joy? Thou poor soul, who prayest for joy, waitest for joy, complainest for want of joy, longest for joy, why, then thou shalt have full joy, as much as thou canst hold, and more than ever thou thoughtest on or thy heart desired. And, in the meantime, walk carefully, watch constantly, and then let God measure out thy times and degrees of joy. It may be He keeps them till thou have more need; thou mayest

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better lose thy comfort, than thy safety; if thou shouldst die full of fears and sorrows, it will be but a moment, and they are all gone, and concluded in joy unconceivable. As the joy of the hypocrite, so the fears of the upright, are but for a moment. And as their hopes are but golden dreams, which when death awakes, then do all perish, and their hopes die with them; so the saints' doubts and fears are but terrible dreams, which, when they die, do all vanish; and they awake in joyful glory. For "God's anger endureth but a moment, but in His favour is life; weeping may endure for a night," darkness and sadness go together, "but joy cometh in the morning." O blessed morning, thrice blessed morning!

Poor, humble, drooping soul, how would it fill thee with joy now, if a voice from heaven should tell thee of the love of God; of the pardon of thy sins; and should assure thee of thy part in these joys? Oh, what then will thy joy be, when thy actual possession shall convince thee of thy title, and thou shalt be in heaven before thou art well aware; when the angels shall bring thee to Christ, and when Christ shall, as it were, take thee by the hand, and lead thee into the purchased possession, and bid thee welcome to His rest, and present thee unspotted before His Father, and give thee thy place about His throne! Poor sinner, what sayest thou to such a day as this? Wilt thou not be almost ready to draw back, and to say, What, I, Lord; I the unworthy neglecter of Thy grace; I the unworthy disesteemer of Thy blood, and slighter of Thy love! Must I have this glory? "Make me a hired servant; I am no more worthy to be called a son." But love will have it so; therefore must thou enter into His joy.

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X

And it is not thy joy only, it is a mutual joy as well as a mutual love. Is there such joy in heaven at thy conversion, and will there be none at thy glorification? Will not the angels welcome thee thither, and congratulate thy safe arrival? Yea, it is the joy of Jesus Christ; for now He hath the end of His undertaking, labour, suffering, dying, when we have our joys; when He is "glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe." We are His seed, and the fruit of His soul's travail, which when He seeth He will be satisfied. This is Christ's harvest, when He shall reap the fruit of His labours; and when He seeth it was not in vain, it will not repent Him concerning His sufferings; but He will rejoice over His purchased inheritance, and His people shall rejoice in Him.

Yea, the Father Himself puts on joy too in our joy. As we grieve His Spirit, and weary Him with our iniquities; so is He rejoiced in our good. Oh how quickly here He doth spy a returning prodigal, even afar off! How doth He run and meet Him! And with what compassion falls He on his neck, and kisseth him, and puts on him the best robe, and a ring on his hand, and his shoes on his feet, and spares not to kill the fatted calf that they may eat and be merry. This is indeed a happy meeting; but nothing to the embracements and the joy of that last and great meeting.

Yea more yet; as God doth mutually love and joy, so He makes this His rest, as it is our rest. Did He appoint a Sabbath because He rested from six days' work, and saw all good, and very good? What an eternal Sabbathism then, when the work of redemption, sanctification, preservation, glorification are all finished, and His work

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more perfect than ever, and very good indeed! So the Lord is said to rejoice, and to take pleasure in His people. O Christians, write these words in letters of gold. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee, is mighty; He will save; He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing."¹ Oh, well may we then rejoice in our God with joy, and rest in our love, and joy in Him with singing. See Isa. lxx. 18, 19.

And now look back upon all this; I say to thee, as the angel to John, "What hast thou seen?" Or if yet thou perceive not, draw nearer, come up higher, "come and see"; dost thou fear thou hast been all this while in a dream? "Why, these are the true sayings of God." Dost thou fear, as the disciples, that thou hast seen but a ghost instead of Christ? A shadow instead of rest? Why, come near and feel. A shadow contains not those substantial blessings, nor rests upon the basis of such a foundation-truth and sure word of promise, as you have seen these do. Go thy way now, and tell the disciples, and tell the humble drooping souls thou meetest with, that thou hast in this glass seen heaven; that the Lord indeed is risen, and hath here appeared to thee; and behold He is gone before us into rest; and that He is now preparing a place for them, and will come again, and take them to Himself, that where He is, there they may be also. Yea, go thy ways, and tell the unbelieving world, and tell thy unbelieving heart, if they ask what is the hope thou boastest of, and what will be thy rest: Why, this is my Beloved, and my Friend, and this is my Hope, and my Rest. Call them forth and say, "Behold what love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be the sons of God," and that we should enter into our Lord's own rest.

¹ Zeph. iii. 17.

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XI

But alas! my fearful heart dares scarce proceed. Methinks I hear the Almighty's voice saying to me, as to Job, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?"

But pardon, O Lord, Thy servant's sin; I have not pried into unrevealed things, nor with audacious wits curiously searched into Thy counsels, but, indeed, I have dishonoured Thy Holiness, wronged Thine Excellency, disgraced Thy saints' glory by my own exceeding disproportionable pourtraying. I bewail from my heart that my conceivings fall so short, my apprehensions are so dull, my thoughts so mean, my affections so stupid, and my expressions so low and unbecoming such a glory. But I have only heard by the hearing of the ear. Oh, let Thy servant see Thee and possess these joys, and then I shall have more suitable conceivings, and shall give Thee fuller glory, and abhor my present self, and disclaim and renounce all these imperfections. "I have now uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.¹ Yet I believed, and therefore spake. Remember with whom Thou hast to do; what canst Thou expect from dust, but levity? Or from corruption, but defilement? Our foul hands will leave, where they touch, the marks of their uncleanness; and most on those things that are most pure. "I know Thou wilt be sanctified in them that come nigh Thee, and before all the people Thou wilt be glorified."² And if Thy jealousy excluded from that land of rest Thy servants Moses and Aaron, because they sanctified Thee not in the midst of Israel,³ what, then, may I expect?

¹ Job xlii. 3.

² Lev. x. 3.

³ Num. xx. 12; Deut. xxxii. 51.

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But though the weakness and unreverence be the fruit of mine own corruption, yet the fire is from 'Thine altar, and the work of Thy commanding. I looked not into Thine ark, nor put forth my hand unto it without Thee. Oh therefore wash away these stains also in the blood of the Lamb; and let not jealousy burn us up: lest Thou affright Thy people away from Thee, and make them in their discouragement to cry out, "How shall the ark of God come to us?"¹ "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?"² Who shall approach and dwell with the consuming fire? Imperfect, or none, must be Thy service here. Oh take Thy Son's excuse, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

¹ 2 Sam. vi. 9.

² 1 Sam. vi. 20.

CHAPTER V

THE FOUR GREAT PREPARATIVES TO OUR REST

HAVING thus opened to you a window toward the temple, and showed you a small glimpse of the back parts of that resemblance of the saints' rest, which I had seen in the Gospel-glass; it follows that we proceed to view a little the adjuncts, and blessed properties of this rest. But alas, this little which I have seen, makes me cry out with the prophet Isaiah, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Yet if He will send and touch my lips with a coal from the altar of His Son, and say, "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged," I shall then speak boldly; and if He ask, "Whom shall I send?" I shall gladly answer, "Here am I, send me." And why doth my trembling heart draw back? Surely the Lord is not now so terrible and inaccessible, nor the passage of Paradise so blocked up, as when the law and curse reigned. Wherefore finding, beloved Christians, "that the new and living way is consecrated for us, through the veil, the flesh of Christ, by which we may with boldness enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, I shall draw near with the fuller assurance; and finding the flaming sword removed, shall look again into the Paradise of our God; and because I know that this is no forbidden fruit; and withal that it is good for food, and pleasant to the spiritual eyes, and a tree to be

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desired to make one truly wise and happy; I shall take (through the assistance of the Spirit) and eat thereof myself, and give to you, according to my power, that you may eat. For you, Christians, is this food prepared, this wine broached, this fountain opened; and the message my Master sends you, is this hearty welcome, which you shall have in His own words, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!" And surely it is neither manners nor wisdom for you or me to draw back or to demur, upon such an invitation.

And first, let us consider of the eminent antecedents, the great preparations; that notable introduction to this rest; for the porch of this temple is exceeding glorious, and the gate of it is called "beautiful." And here offer themselves to our distinct observation these four things, as the four corners of this porch.

1. The most glorious coming and appearing of the Son of God.

2. His powerful and wonderful raising of our bodies from the dust, and uniting them again with the soul.

3. His public and solemn proceedings in their judgment, where they shall be justified and acquit before all the world.

4. His solemn celebration of their coronation, and His enthronising of them in their glory.

Follow but this fourfold stream unto the head, and it will bring you just to the garden of Eden.

I

And well may the coming of Christ be reckoned into His people's glory, and enumerated with those ingredients that compound this precious antidote of rest; for to this end it is intended, and to this end it is of apparent necessity.

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For His people's sake He sanctified Himself to His office; for their sake He came into the world, suffered, died, rose, ascended; and for their sake it is that He will return. Whether His own exaltation or theirs were His primary intention, is a question, though of seeming usefulness, yet so unresolved (for ought I have found) in Scripture, that I dare not scan it, for fear of pressing into the Divine secrets, and approaching too near the inaccessible light. I find Scripture mentioning both ends distinctly and conjunctly, but not comparatively. This is most clear, that to this end will Christ come again to receive His people to Himself, "that where He is, there they may be also." The Bridegroom's departure was not upon divorce; He did not leave us with a purpose to return no more. He hath left pledges enough to assure us; we have His Word in pawn, His many promises, His sacraments, which show forth His death till He come, and His spirit to direct, sanctify, and comfort till He return. We have frequent tokens of love from Him to show us He forgets not His purpose, nor us. We behold the forerunners of His coming, foretold by Himself, daily come to pass. We see the fig-tree put forth her branches, and therefore know the summer is nigh. We see the fields white unto harvest; and though the riotous world say: "Our Lord will be long a-coming," yet let the saints lift up their heads, for their redemption draweth nigh.

Alas, fellow-Christians, what should we do if our Lord should not return? What a case are we here left in! What? Leave us among wolves, and in the lion's den, among a generation of serpents, and here forget us! Did He buy us so dear, and then cast us off so? To leave us sinning, suffering, groaning, dying daily, and come no more at us! It cannot be; never fear it; it cannot be. This is like our unkind dealing with Christ, who when we feel ourselves warm in the world, care not for coming at

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Him; but this is not like Christ's dealing with us. He that would come to suffer, will surely come to triumph; and He that would come to purchase, will surely come to possess. Alas, where else were all our hopes; what were become of our faith, our prayers, our tears, and our waiting? What were all the patience of the saints worth to them? Were we not left of all men most miserable? Christians, hath Christ made us forsake all the world, and be forsaken of all the world; to hate all, and to be hated of all; and all this for Him, that we might have Him instead of all; and will He, think you, after all this forget us, and forsake us Himself? Far be such a thought from our hearts!

But why stayed He not with His people while He was here? Why, must not the Comforter be sent? Was not the work on earth done? Must He not receive the recompense of reward, and enter into His glory? Must He not take possession in our behalf? Must He not go to prepare a place for us? Must He not intercede with the Father; and plead His sufferings; and be filled with the Spirit to send it forth; and receive authority to subdue His enemies? Our abode here is short; if He had stayed on earth, what would it have been to enjoy Him for a few days, and then die? But He hath more in heaven to dwell among; even the spirits of the just of many generations there made perfect. Besides, He will have us live by faith, and not by sight.

O fellow-Christians, what a day will that be, when we who have been kept prisoners by sin, by sinners, by the grave, shall be fetched out by the Lord Himself; when Christ shall come from Heaven to plead with His enemies, and set His captives free! It will not be such a coming as His first was, in meanness, and poverty, and contempt. He will not come to be spit upon, and buffeted, and scorned, and crucified again. He will not come, O

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careless world, to be slighted and neglected by you any more. And yet that coming, which was necessarily in infirmity and reproach for our sakes, wanted not its glory. If the angels of heaven must be the messengers of that coming, as being "tidings of joy to all people": and the heavenly host must go before, or accompany, for the celebration of His nativity, and must praise God with that solemnity, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men," oh then with what shoutings will angels and saints at that day proclaim, "Glory to God, and peace and good will towards men"! If the stars of Heaven must lead men from remote parts of the world to come to worship a child in a manger, how will the glory of His next appearing constrain all the world to acknowledge His sovereignty! If the King of Israel, riding on an ass, be entertained into Jerusalem with hosannahs, "Blessed be the king that comes in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest," oh with what proclamations of blessings, peace and glory will He come toward the New Jerusalem! If when He was in the form of a servant, they cry out, "What manner of man is this that both wind and sea obey him," what will they say when they shall see Him coming in His glory, and the heavens and the earth obey Him? "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

O Christians, it was comfortable to you to hear from Him, to believe in Him, and hope for Him. What will it be to see Him? The promise of His coming, and our deliverance, was comfortable. What will it be thus to see Him, with all the glorious attendance of His angels, come in person to deliver us? "The mighty God the Lord hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the

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sun, to the going down thereof; out of Zion the perfection of beauty God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people. Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice; and the heavens shall declare His righteousness; for God is Judge Himself.”¹

This coming of Christ is frequently mentioned in the prophets, as the great support of His people's spirits till then. And whenever the apostles would quicken to duty, or comfort and encourage to patient waiting, they usually do it by mentioning Christ's coming. Why then do we not use more this cordial consideration whenever we want support and comfort? To think and speak of that day with horror doth well beseem the impenitent sinner, but ill the believing saint. Such may be the voice of a believer, but it is not the voice of faith. Christians, what do we believe, and hope, and wait for, but to see that day? This is Paul's encouragement to moderation, to “rejoicing in the Lord alway; the Lord is at hand.” It is “to all them that love His appearing, that the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give the crown of righteousness at that day.” Dost thou so long to have Him come into thy soul with comfort and life, and takest thyself but for a forlorn orphan while He seemeth absent? And dost thou not much more long for that coming which shall perfect thy life, and joy, and glory? Dost thou so rejoice after some short and slender enjoyment of Him in thy heart? Oh, how wilt thou then rejoice! How full of joy was that blessed martyr Mr. Glover, with the discovery of Christ to his soul, after long doubting and waiting

¹ Ps. l. 1-6.

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in sorrows, so that he cries out, "He is come, He is come!" If thou have but a dear friend returned, that hath been far and long absent; how do all run out to meet him with joy! Oh, saith the child, "My father is come!" saith the wife, "My husband is come!" and shall not we, when we behold our Lord in His majesty returning, cry out, "He is come! He is come!" Shall the wicked with unconceivable horror behold Him, and cry out, oh, yonder is He whose blood we neglected, whose grace we resisted, whose counsels we refused, whose government we cast off! And shall not then the saints with unconceivable gladness, cry out, oh, yonder is He whose blood redeemed us, whose spirit cleansed us, whose law did govern us! Yonder comes He in whom we trusted, and now we see He hath not deceived our trust; He for whom we long waited, and now we see we have not waited in vain. O cursed corruption, that would have had us turn to the world and present things, and give up our hopes, and say, Why should we wait for the Lord any longer? Now we see, that, "blessed are all they that wait for Him."

Believe it, fellow-Christians, this day is not far off. "For yet a little while, and He that comes will come, and will not tarry." And though the unbelieving world and the unbelief of thy heart may say, as those atheistical scoffers, "Where is the promise of His coming? Do not all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation?" Yet let us know, "The Lord is not slack of His promise, as some men count slackness; one day with Him is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." I have thought on it many a time, as a small emblem of that day, when I have seen a prevailing army drawing towards the towns and castles of the enemy. Oh with what glad hearts do all the poor prisoners within hear

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the news, and behold their approach! How do they run up to their prison windows, and thence behold their friends with joy! How glad are they at the roaring report of that cannon, which is the enemy's terror! How do they clap each other on the back, and cry, "Deliverance, deliverance!" While in the meantime the late insulting, scorning, cruel enemies begin to speak them fair, and beg their favour; but all in vain, for they are not at the dispose of prisoners, but of the General. Their fair usage may make their conditions somewhat the more easy, but yet they are used as enemies still. Oh, when the conquering Lion of the tribe of Judah shall appear with all the hosts of heaven, when he shall surprise the careless world, as a thief in the night, when as the lightning which appeareth in the east, and shineth even to the west, so they shall behold Him coming, what a change will the sight of this appearance work, both with the world, and with the saints!

Now, poor deluded world, where is your mirth and your jollity? Now, where is your wealth and your glory? Where is that profane and careless heart, that slighted Christ and His spirit, and out-sate all the offers of grace? Now where is that tongue that mocked the saints, and jeered the holy ways of God, and made merry with His people's imperfections, and their own slanders? What? Was it not you? Deny it if you can. Your heart condemns you, and "God is greater than your heart," and will condemn you much more. Even when you say, "Peace and safety, then destruction cometh upon you, as travail upon a woman with child; and you shall not escape." Perhaps if you had known just the day and hour when the Son of Man would have come, then you would have been found praying, or the like; but you should have watched,

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and been ready, because you know not the hour. But for that faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord, when He comes shall find so doing; oh "blessed is that servant; verily I say unto you" (for Christ hath said it) "He shall make him ruler over all His goods." "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, he shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Oh how should it then be the character of a Christian, "to wait for the Son of God from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come"; and with all faithful diligence, to prepare to meet our Lord with joy; and seeing His coming is of purpose "to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe," oh, what thought should glad our hearts more than the thought of that day?

A little while indeed we have not "seen Him, but yet a little while and we shall see Him." For He hath said, "I will not leave you comfortless, but will come unto you." We were comfortless, should He not come. And while we daily gaze and look up to heaven after Him, let us remember what the angels said, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." While He is now out of sight, it is a sword to our souls, while they daily ask us, "Where is your God?" But then we shall be able to answer our enemies; See, O proud sinners, yonder is our Lord. Oh now, Christians, should we not put up that petition heartily, "Let Thy kingdom come," for "the Spirit and the bride say, come"; and let every Christian, that heareth and readeth say, Come; and our Lord Himself saith, "Surely I come quickly." "Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus."

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II

The second stream that leadeth to Paradise is that great work of Jesus Christ, in raising our bodies from the dust, uniting them again unto the soul. A wonderful effect of infinite power and love. Yea, wonderful indeed, saith unbelief, if it be true. What, saith the Atheist and Sadducee, shall all these scattered bones and dust become a man! A man drowned in the sea is eaten by fishes, and they by men again, and these men by worms; what is become of the body of that first man; shall it rise again? Thou fool (for so Paul calls thee), dost thou dispute against the power of the Almighty? Wilt thou pose Him with thy sophistry? Dost thou object difficulties to the Infinite Strength? Thou blind mole; thou silly worm; thou little piece of creeping, breathing clay; thou dust; thou nothing; knowest thou who it is, whose power thou dost question? If thou shouldst see Him, thou wouldst presently die. If He should come and dispute His cause with thee, couldst thou bear it? Or if thou shouldst hear His voice, couldst thou endure?

But come thy way, let me take thee by the hand, and do thou a little follow me; and let me with reverence, as Elihu, plead for God; and for that power whereby I hope to arise. Seest thou this great massive body of the earth? What beareth it? and upon what foundation doth it stand? Seest thou this vast ocean of waters? What limits them, and why do they not overflow and drown the earth? Whence is that constant ebbing and flowing of her tides? Wilt thou say, from the moon, or other planets? And whence have they that power of effective influence? Must thou not come to a cause of causes, that can do all things? And doth not reason require thee, to conceive of that cause as a perfect intelligence, and voluntary agent, and not such a blind

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worker and empty notion as that "nothing" is which thou callest nature? Look upwards; seest thou that glorious body of light, the sun; how many times bigger is it than all the earth; and yet how many thousand miles doth it run in one minute of an hour, and that without weariness, or failing a moment! What thinkest thou? Is not that power able to effect thy resurrection which doth all this? Dost thou not see as great work as a resurrection every day before thine eyes, but that the commonness makes thee not admire them. Read but the xxxvii., xxxviii., xxxix., xl., xli. chapters of Job, and take heed of disputing against God again for ever. Knowest thou not that with Him all things are possible? Can He make a camel go through the eye of a needle? Can He make such a blind sinner as thou to see, and such a proud heart as thine to stoop, and such an earthly mind as thine heavenly, and subdue all that thy fleshly foolish wisdom? And is not this as great a work as to raise thee from the dust? Wast thou not any unlikelier to be, when thou wast nothing, than thou shalt be when thou art dead? Is it not as easy to raise the dead as to make heaven and earth, and all of nothing? But if thou be unpersuadable, all I say to thee more is, as the prophet to the prince of Samaria, "Thou shalt see that day with thine eyes," but little to thy comfort; for that which is the day of relief to the saints shall be a day of revenge on thee. There is a rest prepared, but thou canst not "enter in because of unbelief."

But for thee, O believing soul, never think to comprehend in the narrow capacity of thy shallow brain the counsels and ways of thy Maker; no more than thou canst contain in thy fist the vast ocean. He never intended thee such a capacity when He made thee, and gave thee that measure thou hast; no more than He intended to enable that worm, or this post, or stone, fully

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to know thee. Therefore when He speaks, dispute not, but believe, as Abraham, who “considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, nor yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was also able to perform”; and “so against hope, believed in hope.” So, look thou not on the dead bones, and dust, and difficulties, but at the promise. Martha knew her brother should rise again at the resurrection, but if Christ say he shall rise before, it must be believed.

Come then, fellow-Christians, let us contentedly commit these carcasses to the dust; that prison shall not long contain them. Let us lie down in peace and take our rest; it will not be an everlasting night, or endless sleep. What if we go out of the troubles and stirs of the world, and enter into those chambers of dust, and the doors be shut upon us, and we hide ourselves, as it were, for a little moment, “until the indignation be overpast”? Yet, “behold the Lord cometh out of His place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity”; and then the earth shall disclose us, and the dust shall hide us no more. As sure as we awake in the morning when we have slept out the night, so sure shall we then awake. And what if in the meantime we must be loathsome lumps, cast out of the sight of men, as not fit to be endured among the living! What if our carcasses become as vile as those of the beasts that perish! What if our bones be digged up, and scattered about the pit-brink, and worms consume our flesh! Yet we know our Redeemer liveth, and shall stand at the last on earth, and we shall see Him with these eyes.

And withal it is but this flesh that suffers all this, which hath been a clog to our souls so long; and what is

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this comely piece of flesh, which thou art loth should come to so base a state? It is not an hundred years since it was either nothing, or an invisible something. And is it not most of it for the present, if not an appearing nothing, seeming something to an imperfect sense; yet at best a condensation of invisibles, which that they may become sensible, are become more gross, and so more vile? Where is all that fair mass of flesh and blood which thou hadst before sickness consumed thee? Annihilated it is not; only resolved into its principles; show me it if thou canst. Into how small a handful of dust or ashes will that whole mass if buried or burnt, return! And into how much smaller can a chemist reduce that little, and leave thee all the rest invisible? What if God prick the bladder, and let out the wind that puffs thee up to such a substance, and resolve thee into thy principles! Doth not the seed thou sowest die before it spring?

And what cause have we to be tender of this body? Oh, what care, what labour, what grief and sorrow hath it cost us? How many a weary, painful, tedious hour? O my soul, grudge not that God should disburden thee of all this. Fear not lest He should free thee from thy fetters. Be not so loth that He should break down thy prison, and let thee go. What though some terrible earthquake go before. It is but that the foundations of the prison may be shaken, and so the doors fly open; the terror will be to thy jailor, but to thee deliverance. Oh therefore at what hour of the night soever thy Lord come, let Him find thee, though with thy feet in these stocks, yet singing praises to Him, and not fearing the time of your deliverance. If unclothing be the thing thou fearest; why, it is that thou mayst have better clothing put on. If to be turned out of doors be the thing thou fearest; why remember, then when this earthly house of thy tabernacle is dissolved, thou hast

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“a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” How willingly do our soldiers burn their huts when the siege is ended; being glad that their work is done, that they may go home and dwell in houses. Lay down then cheerfully this bag of loathsome filth, this lump of corruption; thou shalt undoubtedly receive it again in incorruption. Lay down freely this terrestrial, this natural body; believe it, thou shalt receive it again a celestial, a spiritual body. And though thou lay it down into the dirt with great dishonour, thou shalt receive it into glory with honour; and though thou art separated from it through weakness, it shall be raised again, and joined to thee in mighty power.

When the trumpet of God shall sound the call, “Come away, rise ye dead”; who shall then stay behind; who can resist the powerful command of our Lord; when He shall call to the earth and sea, “O earth, give up thy dead; O sea, give up thy dead”—then shall our Samson break for us the bonds of death. And as the ungodly shall, like toads from their holes, be drawn forth whether they will or no; so shall the godly, as prisoners of hope, awake out of sleep, and come with joy to meet their Lord. The first that shall be called are the saints that sleep; and then the saints that are then alive shall be changed. For Paul hath told us by the word of the Lord, “that they which are alive, and remain till the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then they which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, O Christians, comfort one another with these words.”¹

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 15-18.

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This is one of the Gospel mysteries: "That we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal, immortality. Then is death swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."¹ Triumph now, O Christian, in these promises; thou shalt shortly triumph in their performance. For this is the day that the Lord will make; "we shall be glad and rejoice therein." The grave that could not keep our Lord cannot keep us; He arose for us, and by the same power will cause us to arise. "For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again; even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with Him." Can the head live, and the body and members remain dead? Oh, write those sweet words upon thy heart, Christian: "Because I live, ye shall live also." As sure as Christ lives, ye shall live; and as sure as He is risen, we shall rise. Else the dead perish. Else what is our hope; what advantageth all our duty or suffering? Else the sensual epicure were one of the wisest men; and what better are we than our beasts? Surely our knowledge, more than theirs, would but increase our sorrows; and our dominion over them is no great felicity. The servant hath oft-times a better life than his master, because he hath few of his master's cares. And our dead carcasses are no more comely, nor yield a sweeter savour than theirs. But we have a sure ground of hope. And besides this life, "we have a life that is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." Oh let us not be as the purblind

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 51-57.

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world, that cannot see afar off; let us never look at the grave, but let us see the resurrection beyond it. Faith is quick-sighted, and can see as far as that is; yea, as far as eternity. Therefore let our hearts be glad, and our glory rejoice, and our flesh also shall rest in hope; for He will not leave us in the grave, nor suffer us still to see corruption. Yea, “therefore, let us be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know our labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

God made not death, but Christ overcame it, when sin had introduced it. Death is from ourselves, but life from the Author and Lord of life. “The devil had the power of death till he was overcome by death.”¹ But He that “liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore, hath now the keys of death and hell.” That the very damned live is to be ascribed to Him; that they live in misery is long of themselves. Not that it is more desirable to them to live miserably, as there they must do, than not to live. But as God’s glory is His chief, if not only, end in all His works, so was it the Mediator’s chief end in the world’s reparation. They shall therefore live, whether they will or no, for God’s glory, though they live not to their own comfort, because they would not.

But whatsoever is the cause of the wicked’s resurrection, this sufficeth to the saints’ comfort, that resurrection to glory is only the fruit of Christ’s death; and this fruit they shall certainly partake of. The promise is sure: “All that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and come forth.”² “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent Christ, that of all which He hath given Him, He should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.”³ “And that every one that believeth on the Son may have everlasting life, and He will raise him up at

¹ Heb. ii. 14, 15.

² John v. 28.

³ John vi. 39.

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the last day." If the prayers of the prophet could raise the Shunamite's dead child; and if the dead soldier revived at the touch of the prophet's bones; how certainly shall the will of Christ, and the power of His death raise us. The voice that said to Jairus' daughter, "Arise"; and to Lazarus, "Arise, and come forth," can do the like for us. If His death immediately raised the dead bodies of many saints in Jerusalem, if He gave power to His apostles to raise the dead; then what doubt of our resurrection?

And thus, Christian, thou seest that, Christ having sanctified the grave by His burial, and conquered death, and broke the ice for us, a dead body, and a grave, is not now so horrid a spectacle to a believing eye. But as our Lord was nearest His resurrection and glory when He was in the grave, even so are we. And He that hath promised to make our bed in sickness will make the dust as a bed of roses. Death shall not dissolve the union betwixt Him and us; nor turn away His affections from us. But in the morning of eternity He will send His angels, yea, come Himself, and roll away the stone, and unseal our graves, and reach us His hand, and deliver us alive to our Father. Why, then, doth the approach of death so "cast thee down, O my soul, and why art thou thus disquieted within me?" The grave is not hell; if it were, yet there is thy Lord present; and thence should His merit and mercy fetch thee out. "Thy sickness is not unto death," though I die, "but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." Say not then, He lifted me up to cast me down, and hath raised me high that my fall may be the lower; but He casts me down that He may lift me up, and layeth me low that I may rise the higher. An hundred experiences have sealed this truth unto thee, that the greatest dejections are intended but for advantages to thy greatest dignity and the Redeemer's glory.

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III

The third part of this prologue to the saints' rest is the public and solemn process at their judgment, where they shall first themselves be acquit and justified, and then with Christ judge the world. Public I may well call it; for all the world must there appear. Young and old, of all estates and nations, that ever were from the creation to that day, must here come and receive their doom. The judgment shall be set, and the books opened, and the Book of Life produced; "and the dead shall be judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works, and whosoever is not found written in the Book of Life, is cast into the lake of fire."

O terrible, O joyful day! Terrible to those that have let their lamps go out, and have not watched, but forgot the coming of their Lord; joyful to the saints, whose waiting and hope was to see this day. Then shall the world behold the goodness and severity of the Lord; on them who perish, severity; but to His chosen, goodness; when every one must give an account of his stewardship; and every talent of time, health, wit, mercies, afflictions, means, warnings, must be reckoned for; when the sins of youth, and those which they had forgotten, and their secret sins shall all be laid open before angels and men; when they shall see all their friends, wealth, old delights, all their confidences and false hopes of heaven to forsake them; when they shall see the Lord Jesus whom they neglected, whose Word they disobeyed, whose ministers they abused, whose servants they hated, now sitting to judge them; when their own consciences shall cry out against them, and call to their remembrance all their misdoings. Remember at such a time such or such a

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sin; at such a time Christ sued hard for thy conversion; the minister pressed it home to thy heart, thou wast touched to the quick with the Word; thou didst purpose and promise returning, and yet thou cast off all. When an hundred sermons, Sabbaths, mercies, shall each step up and say, "I am witness against the prisoner"; "Lord, I was abused, and I was neglected"; oh, which way will the wretched sinner look, oh who can conceive the terrible thoughts of his heart? Now the world cannot help him; his old companions cannot help him; the saints neither can nor will; only the Lord Jesus can; but oh, there is the soul-killing misery, He will not: nay, without violating the truth of His word, He cannot; though otherwise, in regard of His absolute power, He might. The time was, sinner, when Christ would, and you would not; and now, oh fain would you, and He will not. Then He followed thee in vain with intreaties; oh poor sinner, what dost thou? wilt thou sell thy soul and Saviour for a lust? look to Me, and be saved; return, why wilt thou die: but thy ear and heart was shut up against all. Why, now thou shalt cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us"; and He shall say, "Depart, I know you not, ye workers of iniquity." Now mercy, mercy, Lord; oh but it was mercy you so long set light by, and now your day of mercy is over. What then remains but to cry out to the mountains, "Fall upon us; and the hills, oh, cover us from the presence of Him that sits upon the throne!" But all in vain; for thou hast the Lord of mountains and hills for enemy, whose voice they will obey, and not thine. Sinner, make not light of this; for as thou livest, except a thorough change and coming in to Christ prevent it (which God grant) thou shalt shortly, to thy unconceivable horror, see that day.

O wretch, will thy cups then be wine or gall; will they be sweet or bitter; will it comfort thee to think of all

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thy merry days, and how pleasantly thy time slipped away; will it do thee good to think how rich thou wast, and how honourable thou wast; or will it not rather wound thy very soul to remember thy folly; and make thee with anguish of heart, and rage against thyself, to cry out, O wretch, where was mine understanding? Didst thou make so light of that sin that now makes thee tremble? How couldst thou hear so lightly of the redeeming blood of the Son of God? How couldst thou quench so many motions of His Spirit, and stifle so many quickening thoughts as were cast into thy soul? What took up all that life's time which thou hadst given thee to make sure work against this day; what took up all thy heart, thy love and delight, which should have been laid out on the Lord Jesus! Hadst thou room in thy heart for the world, thy friend, thy flesh, thy lusts, and none for Christ? O wretch, whom hast thou to love but Him? What hadst thou to do, but to seek Him, and cleave to Him, and enjoy Him? Oh, wast thou not told of this dreadful day a thousand times, till the commonness of that doctrine made thee weary? How couldst thou slight such warnings, and rage against the minister, and say he preacheth damnation? Had it not been better to have heard and prevented it, than now to endure it? Oh, now for one offer of Christ, for one sermon, for one day of grace more; but too late, alas, too late!

Poor careless sinner, I did not think here to have said so much to thee; for my business is to refresh the saints; but if these lines do fall into thy hands, and thou vouchsafe the reading of them, I here "charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom," that thou make haste and get alone, and set thyself sadly to ponder on these things; ask thy heart, Is this

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true, or is it not; is there such a day, and must I see it? Oh what do I then; why trifle I; is it not time, full time, that I had made sure of Christ and comfort long ago; should I sit still another day, who have lost so many; had I not rather be found one of the holy, faithful, watchful Christians than a worldling, a good fellow, or a man of honour; why should I not then choose it now; will it be best then, and is it not best now? Oh think of these things! A few sad hours spent in serious forethoughts is a cheap prevention; it is worth this, or it is worth nothing.

Friend, I profess to thee, from the word of the Lord, that of all thy sweet sins there will then be nothing left, but the sting in thy conscience, which will never out through all eternity; except the blood of Christ believed in, and valued above all the world, do now, in this day of grace, get it out. Thy sin is like a beautiful harlot; while she is young and fresh she hath many followers; but when old and withered every one would shut their hands of her; she is only their shame; none would know her. So will it be with thee; now thou wilt venture on it, whatever it cost thee; but then, when men's rebellious ways are charged on their souls to death; oh, that thou couldst rid thy hands of it; oh, that thou couldst say, Lord, it was not I; "Lord, when saw we Thee hungry, naked, imprisoned?" how fain would they put it off! Then sin will be sin indeed, and grace will be grace indeed. Then say the foolish virgins, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are out; oh, for some of your faith and holiness, which we were wont to mock at!" But what is the answer, "Go buy for yourselves; we have little enough; would we had rather much more."

Then they will be glad of anything like grace; and if they can but produce any external familiarity with Christ, or common gifts, how glad are they; Lord, we

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have eat and drunk in 'Thy presence, prophesied in Thy Name, cast out devils, done many wonderful works; we have been baptized, heard sermons, professed Christianity; but alas, this will not serve the turn; He will profess to them, I never knew you, depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity. O dead-hearted sinner, is all this nothing to thee? As sure as Christ is true, this is true; take it in His own words: "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory; . . . and before Him shall be gathered all nations; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on the right hand, and the goats on the left"; and so on, as you may read in the text.¹

But why tremblest thou, O humble, gracious soul? Cannot the enemies and slights of Christ be foretold their doom but thou must quake? Do I make sad the soul that God would not have sad? Doth not thy Lord know His own sheep, "who have heard His voice and followed Him"? He that would not lose the family of one Noah in a common deluge, when him only He had found faithful in all the earth; He that would not overlook one Lot in Sodom; nay, that could do nothing till he were forth; will He forget thee at that day? "Thy Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished"; He knoweth how to make the same day the greatest for terror to his foes, and yet the greatest for joy to His people. He ever intended it for the great distinguishing and separating day, wherein both love and fury should be manifested to the highest. Oh then, "let the heavens rejoice, the sea, the earth, the floods, the hills; for the Lord cometh to judge the earth": "with righteousness shall He judge the world,

¹ Matt. xxv. 31-33.

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and the people with equity"; but especially, "let Zion hear, and be glad, and her children rejoice"; for, "when God arises to judgment," it is "to save the meek of the earth." They have judged and condemned themselves many a day in heart-breaking confessions, and therefore shall not be judged to condemnation by the Lord; "for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And, "who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Shall the law? Why, "whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law"; "but we are not under the law, but under grace": "for the law of the spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus, hath made us free from the law of sin and death." Or shall conscience? Why, we were long ago "justified by faith, and so have peace with God," "and have our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience"; "and the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." "It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn?"

If our judge condemn us not, who shall? He that said to the adulterous woman, "Hath no man condemned thee? neither do I condemn thee"; He will say to us, more faithfully than Peter to Him, "Though all men deny thee, or condemn thee, I will not." "Thou hast confessed me before men, and I will confess thee before my Father, and the angels of heaven." He whose first coming was not "to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved," I am sure intends not His second coming to condemn His people, but that "they through Him might be saved." He hath given us eternal life in charter and title already, yea, and partly in possession; and will He after that condemn us? When He gave us the knowledge of His Father and Himself, He gave us "eternal life": and He hath verily told us, "that he that heareth His word,

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and believeth on Him that sent Him, hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life." Indeed if our Judge were our enemy, as He is to the world, then we might well fear. If the devil were our judge, or the ungodly were our judge, then we should be condemned as hypocrites, as heretics, as schismatics, as proud, or covetous, or what not. But our Judge is "Christ who died, yea rather who is risen again, and maketh request for us"; for, "all power is given Him in heaven and in earth," "and all things delivered into His hands," "and the Father hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man." For though God judge the world, yet the Father, immediately, without His Vicegerent Christ, "judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."

Oh, what unexpressible joy may this afford to a believer, that our dear Lord, who loveth our souls and whom our souls love, shall be our Judge? Will a man fear to be judged by his dearest friend, by a brother, by a father; or a wife by her own husband? Christian, did he come down, and suffer, and weep, and bleed, and die for thee, and will He now condemn thee? Was He judged and condemned and executed in thy stead, and now will He condemn thee Himself? Did He make a bath of His blood for thy sins, and a garment of His own righteousness for thy nakedness, and will He now open them to thy shame? Is He the undertaker for thy salvation, and will He be against thee? Hath it cost Him so dear to save thee, and will He now Himself destroy thee? Hath He done the most of the work already, in redeeming, regenerating and sanctifying, justifying, preserving and perfecting thee, and will He now undo all again? Nay, hath He begun, and will He not finish;

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hath He interceded so long for thee to the Father, and will He cast thee away Himself? If all these be likely, then fear, and then rejoice not. Oh, what an unreasonable sin is unbelief, that will charge our Lord with such unmercifulness and absurdities!

Well then, fellow-Christians, let the terror of that day be never so great, surely our Lord can mean no ill to us in all. Let it make the devils tremble, and the wicked tremble; but it shall make us to leap for joy. Let Satan accuse us, we have our answer at hand; our Surety hath discharged the debt; if He have not fulfilled the law, then let us be charged as breakers of it; if He have not suffered, then let us suffer: but if He have, we are free. Nay, our Lord will make answer for us Himself, "These are Mine, and shall be made up with My jewels: for their transgressions was I stricken, and cut off from the earth; for them was I bruised and put to grief; My soul was made an offering for their sin, and I bore their transgressions; they are My seed, and the travail of My soul; I have healed them by My stripes; I have justified them by My knowledge; they are My sheep, who shall take them out of my hands?" Yea, though the humble soul be ready to speak against itself: "Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, and fed Thee?" &c., yet will not Christ do so. This is the day of the believers' full justification. They were before made just, and esteemed just, and by faith justified in law; and this, to some, evidenced to their consciences; but now they shall both, by apology, be maintained just, and, by sentence, pronounced just actually by the lively voice of the Judge Himself; which is the most perfect justification. Their justification by faith is a giving them title in law to that apology and absolving sentence, which at that day they shall actually receive from the mouth of Christ; by which sentence, their sin, which before was pardoned in the sense of the law, is now

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perfectly pardoned, or blotted out by this ultimate judgment. Therefore well may it be called, "the time of refreshing," as being to the saints the perfecting of all their former refreshments. He who was vexed with a quarrelling conscience, an accusing world, a cursing law, is solemnly pronounced righteous by the Lord the Judge. Though he cannot plead not guilty in regard of fact; yet being pardoned, he shall be acquit by the proclamation of Christ. And that is not all, but he that was accused, as deserving hell, is pronounced a member of Christ, a son of God, and so adjudged to eternal glory. The sentence of pardon, passed by the spirit and conscience within us, was wont to be exceeding sweet; but this will fully and finally resolve the question; and leave no room for doubting again for ever. We shall more rejoice that our names are found written in the Book of Life, than if men or devils were subjected to us. And it must needs affect us deeply with the sense of our mercy and happiness, to behold the contrary condition of others. To see most of the world tremble with terror, while we triumph with joy; to hear them doomed to everlasting flames, and see them thrust into hell, when we are proclaimed heirs of the kingdom; to see our neighbours that lived in the same towns, came to the same congregations, sate in the same seats, dwelt in the same houses, and were esteemed more honourable in the world than ourselves; to see them now so differenced from us, and by the Searcher of hearts eternally separated. This, with the great magnificence and dreadfulness of the day, doth the apostle pathetically express, in 2 Thess. i. 6-10, "It is righteous with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us; when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;

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who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power," &c. And now is not here enough to make that day a welcome day, and the thoughts of it delightful to us?

But yet there is more. We shall be so far from the dread of that judgment, that ourselves shall become the judges. Christ will take His people, as it were, into commission with Him; and they shall sit and approve His righteous judgment. Oh, fear not now the reproaches, scorns and censures of those that must then be judged by us. Did you think, O wretched worldlings, that those poor despised men, whom you made your daily derision, should be your judges? Did you believe this, when you made them stand as offenders before the bar of your judgment? No more than Pilate, when he was judging Christ, did believe that he was condemning his Judge; or the Jews, when they were whipping, imprisoning, killing the apostles, did think to see them sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. "Do you not know," saith Paul, "that the saints shall judge the world?" Nay, "know you not that we shall judge angels?"¹ Surely, were it not the word of Christ that speaks it, this advancement would seem incredible, and the language arrogant. Yet even "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these saying; Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed; and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoke against Him."²

Thus shall the saints be honoured, and the "righteous have dominion in the morning." Oh, that the careless world were "but wise to consider this, and that they

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.

² Jude 14.

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would remember their latter end!" That they would be now of the same mind, as they will be when they shall see the "heavens pass away with a noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein to be burnt up"; when all shall be on fire about their ears, and all earthly glory consumed! "For the heavens and the earth which are now, are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men." But alas, when all this is said, "the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." Rejoice, therefore, O ye saints; yet watch, and what you have hold fast till your Lord come; and study that use of this doctrine which the apostle propounds: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for, and hasting to the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat."¹ But go your way, keep close with God, and wait till your change come, and till this end be; "for you shall rest, and stand in the lot at the end of the days."²

IV

The fourth antecedent, and highest step to the saints' advancement, is their solemn coronation, enthronising, and receiving into the kingdom. For as Christ their head is anointed both king and priest, so under Him are His people made unto God both kings and priests (for prophecy ceaseth) to reign, and to offer praises for ever. "The crown of righteousness, which was laid up for

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 11, 12.

² Dan. xii. 13.

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them, shall by the Lord, the righteous Judge, be given them at that day." "They have been faithful to the death, and therefore shall receive the crown of life"; and according to the improvement of their talents here, so shall their rule and dignity be enlarged. So that they are not dignified with empty titles, but real dominions. For Christ will take them and set them down with Himself on His own throne; "and will give them power over the nations, even as He received of His Father"; "and will give them the morning star." The Lord Himself will give them possession with these applauding expressions; "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

And with this solemn and blessed proclamation shall He enthrone them: "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Every word full of life and joy. "Come." This is the holding forth of the golden sceptre to warrant our approach unto this glory. Come now as near as you will; fear not the Bethshemites' judgment; for the enmity is utterly taken away. This is not such a "come" as we were wont to hear. "Come, take up your cross and follow me"; though that was sweet, yet this much more. "Ye blessed." Blessed indeed, when that mouth shall so pronounce us. For though the world hath accounted us accursed, and we have been ready to account ourselves so, yet certainly those that He blesseth are blessed, and those whom He curseth, only are cursed. And His blessing shall not be revoked; but He hath blessed us, and we shall be blessed. "Of my Father." Blessed in the Father's love as well as the Son's, for they are one. The Father hath testified His love in their election, donation to Christ, sending

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of Christ, accepting His ransom, &c., as the Son hath also testified His. "Inherit." No longer bondmen, nor servants only, nor children under age, who differ not in possession but only in title from servants. But now we are "heirs of the kingdom";¹ coheirs with Christ. "The kingdom." No less than the kingdom? Indeed to be a King of kings and Lord of lords is our Lord's own proper title; but to be kings and reign with Him is ours. The fruition of this kingdom is as the fruition of the light of the sun, each have the whole, and the rest never the less. "Prepared for you." God is the alpha as well as the omega of our blessedness. Eternal love hath laid the foundation. He prepared the kingdom for us, and then prepared us for the kingdom. This is the preparation of His counsel and decree, for the execution whereof Christ was yet to make a further preparation. "For you." Not for believers only in general, who without individual persons are nobody; nor only for you upon condition of your believing; but for you personally and determinately, for all the conditions were also prepared for you. "From the foundation of the world." Not only from the promise after Adam's fall, as some; but, as the phrase usually signifieth though not always, from eternity. These were the eternal thoughts of God's love towards us, and this is it He purposed for us.

But a great difficulty ariseth in our way. In what sense is our improvement of our talent, our well-doing, our overcoming, our harbouring, visiting, feeding Christ in His little ones, alleged as a reason of our coronation and glory? Is not it the purchased possession, and mere fruit of Christ's blood? If every man must be judged according to his works, and receive according to what they have done in the flesh, whether good or

¹ Jas. ii. 5.

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evil; and God "will render to every man according to his deeds;" and give eternal life to men if they patiently continue in well-doing; and "give right to the tree of life" and entrance into the city to the doers of His commandments; and if this last absolving sentence be the completing of our justification, and so "the doers of the law be justified," why then, what is become of free grace, or justification by faith only, of the sole righteousness of Christ to make us accepted? Then the Papists say rightly, that we are righteous by our personal righteousness, and good works concur to justification.

I did not think to have said so much upon controversy; but because the difficulty is very great, and the matter very weighty, as being near the foundation, I have in another book added to what is said before, certain brief positions, containing my thoughts on this subject; which may tend to the clearing of these and many other difficulties hereabouts, to which I refer you.

But, that the plain constant language of Scripture may not be perverted or disregarded, I only premise these advertisements by way of caution, till thou come to read the fuller answer:

1. Let not the names of men draw thee one way or other, nor make thee partial in searching for truth; dislike the men for their unsound doctrine; but call not doctrine unsound, because it is theirs; nor sound, because of the repute of the writer.

2. Know this, that as an unhumbléd soul is far apter to give too much to duty and personal righteousness than to Christ; so an humble, self-denying Christian is as likely to err on the other hand, in giving less to duty than Christ hath given, and laying all the work from himself on Christ, for fear of robbing Christ of

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the honour; and so much to look at Christ without him, and think he should look at nothing in himself, that he forgets Christ within him. As Luther said of Melancthon's self-denying humility, "*Soli Deo omnia deberi tam obstinate asserit, ut mihi plane videatur saltem in hoc errare quod Christum ipse fingat longius abesse cordi suo quam sit revera—Certe nimis nullus in hoc est Philippus.*" "He so constantly ascribes all 'to God, that to me he seems directly to err, at least in this, that he feigneth or imagineth Christ to be further off from his own heart, than indeed He is.—Certainly he is too much nothing in this."

3. Our giving to Christ more of the work than Scripture doth, or rather our ascribing it to Him out of the Scripture way and sense doth but dishonour, and not honour Him; and depress, but not exalt His free grace. While we deny the inward sanctifying work of His Spirit, and extol His free justification, which are equal fruits of His merit, we make Him an imperfect Saviour.

4. But to arrogate to ourselves any part of Christ's prerogative is most desperate of all, and no doctrine more directly overthrows the Gospel, almost, than that of justification by the merits of our own, or by works of the law.

And thus we have, by the line and plummet of Scripture, fathomed this fourfold stream, and seen the Christian safely landed in Paradise; and in this four-wheeled fiery chariot conveyed honourably to his rest. Now let us a little further view those mansions, consider his privileges, and see whether there be any glory like unto this glory; read, and judge, but not by outward appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

CHAPTER VI

THIS REST MOST EXCELLENT, DISCOVERED BY REASON

THE next thing to be handled is, the excellent properties of this Rest, and admirable attributes which, as so many jewels, shall adorn the crown of the saints. And, first, before we speak of them particularly, let us try this happiness by the rules of the philosophers, and see whether they will not approve it the most transcendently good: not as if they were a sufficient touchstone; but that both the worldling and the saint may see, when anything stands up in competition with this glory for the pre-eminence, reason itself will conclude against it. Now in order of good, the philosopher will tell you that by these rules you may know which is best.

I

That which is desired and sought for itself is better than that which is desired for something else; or the end, as such, is better than all the means. This concludeth for heaven's pre-eminence; all things are but means to that end. If anything here be excellent, it is because it is a step to that; and, the more conducive thereto, the more excellent. The salvation of our souls is the end of our faith, our hope, our diligence, of all mercies, of all ordinances, as before is proved; it is not for themselves, but for this Rest, that all these are desired and used.

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Praying is not the end of praying, nor preaching the end of preaching, nor believing the end of believing; these are but the way to Him, who is the way to this Rest. Indeed Christ Himself is both the Way and the Rest, the means and the end; singularly desirable as the way, but yet more as the end. If anything, then, that ever you saw or enjoyed appear lovely and desirable, then must its end be so much more.

II

In order of good, the last is still the best, for all good tends to perfection; the end is still the last enjoyed, though first intended. Now this Rest is the saints' last estate. Their beginning was as a grain of mustard seed, but their perfection will be an estate high and flourishing. They were taken, with David, from the sheep-fold to reign as kings for ever. Their first day was a day of small things, but their last will be an everlasting perfection. They sowed in tears, but they reap in joy. If their prosperity here, their "*res secundæ*," were desirable, much more their "*res ultimæ*," their final blessedness. Rondeletius saw a priest at Rome, who would fall down in an ecstasy, whenever he heard those words of Christ: "*Consummatum est*. It is finished." But observing him careful in his fall ever to lay his head in a soft place, he, suspecting the dissimulation, by the threats of a cudgel quickly recovered him. But methinks the forethought of that consummation and last estate we spake of should bring a considering Christian into such an unfeigned ecstasy that he should even forget the things of the flesh, and no care or fear should raise him out of it. Surely that is well which ends well, and that is good which is good at last; and therefore heaven must needs be good.

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III

Another rule is this, That whose absence or loss is the worst or the greatest evil, must needs itself be best, or the greatest good. And is there a greater loss than to lose this Rest? If you could ask the restless souls that are shut out of it, they would tell you more sensibly than I can. For as none know the sweetness like those who enjoy it, so none know the loss like those that are deprived of it. Wicked men are here senseless of the loss, because they know not what they lose, and have the delights of flesh and sense to make them up, and make them forget it; but when they shall know it to their torment, as the saints do to their joy, and when they shall see men from the east and west sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, and themselves shut out; when they shall know both what they have lost, and for what and why they lost it, surely there will be weeping, and gnashing of teeth. He that loseth riches may have more; and he that loseth honour may repair it; or if not, yet he is not undone; he that loseth life may save it; but what becomes of him that loseth God, and who or what shall repair his loss? We can bear the loss of anything below; if we have it not, we can either live without it, or die, and live eternally without it; but can we do so without God in Christ? As God gives us outward things as auctuaries, as overplus, or above measure into our bargain; so when He takes them from us, He takes away our superfluities rather than our necessities; and pareth but our nails, and toucheth not the quick; but can we so spare our part in glory? You know whose question it is, "What shall it profit a man to win all the world, and lose his own soul?" Will it prove a saving match? Or, what "shall a man

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give for the ransom of his soul"? Christians, compare but all your losses with that loss, and all your sufferings with that suffering, and I hope you will lay your hand upon your mouth, and cease your repining thoughts for ever.

IV

Another rule is this, That which cannot be given by man, or taken away by man, is ever better than that which can: and then I hope heaven will carry it. For who hath the key of the everlasting treasures? And who is the Disposer of the dignities of the saints? Who saith, "Come ye blessed," and "go ye cursed"? Is it the voice of God, or of mere man? If "every good and perfect gift cometh from above, from the Father of lights," whence then cometh the gift of eternal light with the Father? Whose privilege soever it is to be key-keepers of the visible churches here below, sure no mere man, but the Man of Sin, will challenge the keys of that kingdom, and undertake to shut out, or take in, or to dispose of that treasure of the Church. We may be beholden to men, as God's instruments, for our faith, but no further; for, "what is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom we believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" Surely, every step to that glory, every gracious gift and act, every deliverance and mercy to the Church, shall be so clearly from God that His very name shall be written in the forehead of it, and His excellent attributes stamped upon it, that he who runs may read it was the work of God; and the question may easily be answered, whether it be from heaven or of men? Much more evidently is that glory, the gift of the God of Glory? What! Can man give God, or earth and dust give heaven? Surely no.

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And as much is it beyond them to deprive us of it. Tyrants and persecutors may take away our goods, but not our chief good; our liberties here, but not that state of freedom; our heads, but not our crown. You can shut us up in prisons, and shut us out of your church and kingdom; but now shut us out of heaven if you can. Try in lower attempts. Can you deny us the light of the sun, and cause it to forbear its shining? Can you stop the influences of the planets; or deny us the dew of heaven; or command the clouds to shut up their womb; or stay the course of the flowing streams; or seal up the passages of the deep? How much less can you deprive us of our God, or deny us the light of His countenance, or stop the influences of His Spirit, or forbid the dew of His grace to fall, or stay the streams of His love, and shut up His overflowing, everflowing springs, or seal up the bottomless depth of His bounty! You can kill our bodies (if He permit you), but try whether you can reach our souls. Nay, it is not in the saints' own power to give to, or take away from, themselves this glory. So that, according to this rule, there is no state like the saints' rest. For no man can give this Rest to us, and none can take our joy from us.¹

V

Another rule is this; That is ever better or best which maketh the owner or possessor himself better or best. And sure, according to this rule, there is no state like heaven. Riches, honour, and pleasure make a man neither better nor best; grace here makes us better, but not best; that is reserved as the prerogative of glory. That is our good that doth us good; and that doth us good which makes us good; else it may be good in

¹ John xvi. 22.

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itself, but not good to us. External good is at too great a distance to be our happiness. It is not bread on our tables but in our stomachs that must nourish; nor blood upon our clothes or skin, but in the liver, heart and veins, which is our life. Nay, the things of the world are so far from making the owners good, that they prove not the least impediments thereto, and snares to the best of men. Riches and honour do seldom help to humility, but of pride they occasionally become most frequent fomenters. The difficulty is so great of conjoining graciousness with greatness, that it is next to an impossibility; and their conjunction so rare, that they are next to inconsistent.

To have a heart taken up with Christ and heaven, when we have health and abundance in the world, is neither easy nor ordinary. Though soul and body compose but one man, yet they seldom prosper both together. Therefore that is our chief good which will do us good at the heart, and that is our true glory that makes us all glorious within, and that is the blessed day which will make us holy and blessed men; which will not only beautify our house but cleanse our hearts; nor only give us new habitations and new relations, but also new souls and new bodies. The true knowing, living Christian complains more frequently and more bitterly of the wants and woes within him than without him. If you overhear his prayers, or see him in his tears, and ask him, what aileth him, he will cry out more, Oh, my dark understanding! Oh, my hard, my unbelieving heart! rather than, Oh, my dishonour, or, oh, my poverty! Therefore it is his desired place and state which affords a relief suitable to his necessities and complaints. And surely that is only this Rest.

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VI

Another rule is, That the difficulty of obtaining shows the excellency. And surely, if you consider but what it cost Christ to purchase it; what it costs the Spirit to bring men's hearts to it; what it costs ministers to persuade to it; what it costs Christians, after all this, to obtain it; and what it costs many a half-Christian, that after all, goes without it; you will say that here is difficulty, and therefore excellence. Trifles may be had at a trivial rate, and men may have damnation far more easily. It is but lie still, and sleep out our days in careless laziness. It is but take our pleasure, and mind the world, and cast away the thoughts of sin and grace and Christ and heaven and hell out of our minds; and do as the most do; and never trouble ourselves about these high things, but venture our souls upon our presumptuous conceits and hopes, and let the vessel swim which way it will; and then stream and wind and tide will all help us apace to the gulf of perdition. You may burn a hundred houses easier than build one, and kill a thousand men than make one alive. The descent is easy, the ascent not so. To bring diseases is but to cherish sloth, please the appetite, and take what most delights us; but to cure them will cost bitter pills, loathsome potions, tedious gripings, abstemious, accurate living; and perhaps all fall short too. He that made the way, and knows the way better than we, hath told us it is narrow and strait, and requires striving; and they that have paced it more truly and observantly than we, do tell us it lies through many tribulations, and is with much ado passed through. Conclude, then, it is sure somewhat worth that must cost all this.

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VII

Another rule is this, That is best which not only supplieth necessity but affordeth abundance. By necessity is meant here, that which we cannot live without; and by abundance is meant, a more perfect supply, a comfortable, not a useless abundance. Indeed it is suitable to a Christian state and use, to be scanted here, and to have only from hand to mouth; and that not only in his corporal, but in his spiritual comforts. Here we must not be filled full, that so our emptiness may cause hungering, and our hungering cause seeking and craving, and our craving testify our dependence and occasion receiving, and our receiving occasion thanks returning; and all advance the glory of the Giver. But when we shall be brought to the well-head, and united close to the overflowing fountain, we shall then thirst no more, because we shall be empty no more. Surely, if those blessed souls did not abound in their blessedness, they would never so abound in praises. Such blessing and honour and glory and praise to God would never accompany common mercies; all those alleluias are not, sure, the language of needy men. Now we are poor, we speak supplications; and our beggar's tone discovers our low condition; all our language almost is complaining and craving, our breath fighting, and our life a labouring. But sure where all this is turned into eternal praising and rejoicing, the case must needs be altered, and all wants supplied and forgotten. I think their hearts full of joy and their mouths full of thanks, proves their state abounding, full of blessedness.

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VIII

Reason concludes that for the best, which is so in the judgment of the best and wisest men. Though it is true, the judgment of imperfect man can be no perfect rule of truth or goodness, yet God revealeth this good to all on whom He will bestow it, and hides not from His people the end they should aim at and attain. If the holiest men are the best and wisest, then their lives tell you their judgments; and their unwearied labour and sufferings for this Rest, shows you they take it for the perfection of their happiness. If men of greatest experience be the wisest men, and they that have tried both estates; then surely it is vanity and vexation that is found below, and solid happiness and rest above. If dying men are wiser than others, who by the world's forsaking them, and by the approach of eternity, begin to be undeceived; then surely happiness is hereafter, and not here. For though the deluded world, in their flourishing prosperity, can bless themselves in their fool's paradise, and merrily jest at the simplicity of the saints, yet scarce one of many, even of the worst of them, but are ready at last to cry out with Balaam, "Oh that I might die the death of the righteous, and my last end might be like his!" Never take heed therefore what they think or say now, for as sure as they shall die they will one of these days think and say clean contrary. As we regard not what a drunken man says, because it is not he, but the drink; and when he has slept he will awake in another mind; so why should we regard what wicked men say now, who are drunk with security and fleshly delights; when we know beforehand for certain, that when they have slept the sleep of death at the furthest, they will awake in another mind.

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Only pity the perverted understandings of these poor men who are beside themselves; knowing that one of these days, when too late experience brings them to their right minds, they will be of a far different judgment. They ask us, "What, are you wiser than your forefathers; than all the town besides; than such and such great men, and learned men? And do you think in good sadness we may not with better reason ask you, What, are you wiser than Enoch and Noah; than Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Samuel; than David and Solomon; than Moses and the Prophets; than Peter, Paul, all the Apostles, and all the saints of God, in all ages and nations, that ever went to heaven; yea, than Jesus Christ Himself? Men may be deceived; but we appeal to the unerring judgment of wisdom itself, even the wise All-knowing God, whether "a day in His courts be not better than a thousand elsewhere"; and whether "it be not better to be door-keepers there, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness"? Nay, whether the very "reproaches of Christ," even the scorns we have from you for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, "be not greater riches than all the treasures of the world"? If wisdom, then, may pass the sentence, you see which way the cause will go; and "Wisdom is justified of all her children."

IX

Lastly, another rule in reason is this, That good which containeth all other good in it must needs itself be best. And where do you think, in reason, that all the streams of goodness do finally empty themselves? Is it not in God, from whom by secret springs they first proceed? Where else do all the lines of goodness centre? Are not all the sparks contained in this fire; and all the

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drops in this ocean? Surely the time was when there was nothing besides God; and then all good was only in Him. And even now the creature's essence and existence is secondary, derived, contingent, improper, in comparison of His, who is, and was, and is to come; whose name alone is called "I AM." What do thine eyes see, or thine heart conceive desirable, which is not there to be had? Sin indeed there is none, but darest thou call that good? Worldly delights there are none, for they are good but for the present necessity, and please but the brutish senses. Brethren, do you fear losing or parting with anything you now enjoy? What, do you fear you shall want when you come to heaven; shall you want the drops, when you have the ocean; or the light of the candle when you have the sun; or the shallow creature, when you have the perfect Creator? "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and after many days thou shalt find it." Lay abroad thy tears, thy prayers, pains, boldly and unweariedly: as God is true, thou dost but set them to usury, and shalt receive an hundredfold.

Spare not, man, for state, for honour, for labour; if heaven do not make amends for all, God hath deceived us; which who dare once imagine? Cast away friends, houses, lands, life, if He bid thee; leap into the sea, as Peter, if He command thee; lose thy life, and thou shalt save it everlastingly; when those that saved theirs, shall lose them everlastingly; venture all, man, upon God's word and promise; there is a day of rest coming will fully pay for all. All the pence and farthings thou expendest for Him are contained, with infinite advantage, in the massy gold and jewels of thy crown. When Alexander had given away his treasure, and they asked him where it was, he pointed to the poor, and said, "*In scriniis*, in my chests." And when he went upon a hopeful expedition, he gave away his gold; and when he

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was asked what he kept for himself, he answers, "*Spem majorum et meliorum*, the hope of greater and better things." How much more boldly may we lay out all, and point to heaven, and say, it is "*in scriniis*," in our everlasting treasure; and take that hope of greater and better things, instead of all! Nay, lose thyself for God, and renounce thyself, and thou shalt at that day find thyself again in Him. Give Him thyself, and He will receive thee upon the same terms as Socrates did his scholar Æschines, who gave himself to his master because he had nothing else: "*Accipio, sed ea lege ut te tibi meliorem reddam quam accepi*;" that He may return thee to thyself better than He received thee. So then, this Rest is the good which containeth all other good in it.

And thus you see, according to the rules of reason, the transcendent excellency of the saints' glory in the general. We shall next mention the particular excellencies.

CHAPTER VII

THE EXCELLENCIES OF OUR REST

YET let us draw a little nearer, and see more immediately from the pure fountain of the Scriptures what further excellencies this Rest affordeth. And the Lord hide us in the clefts of the rock, and cover us with the hands of indulgent grace while we approach to take this view! And the Lord grant we may put off from our feet the shoes of unreverence and fleshly conceivings, while we stand upon this holy ground!

I

And first, it is a most singular honour and ornament, in the style of the saints' rest, to be called the "purchased possession"; that it is the fruit of the blood of the Son of God; yea, the chief fruit; yea, the end and perfection of all the fruits and efficacy of that blood. Surely love is the most precious ingredient in the whole composition; and of all the flowers that grow in the garden of love, can there be brought one more sweet and beautiful to the garland, than this blood? Greater love than this there is not, to lay down the life of the lover. And to have this our Redeemer ever before our eyes, and the liveliest sense and freshest remembrance of that dying, bleeding love still upon our souls, oh, how will it fill our souls with perpetual ravishments! To think that, in the

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streams of this blood, we have swam through the violence of the world, the snares of Satan, the seducements of flesh, the curse of the law, the wrath of an offended God, the accusations of a guilty conscience, and the vexing doubts and fears of an unbelieving heart, and are passed through all, and are arrived safely at the breast of God ! Now we are stupefied with vile and senseless hearts, that can hear all the story of this bloody love, and read all the dolours and sufferings of love ; and hear all His sad complaints, and all with dulness, and unaffected. He cries to us, “ Behold and see, is it nothing to you, O all ye that pass by ? Is there any sorrow like unto My sorrow ? ” and we will scarce hear or regard the dolorous voice ; nor scarce turn aside to view the wounds of Him who turned aside and took us up to heal our wounds at this so dear a rate. But oh, then our perfected souls will feel as well as hear and, with feeling apprehensions, flame again in love for love. Now we set His picture, wounded and dying, before our eyes, but can get it no nearer our hearts than if we believed nothing of what we read. But then when the obstructions between the eye and the understanding are taken away, and the passage opened between the head and the heart, surely our eyes will everlastingly affect our heart, and while we view with one eye our slain, revived Lord, and with the other eye our lost, recovered souls and transcendent glory, these views will eternally pierce us and warm our very souls. And those eyes, through which folly and lust hath so often stole into our hearts, shall now be the casements to let in the love of our dearest Lord for ever.

Now, though we should, as some do, travel to Jerusalem, and view the Mount of Olives where He prayed and wept ; and see that dolorous way by which He bare His cross ; and enter the temple of the holy grave ; yea, if we should with Peter have stooped down and seen the place where

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He lay, and beheld His relics ; yet these bolted doors of sin and flesh would have kept out the feeling of all that love. But, oh, that is the joy ! we shall then leave these hearts of stone and rock behind us, and the sin that here so close besets us, and the sottish unkindness that followed us so long shall not be able to follow us into that glory. But we shall behold, as it were, the wounds of love, with eyes and hearts of love for ever. Suppose (a little to help our apprehensions) that a saint who hath partaken of the joys of heaven had been translated from as long an 'abode in hell and, after the experience of such a change, should have stood with Mary and the rest by the Cross of Christ, and have seen the blood, and heard the groans of his Redeemer ; what think you, would love have stirred his breast or no ; would the voice of his dying Lord have melted his heart or no ? Oh, that I were sensible of what I speak ! With what astonishing apprehensions then will redeemed saints everlastingly behold their blessed Redeemer.

I will not meddle with their vain, audacious question who must needs know whether the glorified body of Christ do yet retain either the wounds or scars. But this is most certain, that the memory of it will be as fresh, and the impression of love as deep, and its working as strong as if His wounds were still in our eyes, and His complaints still in our ears, and His blood still streaming afresh. Now His heart is open to us, and ours shut to Him ; but when His heart shall be open, and our hearts open, oh, the blessed congress that there will be then ! What a passionate meeting was there between our new-risen Lord and the first sinful silly woman that He appears to ? How doth love struggle for expressions, and the straitened fire, shut up in the breast, strive to break forth ! “ Mary ! ” saith Christ ; “ Master ! ” saith Mary ; and presently she clasps about

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His feet, having her heart as near to His heart as her hands were to His feet.¹ What a meeting of love then will there be between the new glorified saint and the glorious Redeemer! But I am here at a loss; my apprehensions fail me, and fall too short. Only this I know, it will be the singular praise of our inheritance, that it was bought with the price of that blood; and the singular joy of the saints, to behold the purchaser and the price together with the possession.

Neither will the views of the wounds of love renew our wounds of sorrow. He whose first words after His resurrection were to a great sinner, "Woman, why weepest thou?" knows how to raise love and joy by all those views, without raising any cloud of sorrow, or storm of tears at all. He that made the sacramental commemoration of His death to be His Church's feast will sure make the real enjoyment of its blessed purchase to be marrow and fatness. And if it afforded joy to hear from His mouth, "This is My body which is given for you, and this is My blood which was shed for you"; what joy will it afford, to hear, "This glory is the fruit of My body and My blood." And what a merry feast will it be "when we shall drink of the fruit of the vine new with Him in the kingdom of His Father," as the fruit of His own blood? David would not drink of the waters which he longed for, because they were the blood of those men who jeoparded their lives for them; and thought them fitter to offer to God than to please him.² But we shall value these waters more highly, and yet drink them the more sweetly, because they are the blood of Christ, not jeoparded only, but shed for us. They will be the more sweet and dear to us because they were so bitter and dear to Him. If the buyer be judicious we estimate things by the price they cost. If anything we

¹ John xx. 15, 16.

² 2 Sam. xxiii. 16, 17.

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enjoy were purchased with the life of our dearest friend, how highly should we value it! Nay, if a dying friend deliver but a token of his love, how carefully do we preserve it, and still remember him when we behold it, as if his own name were written on it; and will not then the death and blood of our Lord everlastingly sweeten our possessed glory?

Methinks England should value the plenty of the Gospel with their peace and freedom at a higher rate when they remember what it hath cost; how much precious blood, how many of the lives of God's worthies and our most dear friends, besides all other cost! Methinks when I am with freedom preaching, or hearing, or living, I see my dying friends before mine eyes whose blood was shed for this; and I look the more respectively¹ on them yet living whose frequent dangers did procure it. Oh then, when we are rejoicing in glory, how shall we think of the blood that revived our souls! And how shall we look upon Him whose sufferings did put that joy into our heart! How carefully preserve we those prizes which, with greatest hazard, we gained from the enemy! Goliath's sword must be kept as a trophy, and laid up behind the ephod; and in a time of need David says, "There is none to that." Surely when we do divide the spoil, and partake of the prize which our Lord so dearly won, we shall say indeed, "there is none to that." How dear was Jonathan's love to David, which was testified by "stripping himself of the robe that was upon him, and giving it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle";² and also by saving him from his father's wrath? How dear for ever will the love of Christ be then to us, who stripped Himself, as it were, of His majesty and glory, and put our mean

¹ [*i.e.* reverentially.]

² 1 Sam. xviii. 4.

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garment of flesh upon Him, that He might put the robes of His own righteousness and glory upon us; and saved us, not from cruel injustice, but from His Father's deserved wrath? Well then, Christians, as you use to do in your books, and on your goods, to write down the price they cost you; so do on your righteousness, and on your glory; write down the price: "The precious blood of Christ."

Yet understand this rightly: not that this highest glory was in strictest proper sense purchased, so that it was the most immediate effect of Christ's death. We must take heed that we conceive not of God as a tyrant who so delighteth in cruelty as to exchange mercies for stripes, or to give a crown on condition He may torment men. God was never so pleased with the sufferings of the innocent, much less of His Son, as to sell His mercy properly for their sufferings. "Fury dwelleth not in Him, nor doth He willingly correct the sons of men, nor take pleasure in the death of him that dieth." But the sufferings of Christ were, primarily and immediately, to satisfy justice that required blood, and to bear what was due to the sinner, and to receive the blow that should have fallen upon him, and so to restore him to the life he lost, and the happiness he fell from. But this dignity, which surpasseth the first, is as it were, from the redundancy of His merit, or a secondary fruit of His death. The work of His redemption so well pleased the Father that He gave Him power to advance His chosen to a higher dignity than they fell from, and to give them the glory which was given to Himself; and all this according to His counsel, and the good pleasure of His own will.

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II

The second pearl in the saints' diadem is, that it is free. This seemeth, as Pharaoh's second kine, to devour the former; and, as the angel to Balaam, to meet it with a drawn sword of a full opposition. But the seeming discord is but a pleasing diversity composed into that harmony which constitutes the melody. These two attributes "purchased" and "free," are the two chains of gold which, by their pleasant twisting, do make up the wreath for the heads of the pillars in the temple of God.¹ It was dear to Christ, but free to us. When Christ was to buy, silver and gold was nothing worth; prayers and tears could not suffice; nor anything below His blood; but when we come to buy, the price is fallen to just nothing; our buying is but receiving; we have it freely "without money, and without price." Nor do the Gospel conditions make it less free; or the covenant tenor² before mentioned contradict any of this.

If the Gospel conditions had been such as are the Law's, or payment of the debt required at our hands, the freeness then were more questionable. Yea, if God had said to us, "Sinners, if you will satisfy My justice but for one of your sins, I will forgive you all the rest," it would have been a hard condition on our part, and the grace of the covenant not so free as our disability doth necessarily require. But if all the condition be our cordial acceptation, surely we deserve not the name of purchasers. Thankful accepting of a free acquittance is no paying of the debt. If life be offered to a condemned man, upon condition that he shall not refuse the offer, I think the favour is nevertheless free. Nay,

¹ 1 Kings vii. 17.

² [? meant for "tenure."]

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though the condition were, that he should beg and wait before he have his pardon, and take him for his lord who hath thus redeemed him; all this is no satisfying of the justice of the law, especially when the condition is also given as it is by God to all His chosen. Surely then here is all free. If the Father freely give the Son, and the Son freely pay the debt; and if God do freely accept that way of payment, when He might have required it of the principal; and if both Father and Son do freely offer us the purchased life upon those fair conditions; and if they also freely send the Spirit to enable us to perform those conditions; then what is here that is not free? Is not every stone that builds this temple free-stone? Oh, the everlasting admiration that must needs surprise the saints to think of this freeness!

What did the Lord see in me, that He should judge me meet for such a state, that I, who was but a poor, diseased, despised wretch, should be clad in the brightness of this glory; that I, a silly, creeping, breathing worm, should be advanced to this high dignity; that I, who was but lately groaning, weeping, dying, should now be as full of joy as my heart can hold, yea, should be taken from the grave, where I was rotting and stinking, and from the dust and darkness where I seemed forgotten, and here set before His throne; that I should be taken, with Mordecai, from captivity to be set next unto the king, and, with Daniel from the den, to be made ruler of princes and provinces; and, with Saul from seeking asses, to be advanced to a kingdom! Oh, who can fathom unmeasurable love! Indeed, if the proud-hearted, self-ignorant, self-admiring sinners should be thus advanced, who think none so fit for preferment as themselves, perhaps, instead of admiring free love, they would with those unhappy angels be discontented yet with their estate. But when the self-denying, self-accusing humble

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soul, who thought himself unworthy the ground he trod on, and the air he breathed in, unworthy to eat, drink, or live, when he shall be taken up into this glory; he who durst scarce come among, or speak to the imperfect saints on earth, because he was unworthy; he who durst scarce hear, or scarce read the Scripture, or scarce pray and call God Father; or scarce receive the sacraments of His covenant, and all because he was unworthy; for this soul to find itself rapt up into heaven, and closed in the arms of Christ even in a moment: do but think with yourselves, what the transporting, astonishing admiration of such a soul will be! He that durst not lift up his eyes to heaven, but stood afar off smiting on his breast, and crying, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner"; now to be lift up to heaven himself; he who was wont to write his name in Bradford's style, "The unthankful, the hard-hearted, the unworthy sinner," and was wont to admire that patience could bear so long, and justice suffer him to live; sure he will admire at this alteration when he shall find, by experience, that unworthiness could not hinder his salvation, which he thought would have bereaved him of every mercy. Ah, Christian, there is no talk of our worthiness or unworthiness. If worthiness were our condition for admittance, we might sit down with St. John, and weep, "Because none in heaven or earth is found worthy. But the Lion of the tribe of Judah is worthy, and hath prevailed"; and by that title must we hold the inheritance.

We shall offer there the offering that David refused, even praise for that which cost us nothing. Here our commission runs, "Freely ye have received, freely give." But Christ hath dearly received, yet freely gives. The Master heals us of our leprosy freely; but Gehazi, who had no finger in the cure, will surely run after us, and take something of us, and falsely pretend, it is his

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Master's pleasure. The Pope and his servants will be paid for their pardons and indulgences; but Christ will take nothing for His. The fees of the prelates' courts were large, and our commutation of penance must cost our purses dear, or else we must be cast out of the synagogue, and soul and body delivered up to the devil. But none are shut out of that Church for want of money, nor is poverty any eyesore to Christ. An empty heart may bar them out, but an empty purse cannot. His kingdom of grace hath ever been more consistent with despised poverty than wealth and honour; and riches occasion the difficulty of entrance far more than want can do. "For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." And so it is also, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of that kingdom, which He hath promised to them that love Him."

I know the true labourer is worthy of his hire. And they that serve at the altar, should live upon the altar. And it is not fit to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And I know it is either hellish malice, or penurious baseness, or ignorance of the weight of their work and burthen that makes their maintenance so generally incompetent, and their very livelihood and subsistence so envied and grudged at; and that it is a mere plot of the Prince of Darkness for the diversion of their thoughts, that they must be studying how to get bread for their own and children's mouths when they should be preparing the bread of life for their people's souls. But yet let me desire the right-aiming ministers of Christ to consider what is expedient, as well as what is lawful, and that the saving of one soul is better than a thousand pound a year; and our gain, though due, is a cursed gain, which is a stumbling-block to our people's souls. Let us make the free Gospel as little burthensome and chargeable as is

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possible. I had rather never take their tithes while I live, than by them to destroy the souls for whom Christ died ; and “ though God hath ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel,” yet I had rather suffer all things than hinder the Gospel ; and it were better for me to die, than that any man should make this my glorying void.

Though the well leading elders be worthy of double honour, especially the laborious in the word and doctrine, yet if the necessity of souls, and the promoting of the Gospel should require it, I had rather preach the Gospel in hunger and rags than rigidly contend for what is my due. And if I should do so, yet have I not whereof to glory ; “ for necessity is laid upon me ; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel,” though I never received anything from men. How unbecoming the messengers of this free grace and kingdom is it rather to lose the hearts and souls of their people than to lose a groat of their due ; and rather to exasperate them against the message of God than to forbear somewhat of their right ; and to contend with them at law for the wages of the Gospel ; and to make the glad tidings to their yet carnal hearts seem to be sad tidings because of this burthen ! This is not the way of Christ and His apostles, nor according to the self-denying, yielding, suffering doctrine which they taught. Away with all those actions that are against the main end of our studies and calling, which is to win souls ; and fie upon that gain which hinders the gaining of men to Christ. I know flesh will here object necessities, and distrust will not want arguments ; but we who have enough to answer to the diffidence of our people, let us take home some of our answers to ourselves, and teach ourselves first before we teach them. How many have you known that God suffered to starve in His vineyard ?

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But this is our exceeding consolation, that though we may pay for our Bibles and books and sermons, and, it may be, pay for our freedom to enjoy and use them; yet as we paid nothing for God's eternal love, and nothing for the Son of His love, and nothing for His Spirit, and our grace and faith, and nothing for our pardon; so we shall pay nothing for our eternal rest. We may pay for the bread and wine but we shall not pay for the Body and Blood, nor for the great things of the covenant which it seals unto us. And indeed we have a valuable price to give for those; but for these we have none at all.

Yet this is not all. If it were only for nothing, and without our merit, the wonder were great; but it is moreover against our merit, and against our long endeavouring of our own ruin. Oh, the broken heart that hath known the desert of sin doth both understand and feel what I say! What an astonishing thought it will be, to think of the unmeasurable difference between our deservings, and our receivings; between the state we should have been in, and the state we are in! To look down upon hell, and see the vast difference that free grace hath made betwixt us and them! To see the inheritance there which we were born to, so different from that which we are adopted to! Oh, what pangs of love will it cause within us to think: "Yonder was my native right, my deserved portion; those should have been my hideous cries, my doleful groans, my easeless pains, my endless torment; those unquenchable flames I should have lain in; that never dying worm should have fed upon me; yonder was the place that sin would have brought me to; but this is it that Christ hath brought me to. Yonder death was the wages of my sin; but this eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ my Lord. Did not I neglect grace, and make light of the

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offers of Life, and slight my Redeemer's blood a long time, as well as yonder suffering souls? Did I not let pass my time, and forget my God and soul, as well as they? And was not I born in sin and wrath, as well as they? Oh, who made me to differ? Was my heart naturally any readier for Christ than theirs? Or any whit better affected to the Spirit's persuasions? Should I ever have begun to love, if God had not begun to me? Or ever be willing, if He had not made me willing? Or ever differed, if He had not made me to differ? Had I not now been in those flames, if I had had mine own way, and been let alone to mine own will? Did I not resist as powerful means, and lose as fair advantages as they? And should I not have lingered in Sodom till the flames had seized on me, if God had not in mercy carried me out?" Oh, how free was all this love! And how free is this enjoyed glory!

Doubtless this will be our everlasting admiration, that so rich a crown should fit the head of so vile a sinner; that such high advancement and such long unfruitfulness and unkindness can be the state of the same persons; and that such vile rebellions can conclude in such most precious joys. But no thanks to us, nor to any of our duties and labours, much less to our neglects and laziness. We know to whom the praise is due, and must be given for ever. And indeed to this very end it was that infinite wisdom did cast the whole design of man's salvation into the mould of "Purchase" and "Freeness," that the love and joy of man might be perfected, and the honour of grace most highly advanced; that the thought of merit might neither cloud the one nor obstruct the other; and that on these two hinges the gates of heaven might turn. So then let "Deserved" be written on the door of hell, and on the door of heaven and life, "The Free Gift."

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III

The third comfortable attribute of this rest is that it is the saint's proper and peculiar possession. It belongs to no other of all the sons of men; not that it would have detracted from the greatness or freeness of the gift, if God had so pleased that all the world should have enjoyed it; but when God hath resolved otherwise, that it must be enjoyed but by few, to find our names among that number must needs make us the more to value our enjoyment. If all Egypt had been light the Israelites should not have had the less; but yet to enjoy that light alone, while their neighbours live in thick darkness, must make them more sensible of their privilege. Distinguishing, separating mercy affecteth more than any mercy. If it should rain on our grounds alone, or the sun shine alone upon our habitations; or the blessing of heaven divide between our flocks and other men's, as between Jacob's and Laban's, we should more feelingly acknowledge mercy than now, while we possess the same in common. Ordinariness dulleth our sense, and if miracles were common they would be slighted. If Pharaoh had passed as safely as Israel, the Red Sea would have been less remembered. If the firstborn of Egypt had not been slain, the firstborn of Israel had not been the Lord's peculiar. If the rest of the world had not been drowned, and the rest of Sodom and Gomorrah burned, the saving of Noah had been no wonder, nor Lot's deliverance so much talked of. The lower the weighty end of the balance descends, the higher is the other lifted up; and the falling of one of the sails of the windmill is the occasion of the rising of the other.

It would be no extenuation of the mercies of the saints here, if all the world were as holy as they; and

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the communication of their happiness is their greatest desire; yet it might perhaps dull their thankfulness; and differencing grace would not be known. But when one shall be enlightened, and another left in darkness; one reformed, and another by his lusts enslaved; it makes them cry out with the disciples, "Lord, what is it, that thou wilt reveal thyself to us, and not unto the world?" When the prophet shall be sent to one widow only of all that were in Samaria, and to cleanse one Naaman of all the lepers, the mercy is more observable. Oh, that will sure be a day of passionate sense on both sides, when two shall be in a bed, and two in the field, the one taken, and the other forsaken.¹ . . .

* * * * *

By this time the impenitent world will see a reason for the saints' singularity while they were on earth; and will be able to answer their own demands, "Why must you be more holy than your neighbours?" Even because they would fain be more happy than their neighbours. "And why cannot you do as others, and live as the world about you?" Even because they are full loath to speed as those others, or to be damned with the world about them. Sincere singularity in holiness is by this time known to be neither hypocrisy nor folly. If to be singular in that glory be so desirable, surely to be singular in godly living is not contemptible. As every one of them now knows his own sore and his own grief, so shall every one of them feel his own joy. And if they can now call Christ their own, and call God their own God, how much more then upon their full possession of Him; for as He takes His people for His inheritance; so will He Himself be the inheritance of His people for ever.

¹ [About forty lines here omitted.]

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IV

A fourth comfortable adjunct of this rest is, that it is the fellowship of the blessed saints and angels of God. Not so singular will the Christian be as to be solitary. Though it be proper to the saints only, yet is it common to all the saints. For what is it but an association of blessed spirits in God; a corporation of perfected saints whereof Christ is the Head; the communion of saints completed? Nor doth this make those joys to be therefore mediate, derived by creatures to us, as here; for all the lines may be drawn from the centre, and not from each other, and yet their collocation make them more comely than one alone could be. Though the strings receive not their sound and sweetness from each other, yet their concurrence causeth that harmony which could not be by one alone. For those that have prayed and fasted and wept and watched and waited together, now to joy and enjoy and praise together, methinks should much advance their pleasure. Whatsoever it will be upon the great change that will be in our natures perfected; sure I am, according to the present temperature of the most sanctified human affections, it would affect exceedingly; and he who mentioneth the qualifications of our happiness, of purpose that our joy may be full, and maketh so oft mention of our consociation and conjunction in His praises, sure doth hereby intimate to us, that this will be some advantage to our joys.

Certain I am of this, fellow-Christians, that as we have been together in the labour, duty, danger, and distress, so shall we be in the great recompense and deliverance; and as we have been scorned and despised, so shall we be crowned and honoured together; and we who have gone through the day of sadness, shall enjoy together that day

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of gladness; and those who have been with us in persecution and prison shall be with us also in that palace of consolation. Can the wilful world say, "If our forefathers and friends be all in hell, we will venture there too"; and may not the Christian say on better grounds, "Seeing my faithful friends are gone before me to heaven, I am much the more willing to be there too"? Oh the blessed day, dear friends, when we that were wont to enquire together, and hear of heaven, and talk of heaven together, shall then live in heaven together; when we who were wont to complain to one another, and open our doubts to one another, and our fears, whether ever we should come there or no, shall then rejoice with one another, and triumph over those doubts and fears; when we who were wont formerly in private to meet together for mutual edification shall now most publicly be conjoined in the same consolation! Those same disciples who were wont to meet in a private house "for fear of the Jews," are now met in the celestial habitation without fear; and as their fear then did cause them to shut the door against their enemies, so will God's justice shut it now.

Oh, when I look in the faces of the precious people of God and, believing, think of this day, what a refreshing thought is it! Shall we not there remember, think you, the pikes which we passed through here; our fellowship in duty and in sufferings; how oft our groans made as it were one sound, our conjunct tears but one stream, and our conjunct desires but one prayer? And now all our praises shall make up one melody; and all our churches one church; and all ourselves but one body; for we shall be one in Christ, even as He and the Father are one. It is true, we must be very careful, in this case, that in our thoughts we look not for that in the saints which is alone in Christ, and that we give them not His own prerogative; nor expect too great a part of our comfort in the fruition

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of them. We are prone enough to this kind of idolatry. But yet He who commands us so to love them now, will give us leave in the same subordination to Himself to love them then, when Himself hath made them much more lovely. And if we may love them, we shall surely rejoice in them; for love and enjoyment cannot stand without an answerable joy.

If the forethought of sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God may be our lawful joy; then how much more that real sight, and actual possession! It cannot choose but be comfortable to me to think of that day when I shall join with Moses in his song, with David in his psalms of praise, and with all the redeemed in the song of the Lamb for ever, when we shall see Enoch walking with God, Noah enjoying the end of his singularity, Joseph of his integrity, Job of his patience, Hezekiah of his uprightness, and all the saints the end of their faith. Will it be nothing conducive to the completing of our comforts to live eternally with Peter, Paul, Austin, Chrysostom, Jerome, Wickliffe, Luther, Zuinglius, Calvin, Beza, Bullinger, Sanchius, Paræus, Piscator, Camero; with Hooper, Bradford, Latimer, Glover, Saunders, Philpot; with Reignolds, Whitaker, Cartwright, Brightman, Bayne, Bradshaw, Bolton, Ball, Hildersham, Pemble, Twisse, Ames, Preston, Sibbs? O "*felicem diem*," said holy Grynæus, "*quum ad illud animorum concilium proficiscar, et ex hac turba et colluvione discedam!*" O happy day, when I shall depart out of this crowd and sink, and go to that same council of souls!

I know that Christ is all in all, and that it is the presence of God that maketh heaven to be heaven. But yet it much sweeteneth the thoughts of that place to me to remember that there are such a multitude of my most dear and precious friends in Christ, "with whom I took

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sweet counsel, and with whom I went up to the house of God ; who walked with me in the fear of God, and in integrity of their hearts ” ; in the face of whose conversations there was written the name of Christ ; whose sweet and sensible mention of His excellencies hath made my heart to burn within me. To think of such a friend died at such a time, and such a one at another time ; such a precious Christian slain at such a fight, and such a one at such a fight (Oh what a number of them could I name !), and that all these are entered into rest, and we shall surely go to them, but they shall not return to us.

It is a question with some, whether we shall know each other in heaven or no. Surely there shall no knowledge cease which now we have, but only that which implieth our imperfection. And what imperfection can this imply ? Nay, our present knowledge shall be increased beyond belief. It shall indeed be done away, but as the light of candles and stars is done away by the rising of the sun ; which is more properly a doing away of our ignorance than of our knowledge. Indeed we shall not know each other after the flesh ; nor by stature, voice, colour, complexion, visage, or outward shape ; if we had so known Christ, we should know Him no more ; nor by parts and gifts of learning, nor titles of honour and worldly dignity ; nor by terms of affinity and consanguinity, nor benefits, nor such relations ; nor by youth or age ; nor, I think, by sex ; but by the image of Christ, and spiritual relation, and former faithfulness in improving our talents, beyond doubt, we shall know and be known.

Nor is it only our old acquaintance, but all the saints of all ages, whose faces in the flesh we never saw, whom we shall there both know, and comfortably enjoy. Luther in his last sickness being asked his judgment, whether we shall know one another in heaven, answered thus,

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“*Quid accidit Adam? Nunquam ille viderat Evam,*” &c., *i.e.* How was it with Adam? He had never seen Eve: yet he asketh not, who she was, or whence she came, but saith, “She is flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone.” And how knew he that? Why, being full of the Holy Ghost, and indued with the true knowledge of God, he so pronounced. After the same sort shall we be renewed by Christ in another life, and we shall know our parents, wives, children, &c., much more perfectly than Adam did then know Eve. Yea, and angels as well as saints will be our blessed acquaintance and sweet associates. We have every one now our own angels, there beholding our Father’s face.¹ And those who now are willingly ministering spirits for our good, will willingly then be our companions in joy for the perfecting of our good. And they who had such joy in heaven for our conversion will gladly rejoice with us in our glorification.

I think, Christian, this will be a more honourable assembly, than you ever here beheld; and a more happy society than you were ever of before. Surely Brooke and Pym and Hampden and White, &c., are now members of a more knowing, unerring, well-ordered, right-aiming, self-denying, unanimous, honourable, triumphant Senate than this from whence they were taken is, or ever Parliament will be. It is better to be door-keeper to that Assembly whither Twisse, &c. are translated than to have continued here the Moderator of this. That is the true *Parliamentum Beatum*, the blessed Parliament, and that is the only Church that cannot err. Then we shall truly say as David, “I am a companion of all them that fear Thee”;² when “we are come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an

¹ Acts xii. 15; Matt. xviii. 10; Luke xvi. 22; xv. 10; Heb. i. 14.

² Ps. cxix. 63.

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innumerable company of angels, to the General Assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling." We are come thither already in respect of title and of earnest and first fruits; but we shall then come into the full possession.

O beloved, if it be a happiness to live with the saints in their imperfection, when they have sin to embitter, as well as holiness to sweeten, their society, what will it be to live with them in their perfection, where saints are wholly and only saints! If it be a delight to hear them pray or preach; what will it be to hear them praise! If we thought ourselves in the suburbs of heaven when we heard them set forth the beauty of our Lord and speak of the excellences of the Kingdom, what a day will it be when we shall join with them in praises to our Lord in, and for, that kingdom! Now we have corruption and they have corruption, and we are apter to set awork each other's corruption than our graces; and so lose the benefit of their company while we do enjoy it, because we know not how to make use of a saint; but then it will not be so. Now we spend many an hour which might be profitable, in a dull silent looking on each other, or else in vain and common conference; but then it will not be so. Now the best do know but in part, and therefore can instruct and help us but in part; but then we shall with them make up one perfect man. So then I conclude, this is one singular excellence of the rest of heaven, "that we are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

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V

Another excellent property of our rest will be, that the joys of it are immediately from God. Nor doth this contradict the former, as I have before made plain. Whether Christ (who is God as well as man) shall be the conveyer of all from the Divine nature to us; and whether the giving up the kingdom to the Father do imply the ceasing of the Mediator's office; and, consequently, the laying aside of the human nature (though I believe the negative in these last), yet are questions which I will not now attempt to handle. But this is sure, we shall see God face to face, and stand continually in His presence, and consequently derive our life and comfort immediately from Him.

Whether God will make use of any creatures for our service then, or if any, of what creatures, and what use, is more than I yet know. It seems by Rom. viii. 21, that the creature shall have a day of deliverance, and that into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; but whether this before, or at the great and full deliverance, or whether to endure to eternity, or to what particular employment they shall be continued, are questions yet too hard for me. When God speaks them plainer, and mine understanding is made clearer, then I may know these. But it is certain that, at least, our most and great joys will be immediate, if not all. Now we have nothing at all immediately, but at the second, or third, or fourth, or fifth hand, or how many, who knows? From the earth, from man, from sun and moon, from the influence of the planets, from the ministration of angels, and from the Spirit, and Christ; and doubtless, the farther the stream runs from the fountain the more impure it is. It gathers some defilement from every unclean channel it passeth through.

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Though it savours not in the hand of angels of the imperfection of sinners, yet it doth of the imperfection of creatures ; and as it comes from man, it savours of both.

How quick and piercing is the Word in itself, yet many times it never enters, being managed by a feeble arm. Oh, what weight and worth is there in every passage of the blessed Gospel, enough, one would think, to enter and force the dullest soul, and wholly possess its thoughts and affections, and yet how oft doth it fall as water upon a stone ! And how easily can our hearers sleep out a sermon-time, and much because these words of life do die in the delivery, and the fruit of our conception is almost still-born ! Our people's spirits remain congealed while we who are intrusted with the word that should melt them do suffer it to freeze between our lips. We speak indeed of soul-concerning truths, and set before them life and death, but it is, with such self-seeking affectation, and in such a lazy, formal, customary strain, like the pace the Spaniard rides, that the people little think we are in good sadness, or that our hearts do mean as our tongues do speak. I have heard of some tongues that can lick a coal of fire till it be cold. I fear these tongues are in most of our mouths, and that the breath that is given us to blow up this fire, till it flame in our people's souls, is rather used to blow it out. Such preaching is it that hath brought the most to hear sermons as they say their creed and paternosters, even as a few good words of course. How many a cold and mean sermon that yet contains most precious truths ! The things of God which we handle, are divine ; but our manner of handling too human ; and there is little or none that ever we touch but we leave the print of our fingers behind us ; but if God should speak this word Himself, it would be a piercing, melting word indeed.

How full of comfort are the Gospel promises ; yet do

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we oft so heartlessly declare them that the broken, bleeding-hearted saints are much deprived of their joys. Christ is indeed a precious pearl, but oft held forth in leprous hands. And thus do we disgrace the riches of the Gospel, when it is the work of our calling to make it honourable in the eyes of men; and we dim the glory of that jewel by our dull and low expressions and dung-hill conversations, whose lustre we do pretend to discover, while the hearers judge of it by our expressions, and not its proper genuine worth. The truth is, the best of men do apprehend but little of what God in His Word expresseth, and what they do apprehend they are unable to utter. Human language is not so copious as the heart's conceivings are; and what we possibly might declare, yet through our own unbeliefs, stupidity, laziness, and other corruptions we usually fail in; and what we do declare, yet the darkness of our people's understandings, and the sad senselessness of their hearts, doth usually shut out and make void.

So that as all the works of God are perfect in their season, as He is perfect; so are all the works of man, as himself, imperfect; and those which God performeth by the hand of man, will too much savour of the instrument. If an angel from heaven should preach the Gospel, yet could he not deliver it according to its glory; much less we who never saw what they have seen, and keep this treasure in earthen vessels. The comforts that flow through sermons, through sacraments, through reading, and company, and conference, and creatures, are but half-comforts; and the life that comes by these, is but a half-life, in comparison to those which the Almighty shall speak with His own mouth, and reach forth to us with His own hand. The Christian knows by experience now, that his most immediate joys are his sweetest joys; which have least of man, and are most

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directly from the Spirit. That is one reason, as I conceive, why Christians who are much in secret prayer, and in meditation and contemplation, rather than they who are more in hearing, reading, and conference, are men of greatest life and joy; because they are nearer the Well-head, and have all more immediately from God Himself. And that I conceive the reason also, why we are more indisposed to those secret duties, and can easilier bring our hearts to hear and read and confer, than to secret prayer, self-examination, and meditation; because in the former is more of man, and in these we approach the Lord alone, and our natures draw back from the most spiritual and fruitful duties. Not that we should therefore cast off the other, and neglect any ordinance of God. To live above them while we use them is the way of a Christian. But so to live above ordinances as to live without them is to live without the compass of the Gospel lines, and so without the government of Christ. Let such beware lest while they would be higher than Christians they prove in the end lower than men.

We are not yet come to the time and state where we shall have all from God's immediate hand. As God hath made all creatures and instituted all ordinances for us, so will He continue our need of all. We must yet be contented with love-tokens from Him till we come to receive our all in Him. We must be thankful if Joseph sustain our lives by relieving us in our famine with his provisions till we come to see his own face. There is joy in these remote receivings, but the fulness is in His own presence. O Christians, you will then know the difference betwixt the creature and the Creator, and the content that each of them affords. We shall then have light without a candle; and a perpetual day without the sun: "For the city hath no need of the sun,

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neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Nay, "There shall be no night there, and they need no candle, nor light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever." We shall then have rest without sleep, and be kept from cold without our clothing, and need no fig-leaves to hide our shame; for God will be our rest, and Christ our clothing, and shame and sin will cease together. We shall then have health without physic, and strength without the use of food; for the Lord God will be our strength, and the light of His countenance will be health to our souls, and marrow to our bones.

We shall then, and never till then, have enlightened understandings without Scripture, and be governed without a written law. For the Lord will perfect His law in our hearts, and we shall be all perfectly taught of God; His own will shall be our law, and His own face shall be our light for ever. Then shall we have joy which we drew not from the promises, nor was fetched us home by faith or hope. Beholding and possessing will exclude the most of these. We shall then have communion without sacraments, when Christ shall drink with us of the fruit of the vine new; that is, refresh us with the comforting wine of immediate fruition in the kingdom of His Father. To have necessities but no supply, is the case of them in hell; to have necessity supplied by the means of creatures, is the case of us on earth; to have necessity supplied immediately from God, is the case of the saints in heaven; to have no necessity at all, is the prerogative of God Himself. The more of God is seen and received with and by the means and creature here, the nearer is our state like that in glory.

In a word, we have now our mercies, as Benjamin had

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Joseph's cup; we find them at a distance from God, and scarcely know from whence they come, and understand not the goodwill intended in them, but are oft ready to fear they come in wrath, and think they will but work our ruin. But when we shall feed at Joseph's own house, yea, receive our portion from his own hand; when he shall fully unbowel his love unto us, and take us to dwell in Goshen by him; when we shall live in our Father's House and presence, and God shall be all, and in all; then we are indeed at home in rest.

VI

Again, a further excellence is this, it will be unto us a seasonable rest. He that expecteth the fruit of His vineyard in season, and maketh His people as trees, planted by the waters, fruitful in their season, He will also give them the crown in season. He that will have the words of joy spoken to the weary in season, will sure cause that time of joy to appear in the meetest season. And they who knew the season of grace, and did repent and believe in season, shall also, if they faint not, reap in season. If God will not miss the season of common mercies, even to His enemies, but will give both the former and latter rain in their season, and the appointed weeks of the harvest in its season, and by an inviolable covenant hath established day and night in their seasons; then sure the harvest of the saints, and their day of gladness shall not miss its season. Doubtless He that would not stay a day longer than His promise, but brought Israel out of Egypt that self-same day that the four hundred and thirty years were expired; neither will He fail of one day or hour of the fittest season for His people's glory.

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And as Christ failed not to come in the fulness of time, even then when Daniel and others had foretold His coming; so in the fulness and fitness of time will His second coming be. He that hath given the stork, the crane, the swallow, to know their appointed time, will surely keep His time appointed. When we have had in this world a long night of sad darkness, will not the day breaking, and the arising of the Sun of Righteousness be then seasonable? When we have endured a hard winter in this cold climate, will not the reviving spring be then seasonable? When we have, as Paul, sailed slowly many days, and much time spent, and sailing now grown more dangerous; and when neither sun nor stars in many days appear, and no small tempest lieth on us, and all hope that we shall be saved is almost taken away; do you think the haven of rest is not then seasonable? When we have passed a long and tedious journey, and that through no small dangers, is not home then seasonable? When we have had a long and perilous war, and have lived in the midst of furious enemies, and have been forced to stand on a perpetual watch, and received from them many a wound; would not a peace with victory be now seasonable? When we have been captivated in many years' imprisonment, and insulted over by scornful foes, and suffered many pinching wants, and hardly enjoyed bare necessities, would not a full deliverance to a most plentiful state, even from this prison to a throne, be now seasonable?

Surely a man would think, who looks upon the face of the world, that rest should to all men seem seasonable. Some of us are languishing under continual weakness, and groaning under most grievous pains, crying in the morning, "would God it were evening," and in the evening, "would God it were morning"; weary of going, weary of sitting, weary of standing, weary of lying,

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weary of eating, of speaking, of waking, weary of our very friends, weary of ourselves: Oh, how oft hath this been mine own case; and is not rest yet seasonable? Some are complaining under the pressure of the times; weary of their taxes, weary of their quartering, weary of plunderings, weary of their fears and dangers, weary of their poverty and wants, and is not rest yet seasonable?

Whither can you go; or into what company can you come, where the voice of complaining doth not show that men live in a continual weariness, but especially the saints, who are most weary of that which the world cannot feel? What godly society almost can you fall into, but you shall hear by their moans that somewhat aileth them? Some, weary of a blind mind, doubting concerning the way they walk in, unsettled in almost all their thoughts; some, weary of a hard heart, some of a proud, some of a passionate, and some of all these and much more; some weary of their daily doubtings and fears concerning their spiritual estate; and some of the want of spiritual joys, and some of the sense of God's wrath; and is not rest now seasonable? When a poor Christian hath desired, and prayed, and waited for deliverance many a year, is it not then seasonable? When he is ready almost to give up, and saith, 'I am afraid I shall not reach the end, and that my faith and patience will scarce hold out'; is not this a fit season for rest? If it were to Joseph a seasonable message which called him from the prison to Pharaoh's court; or if the return of his Benjamin, the tidings that Joseph was yet alive, and the sight of the chariots which should convey him to Egypt, were seasonable for the reviving of Jacob's spirits; then methinks, the message for a release from the flesh, and our convoy to Christ, should be a seasonable and welcome message. If the voice of the king were

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seasonable to Daniel, early in the morning, calling him from his den that he might advance him to more than former dignity; then methinks that morning voice of Christ our King, calling us from our terrors among lions to possess His rest among His saints, should be to us a very seasonable voice. Will not Canaan be seasonable after so many years' travel, and that through a hazardous and grievous wilderness?

Indeed to the world it is never in season; they are already at their own home, and have what they most desire; they are not weary of their present state; the saints' sorrow is their joy, and the saints' weariness is their rest; their weary day is coming, where there is no more expectation of rest; but for the thirsty soul to enjoy the fountain, and the hungry to be filled with the bread of life, and the naked to be clothed from above; for the children to come to their Father's house, and the disjoined members to be conjoined with their Head; methinks this should be seldom unseasonable. When the atheistical world began to insult, and question the truth of Scripture promises, and ask us, "Where is now your God? Where is your long looked for glory? Where is the promise of your Lord's coming?" Oh, how seasonable then, to convince these unbelievers, to silence these scoffers, to comfort the dejected waiting believer, will the appearing of our Lord be! We are oft grudging now that we have not a greater share of comforts, that our deliverances are not more speedy and eminent, that the world prospers more than we, that our prayers are not presently answered; not considering that our portion is kept to a fitter season; that these are not always winter fruits, but when summer comes we shall have our harvest. We grudge that we do not find a Canaan in the wilderness, or cities of rest in Noah's ark, and the songs of Zion in a strange land; that we have not a harbour in

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the main ocean, or find not our home in the middle way, and are not crowned in the midst of the fight, and have not our rest in the heat of the day, and have not our inheritance before we are at age, and have not heaven before we leave the earth; and would not all this be very unseasonable?

I confess in regard of the Church's service, the removing of the saints may sometimes appear to us unseasonable; therefore doth God use it as a judgment, and therefore the Church had ever prayed hard before they would part with them, and greatly laid to heart their loss; therefore are the great mournings at the saints' departures, and the sad hearts that accompany them to their graves; but this is not especially for the departed but for themselves and their children, as Christ bid the weeping women; therefore also it is, that the saints in danger of death, have oft begged for their lives, with that argument; "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit?" "Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise thee? Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave; or thy faithfulness in destruction? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark, and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" "For in death there is no remembrance of thee, in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" And this was it that brought Paul to a strait, because he knew it was better for the Church that he should remain here.

I must confess, it is one of my saddest thoughts to reckon up the useful instruments whom God hath lately called out of His vineyard, when the loiterers are many, and the harvest great, and very many congregations desolate, and the people as sheep without shepherds; and yet the labourers called from their work, especially when a door of liberty and opportunity is open. We cannot but lament so sore a judgment, and think the removal

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in regard of the Church unseasonable. I know I speak but your own thoughts; and you are too ready to overrun me in application.¹ I fear you are too sensible of what I speak, and therefore am loth to stir you in your sore. I perceive you in the posture of the Ephesian elders, and had rather abate the violence of your passions; our applications are quicker about our sufferings, than our sins; and we will quicklier say, this loss is mine, than, this fault is mine. But oh, consider, my dear friends, hath God any need of such a worm as I? Cannot He a thousand ways supply your wants? You know when your case was worse, and yet He provided; hath He work to do, and will He not find instruments? And though you see not for the present where they should be had, they are never the further off for that. Where was the world before the creation; and where was the promised seed when Isaac lay on the altar; where was the land of promise when Israel's burden was increased; or when all the old stock save only two were consumed in the wilderness? Where was David's kingdom when he was hunted in the wilderness? Or the glory of Christ's kingdom when He was in the grave; or when He first sent His twelve apostles? How suddenly did the number of labourers increase immediately upon the reformation by Luther, and how soon were the rooms of those filled up, whom the rage of the papists had sacrificed in the flames! Have you not lately seen so many difficulties overcome, and so many improbable works accomplished, that might silence unbelief, one would think, for ever?

But if all this do not quiet you (for sorrow and discontent are unruly passions), yet at least remember this:

¹ These words were written by the author to his friends and congregation, who could then discern no probability of his much longer surviving.

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Suppose the worst you fear should happen, yet shall it be well with all the saints; your own turns will shortly come; and we shall all be housed with Christ together where you will want your ministers and friends no more. And for the poor world which is left behind, whose unregenerate state causeth your grief; why consider, shall man pretend to be more merciful than God? Hath not He more interest than we, both in the Church and in the world, and more bowels of compassion to commiserate their distress? There is a season for judgment as well as for mercy; and if He will have the most of men to perish for their sins, and to suffer the eternal tormenting flames, must we question His goodness, or manifest our dislike of the severity of His judgment? I confess we cannot but bleed over our desolate congregations; and that it ill beseems us to make light of God's indignation; but yet we should, as Aaron when his sons were slain, hold our peace and be silent, because it is the Lord's doing; and say, as David, "If I" (and His people) "shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again, and shew me them, and His habitations; but if He thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him do with me as seemeth good unto Him."

I conclude, then, that whatsoever it is to those that are left behind, yet the saints' departure to themselves is usually seasonable. I say usually, because I know that a very saint may have a death, in some respect unseasonable, though it do translate him into this rest. He may die in judgment, as good Josiah; he may die for his sin. For the abuse of the sacrament many were weak and sickly, and many fallen asleep, even of those who were thus judged and chastened by God, that they might not be condemned with the world. He may die by the hand of public justice; or die in a way of public scandal; he

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may die in a weak degree of grace, and consequently have less degree of glory. He may die in smaller improvements of his talents, and so be ruler but of few cities. The best wheat may be cut down before it is ripe; therefore it is promised to the righteous as a blessing, that they shall be brought as a shock of corn into the barn in season. Nay, it is possible he may die by his own hands; though some divines think such doctrine not fit to be taught lest it encourage the tempted to commit the same sin; but God hath left preservatives enough against sin, without our devising more of our own; neither hath He need of our lie to His glory. He hath fixed that principle so deep in nature, that all should endeavour their own preservation, that I never knew any whose understanding was not crazed or lost, much subject to that sin; even most of the melancholy are more fearful to die than other men. And this terror is preservative enough of that kind; that such committing of a heinous known sin is a sad sign, where there is the free use of reason; that therefore they make their salvation more questionable; that they die most woful scandals to the Church; that however the sin itself should make the godly to abhor it, were there no such danger or scandal attending it, &c. But to exclude from salvation all those poor creatures who in fevers, frenzies, madness, melancholy, &c., shall commit this sin, is a way of prevention, which Scripture teacheth not, and too uncomfortable to the friends of the deceased. The common argument which they urge, drawn from the necessity of a particular repentance for every particular known sin, as it is not universally true, so were it granted, it would exclude from salvation all men breathing, for there was never any man (save Christ) who died not in some particular sin, either of commission or omission, great or small, which he hath no more

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time to repent of, than the sinner in question; but yet, this may well be called untimely death.

But in the ordinary course of God's dealings you may easily observe that He purposely maketh His people's last hour in this life to be of all other to the flesh most bitter, and to the spirit most sweet; and that they who feared death through the most of their lives, yet at last are more willing of it than ever, and all to make their rest more seasonable. Bread and drink are always good; but at such a time as Samaria's siege, to have plenty of food, instead of doves' dung, in one night's space; or in such a thirst, as Ishmael's or Samson's, to have supply of water by miracle in a moment, these are seasonable. So this rest is always good to the saints, and usually also is most seasonable rest.

VII

A further excellence of this rest is this; as it will be seasonable, so a suitable rest; suited, to the natures; to the desires; to the necessities of the saints.

1. To their natures. If suitableness concur not with excellence the best things may be bad to us; for it is that which makes things good in themselves, to be good to us. In our choice of friends we oft pass by the more excellent to choose the more suitable. Every good agrees not with every nature. To live in a free and open air, under the warming rays of the sun, is excellent to man, because suitable; but the fish, which is of another nature, doth rather choose another element; and that which is to us so excellent, would quickly be to it destructive. The choicest dainties which we feed upon ourselves would be to our beasts, as an unpleasing, so an insufficient sustenance. The iron which the ostrich well digests would be but hard food for man. Even among men, contrary

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appetites delight in contrary objects. You know the proverb, "One man's meat is another man's poison." Now here is suitableness and excellence conjoined. The new nature of the saints doth suit their spirits to this rest; and indeed their holiness is nothing else but a spark taken from this element, and by the Spirit of Christ kindled in their hearts, the flame whereof as mindful of his own Divine original, doth ever mount the soul aloft, and tend to the place from whence it comes. It worketh towards its own centre, and makes us restless till there we rest.

Gold and earthly glory, temporal crowns and kingdoms could not make a rest for saints. As they were not redeemed with so low a price, so neither are they endued with so low a nature. These might be a portion for lower spirits, and fit those whose nature they suit with; but so they cannot a saint-like nature. As God will have from them a spiritual worship, suitable to His own spiritual Being, so will He provide them a spiritual rest, suitable to His people's spiritual nature. As spirits have not fleshly substances, so neither delight they in fleshly pleasures; these are too gross and vile for them. When carnal persons think of heaven their conceivings of it are also carnal, and their notions answerable to their own natures. And were it possible for such to enjoy it, it would sure be their trouble and not their rest, because so contrary to their dispositions. A heaven of good fellowship, of wine and wantonness, of gluttony and all voluptuousness would far better please them, as being most agreeing to their natures. But a heaven of the knowledge of God and His Christ, a delightful complacency in that mutual love, an everlasting rejoicing in the fruition of our God, a perpetual singing of His high praises; this is a heaven for a saint, a spiritual rest suitable to a spiritual nature.

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Then, dear friends, we shall live in our element. We are now as the fish in some small vessel of water, that hath only so much as will keep him alive; but what is that to the full ocean? We have a little air let in to us to afford us breathing; but what is that to the sweet and fresh gales upon Mount Zion? We have a beam of the sun to lighten our darkness, and a warm ray to keep us from freezing, but then we shall live in its light and be revived by its heat for ever. Oh, blessed be that hand which fetched a coal, and kindled a fire in our dead hearts from that same altar where we must offer our sacrifice everlastingly. To be locked up in gold and in pearl would be but a wealthy starving; to have our tables with plate and ornaments richly furnished without meat, is but to be richly famished; to be lifted up with human applause is but a very airy felicity; to be advanced to the sovereignty of all the earth, would be but to wear a crown of thorns; to be filled with the knowledge of arts and sciences would be but to further the conviction of our unhappiness; but to have a nature like God, His very image, holy as He is holy, and to have God Himself to be our happiness, how well do these agree! Whether that in 2 Peter i. 4, be meant, as is commonly understood, of our own inherent renewed nature, figuratively called divine, or rather of Christ's divine nature without us, properly so called, whereof we are also relatively made partakers, I know not, but certainly were not our own in some sort divine, the enjoyment of the true divine nature could not be to us a suitable rest.

2. It is suitable also to the desires of the saints; for such as their nature, such be their desires, and such as their desires, such will be their rest. Indeed, we have now a mixed nature, and from contrary principles do arise contrary desires; as they are flesh, they have desires of flesh; and as they are sinful, so they have sinful

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desires. Perhaps they could be too willing, whilst these are stirring, to have delights, and riches, and honour, and sin itself. But these are not prevailing desires, nor such as in their deliberate choice they will stand to; therefore is it not they, but sin and flesh. These are not the desires that this rest is suited to, for they will not accompany them to their rest. To provide contents to satisfy these were to provide food for them that are dead, "for they that are in Christ, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof." But it is the desires of our renewed natures, and those which the Christian will ordinarily own, which this rest is suited to. Whilst our desires remain corrupted and misguided, it is a far greater mercy to deny them, yea, to destroy them, than to satisfy them; but those which are spiritual are of His own planting, and He will surely water them and give the increase. Is it so great a work to raise them in us; and shall they after all this vanish and fail? To send the Word and Spirit, mercies and judgments, to raise the sinner's desires from the creature to God, and then to suffer them, so raised, all to perish without success; this were to multiply the creature's misery; and then were the work of sanctification a designed preparative to our torment and tantalising, but no way conducive to our happy rest. He quickened our hungering and thirst for righteousness that He might make us happy in a full satisfaction.

Christian, this is a rest after thy own heart; it containeth all that thy heart can wish; that which thou longest for, prayest for, labourest for, there thou shalt find it all. Thou hadst rather have God in Christ, than all the world; why there thou shalt have Him. Oh, what wouldst thou not give for assurance of His love? Why, there thou shalt have assurance beyond suspicion. Nay, thy desires cannot now extend to the height of what thou

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shalt there obtain. Was it not an high favour of God to Solomon to promise to give him "whatsoever he would ask"? Why every Christian hath such a promise. Desire what thou canst, and ask what thou wilt as a Christian, and it shall be given thee; not only to half of the kingdom, but to the enjoyment both of kingdom and King. This is a life of desire and prayer; but that is a life of satisfaction and enjoyment. Oh, therefore, that we were but so wise as to limit those which we know should not be satisfied; and those which we know not whether or no they will be satisfied; and especially those which we know should not be satisfied, and to keep up continually in heart and life those desires which we are sure shall have full satisfaction. And oh, that sinners would also consider, that seeing God will not give them a felicity suitable to their sensual desires, it is therefore their wisdom to endeavour for desires suitable to the true felicity; and to direct their ship to the right harbour, seeing they cannot bring the harbour to their ship.

3. This rest is very suitable to the saints' necessities also, as well as to their natures and desires. It contains whatsoever they truly wanted; not supplying them with the gross created comforts, which now they are forced to make use of, which like Saul's armour on David, are more burden than benefit. But they shall there have the benefit without the burden; and the pure spirits extracted (as it were) shall make up their cordial, without the mixture of any drossy or earthly substance. It was Christ and perfected holiness which they most needed, and with these shall they here be principally supplied. Their other necessities are far better removed than supplied in the present carnal way. It is better to have no need of meat and drink and clothing and creatures than to have both the need and the creature continued. Their plaster will be fitted to the quality of the sore. The

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rain which Elias' prayer procured was not more seasonable after the three years' drought than this rest will be to this thirsty soul. It will be with us as with the diseased man, who had lain at the waters and continued diseased thirty-eight years, when Christ did fully cure him in a moment ; or with the woman, who having had the issue of blood, and spent all she had upon physicians, and suffered the space of twelve years, was healed by one touch of Christ. So when we have lain at ordinances and duties and creatures all our lifetime, and spent all, and suffered much, we shall have all done by Christ in a moment. But we shall see more of this under the next head.

VIII

Another excellency of our rest will be this, that it will be absolutely perfect and complete ; and this both in the sincerity and universality of it. We shall then have joy without sorrow, and rest without weariness. As there is no mixture of our corruption with our graces, so no mixture of sufferings with our solace. There is none of those waves in that harbour which now so toss us up and down ; we are now sometimes at the gates of heaven, and presently almost as low as hell ; we wonder at those changes of providence towards us, being scarcely two days together in a like condition. To-day we are well, and conclude the bitterness of death is past ; to-morrow sick, and conclude we shall shortly perish by our distempers ; to-day in esteem, to-morrow in disgrace ; to-day we have friends, to-morrow none ; to-day in gladness, to-morrow in sadness ; nay, we have wine and vinegar in the same cup, and our pleasantest food hath a taste of the gall. If revelations should raise us to the third heaven the messenger of Satan must presently buffet us, and the prick in the flesh

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will fetch us down. But there is none of this unconstancy, nor mixtures in heaven. If perfect love cast out fear then perfect joy must needs cast out sorrow; and perfect happiness exclude all the relics of misery. There will be an universal perfecting of all our parts and powers, and an universal removal of all our evils. And though the positive part be the sweetest and that which draws the other after it, even as the rising of the sun excludes the darkness, yet is not the negative part to be slighted, even our freedom from so many and great calamities. Let us therefore look over these more punctually and see what it is that we shall there rest from. In general, it is from all evil; particularly, first, from the evil of sin; secondly, and of suffering.

It excludeth nothing more directly than sin, whether original and of nature; or actual and of conversation; for there entereth nothing that defileth nor that worketh abomination nor that maketh a lie. When they are there, the saints are saints indeed. He that will wash them with His heart-blood rather than suffer them to enter unclean will now perfectly see to that; He who hath undertaken to present them to His Father, "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but perfectly holy and without blemish," will now most certainly perform His undertaking. What need Christ at all to have died, if heaven could have contained imperfect souls? "For to this end came He into the world, that He might put away the works of the devil." His blood and spirit have not done all this to leave us, after all, defiled. "For what communion hath light with darkness? And what fellowship hath Christ with Belial?" He that hath prepared for sin the torments of hell will never admit it into the blessedness of heaven.

Therefore, Christian, never fear this. If thou be once in heaven thou shalt sin no more. Is not this glad news

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to thee, who hast prayed and watched and laboured against it so long? I know, if it were offered to thy choice, thou wouldst rather choose to be freed from sin than to be made heir of all the world. Why, wait till then and thou shalt have thy desire; that hard heart, those vile thoughts, which did lie down and rise with thee, which did accompany thee to every duty, which thou couldst no more leave behind thee than leave thyself behind thee, shall be now left behind for ever. They might accompany thee to death but they cannot proceed a step further. Thy understanding shall never more be troubled with darkness, ignorance and error are inconsistent with this light. Now thou walkest like a man in the twilight, ever afraid of being out of the way; thou seest so many religions in the world that thou fearest thy one cannot be only the right among all these; thou seest the Scripture so exceeding difficult, and every one pleading for his own cause and bringing such specious arguments for so contrary opinions that it entangleth thee in a labyrinth of perplexities; thou seest so many godly men on this side, and so many on that, and each zealous for his own way, that thou art amazed, not knowing which way to take. And thus do doubtings and fears accompany darkness, and we are ready to stumble at everything in our way. But then will all this darkness be dispelled, and our blind understandings fully opened, and we shall have no more doubts of our way. We shall know which was the right side and which the wrong; which was the truth and which the error.

Oh, what would we give to know clearly all the profound mysteries in the doctrine of decree, of redemption, of justification, of the nature of grace, of the covenants, of the Divine attributes, &c.! What would we not give to see all dark scriptures made plain, to see all seeming contradictions reconciled! Why, when glory hath taken

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the veil from our eyes all this will be known in a moment; we shall then see clearly into all the controversies about doctrine or discipline that now perplex us. The poorest Christian is presently there a more perfect divine than any is here. We are now through our ignorance subject to such mutability that, in points not fundamental, we change as the moon; that it is cast as a just reproach upon us that we possess our religion with reserves, and resolvedly settle upon almost nothing; that we are to-day of one opinion, and within this week, or month, or year, of another; and yet alas, we cannot help it. The reproach may fall upon all mankind as long as we have need of daily growth. Would they have us believe before we understand? Or say, "we believe," when indeed we do not? Shall we profess ourselves resolved before we ever thoroughly studied? Or say, "we are certain," when we are conscious that we are not?

But when once our ignorance is perfectly healed then shall we be settled, resolved men; then shall our reproach be taken from us, and we shall never change our judgments more; then shall we be clear and certain in all, and cease to be sceptics any more. Our ignorance now doth lead us into error, to the grief of our more knowing brethren, to the disturbing of the Church's quiet, and interrupting her desirable harmonious consent; to the scandalising of others, and weakening ourselves. How many an humble faithful soul is seduced into error, and little knows it! Loth they are to err, God knows, and therefore read and pray and confer, and yet err still, and [are] confirmed in it more and more. And in lesser and more difficult points how should it be otherwise? He that is acquainted amongst men, and knows the quality of professors in England, must needs know the generality of them are no great scholars, nor

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have much read or studied controversies, nor are men of profoundest natural parts; nor have the ministers of England much preached controversies to them, but were glad if their hearers were brought to Christ, and got so much knowledge as might help to salvation, as knowing that to be their great work.

And can it be expected that men void of learning and strength of parts, unstudied and untaught, should at the first onset know those truths which they are almost incapable of knowing at all, when the greatest divines of clearest judgment acknowledge so much difficulty that they could almost find in their hearts sometimes to profess them quite beyond their reach? Except we will allow them to lay aside their Divine faith, and take up a human, and see with other men's eyes the weight and weakness of arguments, and not with their own, it cannot be thought that the most of Christians, no, nor the most divines, should be free from erring in those difficult points where we know they have not headpieces able to reach. Indeed, if it were the way of the Spirit to teach us miraculously, as the apostles were taught the knowledge of tongues, without the intervening use of reason; or if the Spirit infused the acts of knowledge as He doth the immediate knowing power, then he that had most of the Spirit, would not only know best, but also know most; but we have enough to convince us of the contrary to this.

But oh, that happy approaching day, when error shall vanish away for ever; when our understanding shall be filled with God Himself whose light will leave no darkness in us; His face shall be the scripture where we shall read the truth; and Himself instead of teachers and counsels to perfect our understandings, and acquaint us with Himself who is the perfect truth. No more error, no more scandal to others, no more disquiet to

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our own spirits, no more mistaking zeal for falsehood, because our understandings have no more sin. Many a godly man hath here in his mistaken zeal been a means to deceive and pervert his brethren, and when he sees his own error cannot again tell how to undeceive them. But there we shall all conspire in one truth, as being one in Him who is that truth.

And as we shall rest from all the sin of our understandings, so of our wills, affection, and conversation. We shall no more retain this rebelling principle which is still withdrawing us from God, and addicting us to backsliding; doubtless we shall no more be oppressed with the power of our corruptions, nor vexed with their presence; no pride, passion, slothfulness, senselessness shall enter with us; no strangeness to God and the things of God, no coldness of affections, nor imperfection in our love, no uneven walking, nor grieving of the Spirit, no scandalous action or unholy conversation; we shall rest from all these for ever.

Then shall our understandings receive their light from the face of God, as the full moon from the open sun, where there is no earth to interpose betwixt them; then shall our wills correspond to the Divine will, as face answers to face in a glass; and the same His will shall be our law and rule from which we shall never swerve again. Now our corruptions, as the Anakims, dismay us; and, as the Canaanites in Israel, they are left for pricks in our sides, and thorns in our eyes; and as the bondwoman and her son in Abraham's house, they do but abuse us, and make our lives a burthen to us; but then shall the bondwoman and her son be cast out, and shall not be heirs with us in our rest. As Moses said to Israel, "Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every one whatsoever is right in his own eyes; for ye are not as yet come to the rest and

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to the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you." I conclude therefore with the words next to my text, "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God from His." So that there is a perfect rest from sin.

IX

It is also a perfect rest from suffering. When the cause is gone the effect ceaseth. Our sufferings were but the consequence of our sinning; and here they both shall cease together. I will show particularly ten kinds of suffering, which we shall there rest from.

We shall rest from all our perplexing doubts and fears. It shall no more be said that doubts are like the thistle, a bad weed but growing in good ground; they shall now be weeded out, and trouble the gracious soul no more. No more need of so many sermons, books, and marks, and signs to resolve the poor doubting soul; the full fruition of love itself hath now resolved his doubts for ever. We shall hear that kind of language no more, "What shall I do to know my state? how shall I know that God is my Father? that my heart is upright? that conversion is true? that faith is sincere? Oh, I am afraid my sins are unpardoned. Oh, I fear that all is but in hypocrisy; I fear that God will reject me from His presence; I doubt He doth not hear my prayers; how can He accept so vile a wretch; so hard-hearted, unkind a sinner; such an undervaluer of Christ as I am?"

All this kind of language is there turned into another tune, even into the praises of Him who hath forgiven, who hath converted, who hath accepted, yea, who hath glorified a wretch so unworthy; so that it

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will now be as impossible to doubt and fear as to doubt of the food which is in our bellies, or to fear it is night when we see the sun shining. If Thomas could doubt with his finger in the wounds of Christ, yet in heaven I am sure he cannot; if we could doubt of what we see, or hear, or taste, or feel; yet I am sure we cannot of what we there possess. Sure this will be comfort to the sad and drooping souls whose life was nothing but a doubting distress, and their language nothing but a constant complaining. If God would speak peace, it would ease them; but when He shall possess them of this peace, they shall rest from all their doubts and fears for ever.

X

We shall rest from all that sense of God's displeasure, which was our greatest torment, whether manifested mediately or immediately, "for He will cause His fury towards us to rest, and His jealousy to cease, and He will be angry with us no more." Surely hell shall not be mixed with heaven; there is the place for the glorifying of justice, prepared of purpose to manifest wrath; but heaven is only for mercy and love. Job doth not now use his old language, "Thou writest bitter things against me, and takest me for Thine enemy, and settest me up as a mark to shoot at," &c. Oh, how contrary now to all this! David doth not now complain, that "the arrows of the Almighty stick in him"; that "his wounds stink and are corrupt"; that "his sore runs and ceaseth not"; that "his moisture is as the drought of summer"; that "there is no soundness in his flesh, because of God's displeasure; nor rest in his bones, because of sin"; that "he is weary of crying, his throat is dried, his eyes fail in waiting for God"; that "he

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remembers God and is troubled; that in complaining his spirit is overwhelmed"; that "his soul refuseth to be comforted"; that "God's wrath lieth hard upon him"; and that "He afflicteth him with all His waves." Oh, how contrary now are David's songs! Now he saith, "I spake in my haste, and this was my infirmity." Here the Christian is oft complaining: "Oh, if it were the wrath of man I could bear it, but the wrath of the Almighty who can bear? Oh, that all the world were mine enemies, so that I were assured that He were my friend! If it were a stranger, it were nothing; but that my dearest friend, my own Father, should be so provoked against me; this wounds my very soul! If it were a creature, I would condemn it, but if God be angry who may endure? If He be against me, who can be for me? And if He will cast me down, who can raise me up?" But oh, that blessed day when all these dolorous complaints will be turned into admiring thankfulness, and all sense of God's displeasure swallowed up in that ocean of infinite love, when sense shall convince us that fury dwelleth not in God. And though for a little moment He hide His face, yet with everlasting compassion will He receive and embrace us when He shall say to Sion, "Arise and shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

XI

We shall rest from all the temptations of Satan whereby he continually disturbs our peace. What a grief is it to a Christian though he yield not to the temptation, yet to be still solicited to deny his Lord; that such a thought should be cast into his heart; that he can set about nothing that is good, but Satan

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is still dissuading him from it, distracting him in it, or discouraging him after it! What a torment, as well as a temptation is it, to have such horrid motions made to his soul; such blasphemous ideas presented to his fantasy; sometimes cruel thoughts of God; sometimes undervaluing thoughts of Christ; sometimes unbelieving thoughts of Scripture: sometimes injurious thoughts of Providence; to be tempted sometimes to turn to present things; sometimes to play with the baits of sin; sometimes to venture on the delights of flesh; and sometimes to flat atheism itself; especially, when we know the treachery of our own hearts that they are as tinder or gunpowder, ready to take fire as soon as one of these sparks shall fall upon them. Oh, how the poor Christian lives in continual disquietness, to feel these motions; but more, that his heart should be the soil for this seed, and the too fruitful mother of such an offspring; and most of all through fear, lest they will at last prevail, and these cursed motions should procure his consent!

But here is our comfort; as we now stand not by our own strength, and shall not be charged with any of this, so when the day of our deliverance comes we shall fully rest from these temptations; Satan is then bound up, the time of tempting is then done; the time of torment to himself, and his conquered captives, those deluded souls, is then come; and the victorious saints shall have triumph for temptation. Now we do walk among his snares, and are in danger to be circumvented with his methods and wiles; but then we are quite above his snares, and out of the hearing of his enticing charms. He hath power here to tempt us in the wilderness, but he entereth not the holy city; he may set us on the pinnacle of the temple in the earthly Jerusalem, but the new Jerusalem he may not

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approach. Perhaps he may bring us to an exceeding high mountain; but the Mount Sion and city of the living God he cannot ascend. Or if he should, yet all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them will be but a poor despised bait to the soul which is possessed with the kingdom of our Lord and the glory of it.

No, no, here is no more work for Satan now. Hopes he might have of deceiving poor creatures on earth who lived out of sight, and only heard and read of a kingdom which they never beheld, and had only faith to live upon, and were encompassed with flesh, and drawn aside by sense. But when once they see the glory they read of, and taste the joys they heard of, and possess that kingdom which they then believed and hoped for, and have laid aside their fleshly sense, it is time then for Satan to have done; it is in vain to offer a temptation more. What, draw them from that glory; draw them from the arms of Jesus Christ; draw them from the sweet praises of God; draw them from the blessed society of saints and angels; draw them from the bosom of the Father's love, and that to a place of torment among the damned which their eyes behold; why, what charms, what persuasions can do it? To entice them from an unknown joy and unknown God, were somewhat hopeful; but now they have both seen and enjoyed, there is no hope.

Surely it must be a very strong temptation that must draw a blessed saint from that rest. We shall have no more need to pray, "Lead us not into temptation"; nor "to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation"; nor shall we serve the Lord as Paul did, in "many tears and temptations"; no, but now they who continued with Christ in temptation shall by Him be appointed to a kingdom, even as His Father appointed to Him, that they may eat and drink at His table in His kingdom.

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“Blessed therefore are they that endure temptation; for when they are tried, they shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.” And then they shall be saved from the hour of temptation; then the malignant planet Saturn shall be below us, and lose all its influence, which now is above exercising its enmity; and Satan must be suffering, who would have drawn us into suffering: as Bucholtzer wittily, *“Ubi Saturnus non supra nos sed infra nos conspicietur, luens pœnas pro sua in nos sævitia et malitia.”*

XII

We shall rest also from all our temptations which we now undergo from the world and the flesh, as well as Satan; and that is a number unexpressible, and weight utterly intolerable, were it not that we are beholden to supporting grace. Oh, the hourly dangers that we poor sinners here below walk in! Every sense is a snare, every member a snare, every creature a snare, every mercy a snare, and every duty a snare to us. We can scarce open our eyes but we are in danger; if we behold those above us, we are in danger of envy; if those below us, we are in danger of contempt; if we see sumptuous buildings, pleasant habitations, honour and riches, we are in danger to be drawn away with covetous desires; if the rags and beggary of others, we are in danger of self-applauding thoughts and unmercifulness. If we see beauty, it is a bait to lust; if deformity, to loathing and disdain. We can scarcely hear a word spoken but contains to us matter of temptation; how soon do slanderous reports, vain jests, wanton speeches by that passage creep into the heart! How strong and prevalent a temptation is our appetite, and how constant and

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strong a watch doth it require! Have we comeliness and beauty; what fuel for pride! Are we deformed; what an occasion of repining! Have we strength of reason and gifts of learning; oh, how hard it is not to be puffed up; to seek ourselves; to hunt after applause; to despise our brethren; to mislike the simplicity that is in Christ, both in the matter and manner of Scripture; in doctrine, in discipline, in worship, and in the saints; to affect a pompous, specious, fleshly service of God; and to exalt reason above faith! Are we unlearned and of shallow heads and slender parts? How apt then to despise what we have not; and to undervalue that which we do not know; and to err with confidence because of our ignorance; and, if conceitedness and pride do but strike in, to become a zealous enemy to truth, and a leading troubler of the Church's peace, under pretences of truth and holiness! Are we men of eminency, and in place of authority; how strong is our temptation to slight our brethren, to abuse our trust, to seek ourselves, to stand upon our honour and privileges, to forget ourselves, our poor brethren, and the public good; how hard to devote our power to His glory from whom we have received it; how prone to make our wills our law, and to cut out all the enjoyments of others, both religious and civil, by the cursed rules and model of our own interest and policy! Are we inferiors and subject; how prone to grudge at others' pre-eminence, and to take liberty to bring all their actions to the bar of our incompetent judgment; and to censure and slander them, and murmur at their proceedings! Are we rich, and not too much exalted! Are we poor, and not discontented, and make our worldly necessities a pretence for the robbing God of all His service! If we be sick, oh how impatient! If in health, how few and stupid are our thoughts of eternity! If death be near, we are distracted with the fears of it;

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if we think it far off, how careless is our preparation! Do we set upon duty? why, there are snares too: either we are stupid and lazy; or rest on them, and turn from Christ; or we are customary, and notional only.¹

In a word, not one word that falls from the mouth of a minister or Christian, but is a snare; not a place we come into, not a word that our own tongues speak, not any mercy we possess, not a bit we put into our mouths, but they are snares; not that God hath made them so, but through our own corruption they become so to us; so that what a sad case are we poor Christians in, and especially they that discern them not; for it is almost impossible they should escape them. It was not for nothing that our Lord cries out, "What I say to one I say to all, watch." We are like the lepers at Samaria, if we go into the city, there is nothing but famine; if we sit still, we perish.

But for ever blessed be omnipotent love which saves us out of all these, and makes our straits but the advantages of the glory of His saving grace! And "blessed be the Lord, who hath not given our souls for a prey; our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped." No, our houses, our clothes, our sleep, our food, our physic, our father, mother, wife, children, friends, goods, lands are all so many temptations; and ourselves the greatest snare to ourselves. But in heaven the danger and trouble is over; there is nothing but what will advance our joy. Now every old companion and every loose fellow is putting up the finger, and beckoning us to sin, and we can scarce tell how to say them nay. What, say they, will not you take a cup? Will you not do as your neighbours? Must you be so precise? Do you think

¹ Deut. xii. 30; vii. 25; Hosea ix. 8; Ps. lxix. 22; Prov. xx. 25; xxii. 25; xxix. 6, 25; 1 Tim. vi. 9; Job xviii. 8, 10.

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none shall be saved but Puritans? What needs all this strictness, this reading and praying and preaching? Will you make yourself the scorn of all men? Come, do as we do, take your cups and drink away sorrow. Oh, how many a poor Christian hath been haunted and vexed with these temptations; and it may be father, or mother, or nearest friends will strike in, and give a poor Christian no rest; and alas, how many, to their eternal undoing, have hearkened to their seducements! But this is our comfort, dear friends, our rest will free us from all these. As Satan hath no entrance there, so neither anything to serve his malice; but all things shall there with us conspire the high praises of our great Deliverer.

XIII

And as we rest from the temptations, so also from all abuses and persecutions which we suffer at the hands of wicked men. We shall be scorned and derided, imprisoned, banished, butchered by them no more; the prayers of the souls under the altar will then be answered, and "God will avenge their blood on those that dwell on the earth." This is the time for crowning with thorns, buffeting, spitting on; that is the time for crowning with glory. Now the law is decreed on, "That whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecutions"; then "they that suffered with Him shall be glorified with Him." Now we must be "hated of all men for Christ's name sake, and the Gospel"; then will Christ be admired in His saints that were thus hated. Now because "we are not of the world, but Christ hath taken us out of the world, therefore doth the world hate us"; then because we are not of the world, but taken out of their calamity, therefore will the world admire us.

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Now as they hated Christ, they will also hate us; then as they will honour Christ, so will they also honour us. We are here as the scorn and offscouring of all things; as men set up for a gazing-stock to angels and men, even for signs and wonders among professing Christians; they put us out of their synagogues, and cast out our name as evil, and separate us from their company; but we shall then be as much gazed at for our glory, and they will be shut out of the church of the saints, and separated from us, whether they will or no.¹ They now think it strange that we run not with them “to all excess of riot, speaking evil of us”; they will then think more strange that they ran not with us in the despised ways of God; and speak evil of themselves; and more vehemently befool themselves for their carelessness than ever they did us for our heavenliness. A poor Christian can scarce go along the streets now but every one is pointing the finger in scorn, but then they would be glad of the crumbs of his happiness. The rich man would scarce have believed him that would have told him that he should beg for water from the tip of Lazarus’ finger. Here is a great change! We can scarcely now pray in our families, or sing praises to God, but our voice is a vexation to them. How must it needs torment them then, to see us praising and rejoicing, while they are howling and lamenting! How full have their prisons oft been, and how bitter their rage! How did they scatter the carcasses in the fields, and delight themselves in the blood of saints! How glad would they have been, if they could have brought them to ruin, and blotted out their name from off the earth! How did they prepare, like Haman, their gallows; and if God had not gainsaid it, the execution would have been answerable; “but He that sitteth in heaven did laugh them to scorn, the Lord had them in derision.” Oh, how

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 9, 13; Lam. iii. 45; Heb. x. 33; Isa. viii. 18; Luke vi. 22.

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full were their hearts of blood, and their hands of cruelty, so that the next generations, that knew them not, will scarcely believe the fury of their predecessors' rage.

Blessed be the Guardian of the saints, who hath not suffered the prevalency of that wrath, which would have made the gunpowder treason, the Turkish slavery, the Spanish Inquisition, the French massacres to have been as ordinary as inhuman. But the Lord of hosts hath oft brought them down; and His power and justice hath abated their fury, and raised to His name everlasting trophies, and set up many a monument of remembrance in England and in other places, which God forbid should ever be forgotten. "So let all thine" incurable "enemies perish, O Lord." "When the Lord maketh inquisition for blood, He will remember the precious blood which they have shed, and the earth shall not cover it any more." The Jesuits' hopes are that they shall yet again have a prevailing day. It is possible though improbable. If they should, we know where their rage will stop. They shall pursue, but as Pharaoh, to their own destruction; and where they fall, there we shall pass over safely, and escape them for ever. For our Lord hath told them, "That whither He goes, they cannot come." When their flood of persecution is dried up, and the Church called out of the wilderness, and the new Jerusalem come down from heaven, and mercy and justice are fully glorified, then shall we feel their fury no more. There is no cruel mockings and scourgings, no bonds, or imprisonments, no stoning, or sawing asunder, tempting, or slaying with the sword, wandering in sheep skins, or goat skins, in deserts or mountains, dens or caves of the earth; no more being destitute, afflicted, or tormented.

We leave all this behind us when once we enter the city of our rest; the names of Lollard, Huguenots,

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Puritan, Roundheads, are not there used ; the Inquisition of Spain is there condemned ; the statute of the Six Articles is there repealed, and the law *De Hæreticis comburendis* more justly executed ; the date of the *Interim* is there expired ; subscription and conformity no more urged ; silencing and suspending are more than suspended ; there are no bishops' or chancellors' courts ; no Visitations nor High Commission judgments ; no censures to loss of members, perpetual imprisonment or banishment. Christ is not there clothed in a gorgeous robe, and blindfolded, nor do they smite Him, and say, "Read who struck thee" ; nor is truth clothed in the robes of error, and smitten for that which it most directly contradicteth ; nor a schismatic wounded, and a saint found bleeding ; nor our friends smite us, whilst they mistake us for their enemies ; there is none of this blind mad work there.

Dear brethren, you that now can attempt no work of God without resistance, and find you must either lose the love of the world, and your outward comforts, or else the love of God and your eternal salvation ; consider, you shall in heaven have no discouraging company, nor any but who will further your work, and gladly join heart and voice with you in your everlasting joy and praises. Till then, "possess your souls in patience" ; bind all reproaches as a crown to your heads ; esteem them greater riches than the world's treasures : account it matter of joy when you fall into tribulation. You have seen in these days that our God is able to deliver us ; but this is nothing to our final conquest : He will recompense tribulation to them that trouble you ; and to you who are troubled rest with Christ. Only see to this, brethren, that none of you suffer as an evil-doer, as a busybody in other men's matters, as a resister of the commands of lawful authority, as ungrateful to those

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that have been instruments of our good, as evil speakers against dignities, as opposers of the discipline and ordinances of Christ, as scornful revilers of your Christian brethren, as reproachers of a laborious, judicious, conscientious ministry, &c. "But if any of you suffer for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of God and of glory resteth upon you." And if any of you begin to shrink and draw back because of opposition, and are ashamed either of your work or your Master; let such a one know to his face that he is but a base-spirited, cowardly wretch, and cursedly undervalueth the saints' rest, and most foolishly overvalueth the things below; and he must learn to forsake all these, or else he can never be Christ's disciple; and that Christ will renounce him and be ashamed of him before His Father and the angels of Heaven.

But for those that have held fast their integrity, and gone through good report and evil report, and undergone the violence of unreasonable men, let them "hear the word of the Lord; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified"; (they had good words, and godly pretences) "but He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed." "Your Redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is His name; He shall thoroughly plead your cause, that He may give rest to His people, and disquietness to " their enemies.¹

XIV

We shall then also rest from all our sad divisions and unchristian-like quarrels with one another. As he said, who saw the carcasses lie together, as if they had embraced each other, who had been slain by each other in

¹ Isa. lxvi. 5; Jer. l. 34.

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a duel, "*Quanta se invicem amplectuntur amicitia, qui mutua implacabili inimicitia perire?*" How lovingly do they embrace one another, being dead, who perished through their mutual implacable enmity! So, how lovingly do thousands live together in heaven, who lived in divisions and quarrels on earth! Or, as he said, who beheld how quietly and peaceably the bones and dust of mortal enemies did lie together; "*Non tanta vivi pace essetis conjuncti.*" You did not live together so peaceably. So we may say of multitudes in heaven now all of one mind, one heart, and one employment: You lived not on earth in so sweet familiarity. There is no contention, because none of this pride, ignorance, or other corruption. Paul and Barnabas are now fully reconciled. There they are not every man conceited of his own understanding, and in love with the issue of his own brain, but all admiring the Divine perfection, and in love with God and one another. As old Grynæus wrote to his friend, "*Si te non amplius in terris videam, ibi tamen conveniemus ubi Lutherus cum Zuinglio optime jam convenit.*" If I see you no more on earth, yet we shall there meet, where Luther and Zuinglius are now well agreed. There is a full reconciliation between Sacramentarians and Ubiquitarians, Calvinists and Lutherans, Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants, Disciplinarians and Anti-Disciplinarians, Conformists and Nonconformists. Antinomians and Legalists are terms there not known. Presbyterians and Independents are perfectly agreed. There is no discipline erected by state policy, nor any disordered popular rule; no government but that of Christ. All things are established *Jure Divino*; no bitter invectives, nor voluminous reproaches; the language of Martin¹ is there a stranger; and the sound

¹ Two books full of bitterest scorns at the ministry and discipline, thought to be written by one Overton.

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of his echo is not heard. No recording our brethren's infirmities; nor raking into the sores which Christ died to heal.

How many sermons zealously preached, how many books studiously compiled, will then by the authors be all disclaimed. How many backbiting slanderous speeches, how many secret dividing contrivances, must then be laid upon the score of Christ, against whom and His saints they were committed! The zealous authors dare not own them; they would then, with the Ephesians, burn their books,¹ and rather lose their labour than stand to it. There is no plotting to strengthen our party, nor deep designing against our brethren. And is it not shame and pity that our course is now so contrary? Surely, if there be sorrow or shame in heaven, we shall then be both sorry and ashamed to look one another there in the face, and to remember all this carriage on earth, even as the brethren of Joseph were to behold him, when they remembered their former unkind usage. Is it not enough that all the world is against us, but we must also be against one another? Did I ever think to have heard Christians so to reproach and scorn Christians, and men professing the fear of God to make so little conscience of censuring, vilifying, slandering, and disgracing one another? Could I have believed him that would have told me five years ago that when the scorers of godliness were subdued and the bitter prosecutors of the Church overthrown that such should succeed them who suffered with us, who were our intimate friends, with whom we took sweet counsel, and went up together to the house of God? Did I think it had been in the hearts of men professing such zeal to religion and the ways of Christ to draw their swords against each other, and to seek each other's blood so fiercely? Alas, if the

¹ Acts xix. 19.

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judgment be once perverted, and error hath possessed the supreme faculty, whither will men go, and what will they do? Nay, what will they not do?

Oh, what a potent instrument for Satan is a misguided conscience! It will make a man kill his dearest friend, yea, father or mother, yea, the holiest saints, and think he doth God service by it; and to facilitate the work, it will first blot out the reputation of their holiness, and make them take a saint for a devil, that so they may vilify or destroy him without remorse. Oh, what hellish things are ignorance and pride that can bring men's souls to such a case as this! Paul knew what he said when he commanded that a novice should not be a teacher, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. He discerned that such young Christians that have got but a little smattering knowledge in religion do lie in greatest danger of this pride and condemnation. Who but a Paul could have foreseen that among the very teachers and governors of so choice a church as Ephesus, that came to see and hear him, that pray and weep with him, there were some that afterwards should be notorious sect-masters; "that of their own selves men should arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Who then can expect better from any society now, how knowing and holy soever? To-day they may be orthodox, unanimous, and joined in love; and perhaps within a few weeks be divided and at bitter enmity through their doting about questions that tend not to edify. Who that had seen how lovingly the godly in England did live together, when they were hated and scorned of all, would have believed that ever they would have been so bitter against one another; that when those who derided us for preaching, for hearing, for constant praying in our families, for singing Psalms, for sanctifying the Lord's day, for repeating sermons, for taking

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notes, for desiring discipline, &c., had their mouths stopped, we should fall upon one another for the very same duties; and that professors of religion should oppose and deride almost all that worship of God, out of conscience, which others did before them through profaneness? Did I not think, that of all other, the scorning at the worshippers of Christ had been a sure sign of a wicked wretch? But I see now we must distinguish between scorers and scorners, or else I fear we shall exclude almost all.

I read indeed in Pagan writers that the Christians were as cruel as bears and tigers against one another; Ammianus Marcellinus gives it as the reason of Julian's policy in proclaiming liberty for every party to profess and preach their own opinions, because he knew that cruel Christians would then most fiercely fall upon one another; and so by liberty of conscience, and by keeping their children from the schools of learning, he thought to have rooted out Christianity from the earth. But I had hoped this accusation had come from the malice of the Pagan writer; little did I think to have seen it so far verified. Lord, what devils are we unsanctified, when there is yet such a nature remaining in the sanctified! Such a nature hath God in these days suffered to discover itself in the very godly that if He did not graciously and powerfully restrain, they would shed the blood of one another; and no thanks to us if it be not done. But I hope His design is but to humble and shame us by the discovery, and then to prevent the breaking forth. But alas, since the first writing of this my hopes are frustrate.

But is it possible such should be truly godly? Then what sin will denominate a man ungodly?

Or else I must believe the doctrine of the saints' apostasy, or believe there are scarce any godly in the world. Oh, what a wound of dishonour hath this given

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not only to the stricter profession of holiness, but even to the very Christian name! Were there a possibility of hiding it, I durst not thus mention it. O Christian, if thou who readest this be guilty, I charge thee before the living God, that thou sadly consider how far is this unlike the copy? Suppose thou hadst seen the Lord Jesus, girded to the service, stooping to the earth, washing His disciples' dirty feet, and wiping them, and saying to them; 'This I have done to give you an example, that if I your Lord and Master have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's: would not this make thee ashamed and tremble? Shall the Lord wipe the feet, and the fellow-servant be ready to cut the throat? Would not thy proud heart scorn to stoop to thy Master's work? Look to thyself; it is not the name of a professor, nor the zeal for thy opinions, that will prove thee a Christian, or secure thee from the heat of the consuming fire. If thou love not thine enemy, much more thy Christian friend, thou canst not be Christ's disciple. It is the common mark, whereby His disciples are known to all men, "that they love one another." Is it not His last great legacy, "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you"? Mark the expressions of that command, "If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men"; "Follow peace with all men, and holiness."

Oh, the deceitfulness of the heart of man, that those same men who lately in their self-examination could find nothing of Christ so clear within them as their love to their brethren, and were confident of this when they could scarce discover any other grace, should now look so strangely upon them, and be filled with so much bitterness against them! That the same men, who would have travelled through reproaches many miles, to hear an able faithful minister, and not think the labour ill bestowed, should now become their bitterest enemies, and

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the most powerful hinderers of the success of their labours, and travel as far to cry them down! It makes me almost ready to say, O sweet, O happy days of persecution; which drove us together in a closure of love; who being now dried at the fire of liberty and prosperity are crumbled all into dust by our contentions. But it makes me seriously both to say and to think, O sweet, O happy day of the rest of the saints in glory, when as there is one God, one Christ, one Spirit, so we shall have one judgment, one heart, one church, one employment for ever; when there shall be no more circumcision and uncircumcision, Jew and Gentile, Anabaptist or Pædobaptist, Brownist, Separatist, Independent, Presbyterian, Episcopal; but Christ is all and in all. We shall not there scruple our communion, nor any of the ordinances of Divine worship; there will not be one for singing, and another against it; but even those who here jarred in discord shall all conjoin in blessed concord, and make up one melodious choir.

I could wish they were of the martyr's mind, who rejoiced that she might have her foot in the same hole of the stocks in which Master Philpots had been before her. But, however, I am sure they will joyfully live in the same heaven, and gladly participate in the same rest. Those whom one house could not hold, nor one church hold them, no, nor one kingdom neither; yet one heaven, and one God may hold. One house, one kingdom could not hold Joseph and his brethren, but they must together again, whether they will or no; and then how is the case altered! Then every man must straight withdraw, while they weep over and kiss each other. Oh, how canst thou now find in thy heart, if thou bear the heart or face of a Christian, to be bitter or injurious against thy brethren, when thou dost but once think of that time and place where thou hopest in the nearest and sweetest

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familiarity to live and rejoice with them for ever! I confess their infirmities are not to be loved, nor sin to be tolerated because it is theirs. But be sure it be sin which thou opposest in them; and do it with a spirit of meekness and compassion, that the world may see thy love to the person, while thou opposest the offence. Alas, that Turks and Pagans can agree in wickedness better than Christians in the truth; that bears and lions, wolves and tigers can agree together, but Christians cannot; that a legion of devils can accord in one body, and not the tenth part so many Christians in one church! Well, the fault may be mine, and it may be theirs; or more likely both mine and theirs; but this rejoiceth me, that my old friends, who now look strangely at me, will joyfully triumph with me in our common rest.

XV

We shall then rest from all our dolorous hours and sad thoughts which we now undergo by participating with our brethren in their calamities. Alas, if we had nothing upon ourselves to trouble us, yet what heart could lay aside sorrows, that lives in the sound of the Church's sufferings! If Job had nothing upon his body to disquiet him, yet the message of his children's overthrow must needs grieve the most patient soul. Except we are turned into steel or stone, and have lost both Christian and human affection, there needs no more than the miseries of our brethren to fill our hearts with successions of sorrows, and make our lives a continued lamentation. The Church on earth is a mere hospital; which way ever we go we hear complaining; and into what corner soever we cast our eyes we behold objects of pity and grief; some groaning under a dark

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understanding, some under a senseless heart, some languishing under unfruitful weakness, and some bleeding for miscarriages and wilfulness, and some in such a lethargy that they are past complaining; some crying out of their pining poverty; some groaning under pains and infirmities; and some bewailing a whole catalogue of calamities, especially in days of common sufferings when nothing appears to our sight but ruin; families ruined; congregations ruined; sumptuous structures ruined; cities ruined; country ruined; court ruined; kingdoms ruined. Who weeps not, when all these bleed?

As now our friends' distresses are our distresses, so then our friends' deliverance will be part of our own deliverance. How much more joyous now to join with them in their days of thanksgiving and gladness, than in the days of humiliation in sackcloth and ashes! How much then more joyous will it be to join with them in their perpetual praises and triumphs, than to hear them bewailing now their wretchedness, their want of light, their want of life, of joy, of assurance, of grace, of Christ, of all things! How much more comfortable to see them perfected, than now to see them wounded, weak, sick, and afflicted! To stand by the bed of their languishing as silly comforters, being overwhelmed and silenced with the greatness of their griefs, conscious of our own disability to relieve them, scarce having a word of comfort to refresh them; or if we have, alas, they be but words which are a poor relief when their sufferings are real; fain we would ease or help them but cannot; all we can do is to sorrow with them, which alas, doth rather increase their sorrows. Our day of rest will free both them and us, from all this.

Now we may enter many a poor Christian's cottage, and there see their children ragged, their purse empty, their cupboard empty, their belly empty, and poverty

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possessing and filling all; how much better is that day when we shall see them filled with Christ, clothed with glory, and equalised with the richest and greatest princes! Oh, the sad and heart-piercing spectacles, that mine eyes have seen in four years' space; in this fight a dear friend fall down by me; from another a precious Christian brought home wounded or dead; scarce a month, scarce a week without the sight or noise of blood; surely there is none of this in heaven. Our eyes shall then be filled no more, nor our hearts pierced, with such fights, as at Worcester, Edgehill, Newbury, Nantwich, Montgomery, Horncastle, York, Naseby, Langport, &c. We shall then have the conquest without the calamity. Mine eyes shall never more behold the earth covered with the carcasses of the slain. Our black ribands and mourning attire will then be turned into the white robes and garments of gladness. Oh, how hardly can my heart now hold when I think of such, and such, and such a dear Christian friend slain or departed! Oh, how glad must the same heart needs be when we see them all alive and glorified! But a far greater grief it is to our spirits, to see the spiritual miseries of our brethren; to see such a one with whom we took sweet counsel, and who zealously joined with us in God's worship, to be now fallen off to sensuality, turned drunkard, worldling, or a persecutor of the saints; and these trying times have given us too large occasion for such sorrows; to see our dearest and most intimate friends to be turned aside from the truth of Christ, and that either in or near the foundation; and to be raging confident in the grossest errors; to see many near us in the flesh continue their neglect of Christ and their souls, and nothing will waken them out of their security; to look on an ungodly father or mother, brother or sister in the face; to look

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on a carnal wife or husband, or child, or friend; and to think how certainly they shall be in hell for ever, if they die in their present unregenerate estate. Oh, what continual dolours do all these sad sights and thoughts fill our hearts with from day to day; and will it not be a blessed day when we shall rest from all these?

What Christian now is not in Paul's case, and cannot speak in his language: "Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches; who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" What heart is not wounded to think on Germany's long desolations? Oh, the learned universities, the flourishing churches there, that now are left desolate! Look on England's four years' blood, a flourishing land almost made ruined; hear but the common voice in most cities, towns, and countries through the land; and judge whether here be no cause of sorrow. Especially, look but to the sad effects; and men's spirits grown more out of order. When a most wonderful Reformation by such wonderful means might have been well expected; and is this not cause of astonishing sorrows? Look to Scotland, look to Ireland, look almost everywhere, and tell me what you see. Blessed that approaching day, when our eyes shall behold no more such sights, nor our ears hear any more such tidings!

How many hundred pamphlets are printed full of almost nothing but the common calamities! so that it is become a gainful trade to divulge the news of our brethren's sufferings. And the fears for the future that possessed our hearts were worse than all that we saw and suffered. Oh, the tidings that run from Edgehill fight, of York fight, &c.; how many a face did they make pale; and how many a heart did they astonish. Nay, have not many died with the fears of

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that which, if they had lived, they had neither suffered nor seen. It is said of Melancthon, that the miseries of the Church made him almost neglect the death of his most beloved children; to think of the Gospel departing, the glory taken from Israel, our sun setting at noon-day, poor souls left willingly dark and destitute, and with great pains and hazard blowing out the light that should guide them to salvation. What sad thoughts must these be! To think of Christ removing His family; taking away both worship and worshippers, and to leave the land to the rage of the merciless; these were sad thoughts. Who could then have taken the harp in hand, or sung the pleasant songs of Zion? But blessed be the Lord who hath frustrated our fears, and who will hasten that rejoicing day when Zion shall be exalted above the mountains, and her gates shall be open day and night, and the glory of the Gentiles be brought into it, and the nation and kingdom that will not serve her shall perish; when the sons of them that afflicted her, shall come bending unto her, and all they that despised her, shall bow themselves down at the soles of her feet; and they shall call her the city of the Lord, the Zion of the holy One of Israel; when her people also shall be all righteous, even the work of God's hands, the branch of His planting, who shall inherit the land for ever, that He may be glorified. When that voice shall sound forth, "Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her; that ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolation; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory."

Thus shall we rest from our participation of our brethren's sufferings.

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XVI

We shall rest also from all our own personal sufferings, whether natural and ordinary, or extraordinary from the afflicting hand of God. And though this may seem a small thing to those that live in continual ease, and abound in all kind of prosperity; yet, methinks, to the daily afflicted soul it should make the forethoughts of heaven delightful; and I think we shall meet with few of the saints but will say that this is their own case. Oh, the dying life that we now live; as full of sufferings as of days and hours! We are the carcasses that all calamities prey upon; as various as they are, each one will have a snatch at us, and be sure to devour a morsel of our comfort. When we bait our bulls and bears, we do but represent our own condition; whose lives are consumed under such assaults, and spent in succession of fresh encounters. All creatures have an enmity against us ever since we made the Lord of all our enemy.

And though we are reconciled by the blood of the covenant, and the price is paid for our full deliverance; yet our Redeemer sees it fit to leave this measure of misery upon us, to make us know for what we are beholden, and to mind us of what we would else forget; to be serviceable to His wise and gracious designs, and advantageous to our full and final recovery. He hath sent us as lambs among wolves; and sure there is little rest to be expected. As all our senses are the inlets of sin, so they are become the inlets of our sorrow. Grief creeps in at our eyes, at our ears, and almost everywhere; it seizes upon our head, our hearts, our flesh, our spirits, and what part doth escape it? Fears do devour us and darken our delights, as the frosts do nip the tender buds: cares do consume us and feed upon our spirits, as the

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scorching sun doth wither the delicate flowers. Or, if any saint or stoic have fortified his inwards against these, yet is he naked still without; and if he be wiser than to create his own sorrows, yet shall he be sure to feel his share, he shall produce them as the meritorious, if not as the efficient cause. What tender pieces are these dusty bodies! What brittle glasses do we bear about us; and how many thousand dangers are they hurried through; and how hardly cured, if once cracked! Oh, the multitudes of slender veins, of tender membranes, nerves, fibres, muscles, arteries, and all subject to obstructions, exesions, tensions, contractions, resolutions, ruptures, or one thing or other to cause their grief; every one a fit subject for pain, and fit to communicate that pain to the whole; what noble part is there that suffereth its pain or ruin alone?

Whatever it is to the sound and healthful, methinks, to such as myself this rest should be acceptable, who in ten or twelve years' time have scarce had a whole day free from some dolor. Oh, the weary nights and days! Oh, the unserviceable languishing weakness! Oh, the restless working vapours! Oh, the tedious nauseous medicines, besides the daily expectations of worse! And will it not be desirable to rest from all these? There will be then no crying out; oh, my head; oh, my stomach, oh, my sides; or oh, my bowels. No, no, sin and flesh and dust and pain will all be left behind together. Oh, what would we not give now for a little ease, much more for a perfect cure! How then should we value that perfect freedom! If we have some mixed comforts here, they are scarce enough to sweeten our crosses; or if we have some short and smiling intermissions, it is scarce time enough to breathe us in, and to prepare our tacklings for the next storm. If one wave pass by, another succeeds: and if the night be over and the day

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come, yet will it soon be night again. Some men's fevers are continual and some intermittent; some have tertians and some quartans; but, more or less, all have their fits.

Oh, the blessed tranquillity of that region where there is nothing but sweet continued peace! No succession of joy there, because no intermission. Our lives will be but one joy, as our time will be changed into one eternity. O healthful place, where none are sick! O fortunate land, where all are kings! O place most holy, where all are priests! How free a state, where none are servants, save to their supreme Monarch! For it shall come to pass, that in that day the Lord shall give us rest from our sorrow, and our fear, and from the hard bondage wherein we served. The poor man shall no more be tired with his incessant labours; no more use of plough, or flail, or scythe, or sickle; no stooping of the servant to the master, or the tenant to the landlord; no hunger or thirst or cold or nakedness; no pinching frosts nor scorching heats. Our very beasts who suffered with us shall also be freed from their bondage; ourselves therefore much more; our faces shall no more be pale or sad; our groans and sighs will be done away; and God will wipe away all tears from our eyes.

No more parting of friends asunder, nor voice of lamentation heard in our dwellings. No more breaches, nor disproportion in our friendship, nor any trouble accompanying our relations; no more care of master for servants, of parents for children, of magistrates over subjects, of ministers over people. No more sadness for our study lost, our preaching lost, our entreaties lost, the tenders of Christ's blood lost, and our dear people's souls lost. No more marrying nor giving in marriage, but we shall be as the angels of God. Oh, what room can there be for any evil where the whole is perfectly filled with God! Then shall the "ransomed of the Lord

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return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Hold out then a little longer, O my soul; bear with the infirmities of thine earthly tabernacle; endure that share of sorrows that the love of thy Father shall impose; submit to His indignation also, because thou hast sinned against Him; it will be thus but a little while; the sound of thy Redeemer's feet are even at the door; and thine own deliverance nearer than many others. And thou who hast often cried in the language of the divine poet,

"Sorrow was all my soul; I scarce believed,
Till grief did tell me roundly, that I lived,"

shalt then feel that God and joy is all thy soul; the fruition of whom, with thy freedom from all these sorrows, will more sweetly and more feelingly make thee know, and to His eternal praise acknowledge, that thou livest. And thus we shall rest from all afflictions.

XVII

We shall rest also from all the trouble and pain of duty. The conscientious magistrate now cries out, oh, the burden that lieth upon me! The conscientious parents that know the preciousness of their children's souls, and the constant pains required to their godly education, cry out, oh, the burden! The conscientious minister above all, when he reads his charge, and views his pattern, when he hath tried a while what it is to study, and pray, and preach, according to the weight and excellence of the work; to go from house to house, and from neighbour to neighbour, and to beseech them night and day with tears; and after all to be hated and

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persecuted for so doing; no wonder if he cry out, oh, the burden! and be ready to run away with Jonas; and with Jeremy to say, "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name; for His word is a reproach to us, and a derision daily; but that He hath made His word as a fire shut up in our bones and heart, that we are weary of forbearing, and cannot stay."

How long may we study and labour before one soul is brought clear over to Christ; and when it is done, how soon do the snares of sensuality or error entangle them! How many receive the doctrine of delusion, before they have time to be built up in the truth; and when heresies must of necessity arise, how few of them do appear approved! The first new strange apparition of light doth so amaze them that they think they are in the third heavens, when they are but newly passed from the suburbs of hell, and are presently as confident, as if they knew all things, when they have not yet half light enough to acquaint them with their ignorance; but after ten or twenty years' study they become usually of the same judgment with those they despised. And seldom doth a minister live to see the ripeness of his people; but one soweth and planteth, another watereth, and a third reapeth and receiveth the increase. Yet were all this duty delightful, had we but a due proportion of strength. But, to inform the old ignorant sinner, to convince the stubborn and worldly wise, to persuade a wilful resolved wretch, to prick a stony heart to the quick, to make a rock to weep and tremble, to set forth Christ according to our necessity and His excellency, to comfort the soul whom God rejected, to clear up dark and difficult truths, to oppose with convincing arguments all gainsayers, to credit the Gospel with exemplary conversations, when multitudes do but watch for our halting; oh, "who is sufficient for these things?"

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So that every relation, state, age, hath variety of duty: every conscientious Christian cries out, Oh, the burden! or, Oh, my weakness that makes it so burdensome! But our remaining rest will ease us of the burden. Then will that be sound doctrine which now is false, that the law hath no more to do with us; that it becomes not a Christian to beg for pardon, seeing all his sins are perfectly pardoned already; that we need not fast, nor mourn, nor weep, nor repent; and that a sorrowful countenance beseems not a Christian; then will all these become truths.

XVIII

And lastly, we shall rest from all those sad affections which necessarily accompany our absence from God; the trouble that is mixed in our desires and hopes, our longings and waitings, shall then cease. We shall no more look into our cabinet, and miss our treasure; look into our hearts, and miss our Christ; nor no more seek Him from ordinance to ordinance, and enquire for our God of those we meet; our heart will not lie in our knee, nor our souls be breathed out in our requests; but all concluded in a most full and blessed fruition. But because this with the former are touched before, I will say no more of them now.

So you have seen what we shall rest from.

XIX

The ninth and last jewel in our crown, and blessed attribute of this rest, is, that it is an eternal rest. This is the crown of our crown; without which all were comparatively little or nothing. The very thought of

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once leaving it would else embitter all our joys; and the more would it pierce us because of the singular excellencies which we must forsake. It would be a hell in heaven to think of once losing heaven: as it would be a kind of heaven to the damned had they but hopes of once escaping. Mortality is the disgrace of all sublunary delights. It makes our present life of little value (were it not for the reference it hath to God and eternity) to think that we must shortly lay it down. How can we take delight in anything when we remember how short that delight would be; that the sweetness of our cups and morsels is dead as soon as they are once but past our taste? Indeed if man were as the beast, that knows not his suffering or death, till he feel it, and little thinks when the knife is whetting, that it is making ready to cut his throat; then might we be merry till death forbids us, and enjoy our delights till they shall forsake us; but alas, we know both good and evil; and evil foreknown is in part endured; and thus our knowledge increaseth our sorrows.

How can it choose but spoil our pleasure while we see it dying in our hands? How can I be as merry as the jovial world had I not mine eye fixed upon eternity; when methinks I foresee my dying hour, my friends waiting for my last gasp, and closing mine eyes, while tears forbid to close their own; methinks I hear them say, he is dead; methinks I see my coffin made, my grave in digging, and my friends there leaving me in the dust; and where now is that we took delight in? Oh, but methinks I see, at the same view, that grave opening, and my dead revived body rising; methinks I hear that blessed voice, Arise and live, and die no more. Surely were it not for eternity, I should think man a silly piece, and all his life and honour but contemptible, I should call him with David, "A vain shadow," and with the prophet,

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“Nothing, and less than nothing, and altogether lighter than vanity itself.” It utterly disgraceth the greatest glory in mine eyes if you can but truly call it mortal. I can value nothing that shall have an end; except as it leads to that which hath no end; or as it comes from that love which neither hath beginning nor end. I speak this of my deliberate thoughts; and if some ignorant or forgetful soul have no such sad thoughts to disturb his pleasure, I confess he may be merrier for the present; but where is his mirth when he lieth dying; alas, it is a poor happiness that consists only in the ignorance or forgetfulness of approaching misery.

But, O blessed eternity! where our lives are perplexed with no such thoughts, nor our joys interrupted with any such fears! Where we shall be “pillars in God’s temple,” and go out no more. Oh, what do I say when I talk of eternity? Can my shallow thoughts at all conceive what that most high expression doth contain? To be eternally blessed, and so blessed! Why, surely this, if anything, is the resemblance of God; eternity is a piece of infiniteness. Then, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” Days, and nights, and years, time, and end, and death, are words which there have no signification; nor are used, except perhaps to extol eternity, as the mention of hell, to extol heaven. No more use of our calendars or chronology; all the years of our Lord, and the years of our lives are lost and swallowed up in this eternity. While we were servants, we held by lease, and that but for the term of a transitory life, but the son abideth in the house for ever.

Our first and earthly paradise in Eden had a way out, but none, that ever we could find, in again; but this eternal paradise hath a way in (a milky way to us, but a bloody way to Christ), but no way out again; “for they

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that would pass from hence to you," saith Abraham, "cannot." A strange phrase! Would any pass from such a place, if they might? Could they endure to be absent from God again one hour? No, but upon supposal that they would, yet they could not. Oh then, my soul, let go thy dreams of present pleasures; and loose thy hold of earth and flesh. Fear not to enter that estate where thou shalt ever after cease thy fears. Sit down and sadly once a day bethink thyself of this eternity; among all thy arithmetical numbers study the value of this infinite cypher, which though it stand for nothing in the vulgar account doth yet contain all our millions, as much less than a simple unit! Lay by thy perplexed and contradicting chronological tables, and fix thine eye on this eternity; and the lines which, remote, thou couldst not follow, thou shalt see all together here centred; study less those tedious volumes of history, which contain but the silent narration of dreams, and are but the pictures of the actions of shadows; and instead of all, study frequently, study thoroughly this one word *eternity*, and when thou hast learned thoroughly that one word thou wilt never look on books again. What! live and never die. Rejoice, and ever rejoice! Oh, what sweet words are those, never and ever! O happy souls in hell, should you but escape after millions of ages, and if the Origenist doctrine were but true. O miserable saints in heaven, should you be dispossessed after the age of a million of worlds! But oh, this word *everlasting* contains the accomplished perfection of their torment and our glory. Oh, that the wicked sinner would but soundly study this word *everlasting*! Methinks it should startle him out of his dearest sleep. Oh, that the gracious soul would believingly study this word *everlasting*! Methinks it should revive him in his deepest agony.

And must I, Lord, thus live for ever? Then will I also

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love for ever. Must my joys be immortal, and shall not my thanks be also immortal? Surely, if I shall never lose my glory, I will also never cease Thy praises. Shouldst Thou but renew my lease of these first fruits, would I not renew Thy fine and rent? But if thou wilt both perfect and perpetuate me and my glory; as I shall be Thine, and not mine own, so shall my glory be Thy glory; and as all did take their spring from Thee, so all shall devolve into Thee again; and as Thy glory was Thine ultimate end in my glory, so shall it also be mine end, when Thou hast crowned me with that glory which hath no end. And "to Thee, O King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, shall be the honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen."

XX

And thus I have endeavoured to show you a glimpse of the approaching glory. But oh, how short are my expressions of its excellence! Reader, if thou be an humble, sincere believer, and waitest with longing and labouring for this rest, thou wilt shortly see and feel the truth of all this; then wilt thou have so high an apprehension of this blessed state that will make thee pity the ignorance and distance of mortals; and will tell thee, then, all that is here said is spoken but in the dark, and falls short of the truth a thousand-fold. In the meantime, let this much kindle thy desires, and quicken thine endeavours. Up and be doing, run, and strive, and fight, and hold on, for thou hast a certain glorious prize before thee. God will not mock thee; do not mock thyself, nor betray thy soul, by delaying or dallying, and all is thine own. What kind of men dost thou think Christians would be in their lives and duties, if they had still this glory fresh in their thoughts? What frame would their spirits be in, if their

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thoughts of heaven were lively and believing? Would their hearts be so heavy and their countenance so sad? Or would they have need to take up their comforts from below, would they be so loath to suffer, and afraid to die, or would they not think every day a year till they did enjoy it? The Lord heal our carnal hearts, lest we enter not into His rest because of our unbelief.

CHAPTER VIII

WHETHER THE SOULS DEPARTED, ENJOY THIS REST BEFORE THE RESURRECTION

I HAVE but one thing more to clear, before I come to the use of this doctrine; and that is, whether this rest remain till the resurrection before we shall enjoy it? Or whether we shall have any possession of it before? The Socinians, and many others of late among us, think that the soul separated from the body is either nothing, or at least not capable of happiness or misery. Truly, if it should be so, it would be somewhat a sad uncomfortable doctrine to the godly at their death, to think of being deprived of their glory till the resurrection; and somewhat comfortable to the wicked, to think of tarrying out of hell so long. But I am in strong hopes that this doctrine is false, yea, very confident that it is so. I do believe that as the soul separated from the body is not a perfect man, so it doth not enjoy the glory and happiness so fully and so perfectly as it shall do after the resurrection, when they are again conjoined. What the difference is and what degree of glory souls in the meantime enjoy are too high things for mortals particularly to discern. For the great question: What place the souls of those before Christ, of infants, and of all others since Christ, do remain in till the resurrection? I think it is a vain enquiry of what is yet beyond our reach. It is a great question, what place is. But if it be only a circumstant body; and if to be in a place be only to be in a circum-

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stant body, or in the superficies of an ambient body, or in the concavity of that superficies, then it is doubtful whether spirits can be properly said to be in *place*. We can have yet no clear conceivings of these things. But that separated souls of believers do enjoy inconceivable blessedness and glory, even while they remain thus separated from the body, I prove, as followeth: (Beside all those arguments for the soul's immortality which you may read in Alex. Ross' "Philosophical Touchstone," part last).

1. Those words of Paul, 2 Cor. v. 6-8, are so exceeding plain, that I yet understand not what tolerable exception can be made against them. "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight). We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." What can be spoken more plainly? So also the verses 1 to 4 of the same chapter.

2. As plain is that in Phil. i. 23, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." What sense were in these words, if Paul had not expected to enjoy Christ till the resurrection? Why should he be in a strait, or desire to depart? Should he be with Christ ever the sooner for that? Nay, should he not have been loath to depart upon the very same grounds? For while he was in the flesh, he enjoyed something of Christ; but being departed (according to the Socinian's doctrine) he should enjoy nothing of Christ till the day of resurrection.

3. And plain enough is that of Christ to the thief, "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." The dislocation of the word, *this day*, is but a gross evasion.

4. And sure if it be but a parable of the rich man in hell and Lazarus, yet it seems unlikely to me that Christ

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would teach them by such a parable as seemed evidently to intimate and suppose the soul's happiness or misery presently after death, if there were no such matter.

5. Doth not His argument against the Sadducees for the resurrection run upon this supposition, that God being not the God of the dead, but of the living, therefore Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were then living, *i.e.* in soul, and consequently should have their bodies raised at the resurrection.

6. Plain also is that in Rev. xiv. 13, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them," *i.e.* close as the garments on a man's back follow him, and not at such a distance as the resurrection; for if the blessedness were only in resting in the grave, then a beast or a stone were as blessed; nay, it were evidently a curse, and not a blessing. For was not life a great mercy; was it not a greater mercy to enjoy all the comforts of life; to enjoy the fellowship of the saints; the comfort of the ordinances; and much of Christ in all? To be employed in the delightful work of God, and to edify His Church, &c.; is it not a curse to be so deprived of all these? Do not these yield a great deal more sweetness than all the troubles of this life can yield us bitterness? Though I think not, as some, that it is better to be most miserable, even in hell, than not to be at all; yet it is undeniable, that it is better to enjoy life, and so much of the comforts of life, and so much of God in comforts and afflictions as the saints do, though we have all this with persecution, than to lie rotting in the grave, if that were all we could expect. Therefore it is some further blessedness that is there promised.

7. How else is it said, "That we are come to the

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mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." Heb. xii. 22, 23. Sure at the resurrection the body will be made perfect, as well as the spirit. To say (as Lushington doth) that they are said to be made perfect, because they are sure of it as if they had it, is an evasion so grossly contradicting the text, that by such commentaries he may as well deny any truth in Scripture; to make good which, he as much abuseth that of Phil. i. 23.

8. Doth not Scripture tell us that Enoch and Elias are taken up already? And shall we think they possess that glory alone?

9. Did not Peter and James and John see Moses also with Christ on the Mount? Yet the Scripture saith, Moses died. And is it likely that Christ did delude their senses in showing them Moses, if he should not partake of that glory till the resurrection?

10. And is not that of Stephen as plain as we can desire? "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." Sure, if the Lord receive it, it is neither asleep, nor dead, nor annihilated; but it is where He is, and beholds His glory.

11. The like may be said of that, Eccles. xii. 7, "The spirit shall return to God who gave it."

12. How else is it said, "that we have eternal life already"? John vi. 54. And that "the knowledge of God" (which is begun here) "is eternal life"? John xvii. 3. So 1 John v. 13. "And he that believeth on Christ, hath everlasting life": John iii. 36; John vi. 47. "He that eateth this bread, shall not die" (verse 50). "For he dwelleth in Christ, and Christ in him" (verse 56).

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"And as the Son liveth by the Father, so he that eateth Him, shall live by him" (verse 57). How is "the kingdom of God, and of heaven" (which is eternal) said to be "in us"? Luke xvii. 21; Rom. xiv. 17; Matt. xiii.

Surely, if there be as great an interruption of our life as till the resurrection, which with some will be many thousand years, this is no eternal life, nor everlasting kingdom. Lushington's evasion is, "That because there is no time with dead men; but they so sleep that when they awake, it is all one to them as if it had been at first; therefore the Scripture speaks of them as if they were there already." It is true indeed, if there were no joy till the resurrection, then that consideration would be comfortable; but when God hath thus plainly told us of it before, then this evasion contradicteth the text. Doubtless there is time also to the dead, though in respect of their bodies they perceive it not. He will not sure think it a happiness to be petrified or stupefied, while others are enjoying the comforts of life; if he do, it were the best course to sleep out our lives.

13. In Jude 7 the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are spoken of, as "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"; and if the wicked do already suffer eternal fire, then no doubt but the godly do enjoy eternal blessedness. I know some understand the place, of that fire which consumed their bodies, as being a type of the fire of hell. I will not be very confident against this exposition, but the text seemeth plainly to speak more.

14. It is also observable, that when John saw his glorious revelations, he is said to be "in the Spirit": Rev. i. 10, and iv. 2, and to be "carried away in the Spirit": Rev. xvii. 3, and xxi. 10. And when Paul had his revelations, and saw "things unutterable, he knew not whether it were in the body, or out of the body."

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All implying that spirits are capable of these glorious things without the help of their bodies.

15. And though it be a prophetical, obscure book, yet it seems to me, that those words in the Revelations do imply this, where John “saw the souls under the altar”: Rev. vi. 9, &c.

16. We are commanded by Christ, “not to fear them that can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul”: Luke xii. 4. Doth not this plainly imply that when wicked men have killed our bodies, that is, separated the souls from them, yet the souls are still alive?

17. The soul of Christ was alive when His body was dead, and therefore so shall ours too; for His created nature was like ours, except in sin. That Christ’s human soul was alive is a necessary consequent of its hypostatical union with the Divine nature, as I judge. And by His words to the thief, “This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise”; so also by His voice on the cross; Luke xxiii. 46, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” And whether that in 1 Pet. iii. 18, 19, “That He went and preached to the spirits in prison,” &c., will prove it, I leave to others to judge. Read Illyricus’ arguments in his “Clavis Scripturæ” on this text. Many think that the opposition is not so irregular, as to put the dative *σαρκὶ* for *ἐν σαρκὶ*, as the subject recipient, and the dative *πνεύματι* for *διὰ πνεύματος*, as the efficient cause; but that it is plainly to be understood as a regular opposition, that Christ was mortified in the flesh, but vivified in the spirit, that is, in the spirit which is usually put in opposition to this flesh, which is the soul, by which spirit, &c. But I leave this as doubtful; there is enough besides.

18. Why is there mention of God’s breathing into man the breath of life, and calling His soul a living soul? There is no mention of any such thing in the creating of

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other creatures ; sure therefore this makes some difference between the life of our souls, and theirs.

19. It appears in Saul's calling for Samuel to the witch, and in the Jews' expectation of the coming of Elias, that they took it for current then, that Elias' and Samuel's souls were living.

20. Lastly, if the spirits of those that were disobedient in the days of Noah, were in prison (1 Pet. iii. 19), then certainly the separated spirits of the just are in an opposite condition of happiness. If any say that the word "prison" signifieth not their full misery, but a reservation thereto, I grant it; yet it importeth a reservation in a living and suffering state, for were they nothing they could not be in prison.

Though I have but briefly named these twenty arguments, and put them together in a narrow room, when some men cannot see the truth without a multitude of words; yet I doubt not but if you will well consider them, you will discern the clear evidence of Scripture verity. It is a lamentable case, that the brutish opinion of the soul's mortality should find so many patrons professing godliness, when there is so clear light of Scripture against them, and when the opinion tends to no other end than the emboldening of sin, the cherishing of security, and the great discomfort and discouragement of the saints, and when many pagans were wiser in this without the help of Scripture. Surely, this error is an introduction to paganism itself. Yea more, the most of the nations in the world, even the barbarous Indians, do by the light of nature acknowledge that which these men deny, even that there is a happiness and misery which the souls go presently to, which are separated from their bodies. I know the silly evading answers that are used to be given to the forementioned Scriptures, which being carried with confidence and subtile words may soon shake the ordinary

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sort of Christians that are not able to deal with a sophister. But if they be thoroughly dealt with, they presently appear to be mere vanity or contradiction. Were there but that one text, 2 Cor. v. 8, or that 1 Pet. iii. 19, or, that Phil. i. 23, all the seducers in the world could not answer them.

Believe therefore steadfastly, O faithful souls, that whatever all the deceivers in the world shall say to the contrary, your souls shall no sooner leave their prisons of flesh, but angels will be their convoy, Christ will be their company with all the perfected spirits of the just; heaven will be their residence, and God will be their happiness. And you may boldly and believingly when you die, say as Stephen, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit," and commend it, as Christ did, into a Father's hands.

CHAPTER IX

REPROVING OUR EXPECTATIONS OF REST ON EARTH

I

DOTH this rest remain? How great then is our sin and folly to seek and expect it here. Where shall we find the Christian that deserves not this reproof? Surely we may all cry "guilty" to this accusation. We know not how to enjoy convenient houses, goods, lands, and revenues, but we seek rest in these enjoyments. We seldom, I fear, have such sweet and heart-contenting thoughts of God and glory as we have of our earthly delights. How much rest do the voluptuous seek, in buildings, walks, apparel, ease, recreation, sleep, pleasing meats and drinks, merry company, health and strength, and long life! Nay, we can scarce enjoy the necessary means that God hath appointed for our spiritual good, but we are seeking rest in them. Do we want ministers, godly society, or the like helps? Oh, think we, if it were but thus and thus with us we were well. Do we enjoy them? Oh, how we settle upon them, and bless ourselves in them, as the rich fool in his wealth! Our books, our preachers, sermons, friends, abilities for duty, do not our hearts hug them, and quiet themselves in them even more than in God? Indeed, in words we disclaim it, and God hath usually the pre-eminence in our tongues and professions; but it is too apparent that it is otherwise in our hearts, by these discoveries:

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Do we not desire these more violently when we want them than we do the Lord Himself? Do we not cry out more sensibly, O my friend, my goods, my health, than, O my God! Do we not miss ministry and means more passionately than we miss our God? Do we not bestir ourselves more to obtain and enjoy these than we do to recover our communion with God?

Do we not delight more in the possession of these than we do in the fruition of God Himself? Nay, be not those mercies and duties most pleasant to us wherein we stand at greatest distance from God? We can read, and study, and confer, preach and hear, day after day, without much weariness; because in these we have to do with instruments and creatures; but in secret prayer and conversing with God immediately, where no creature interposeth, how dull, how heartless and weary are we!

And if we lose creatures or means, doth it not trouble us more than our loss of God? If we lose but a friend, or health, &c., all the town will hear of it; but we can miss our God and scarce bemoan our misery. Thus it is apparent we exceedingly make the creature our rest. Is it not enough that they are sweet delights and refreshing helps in our way to heaven; but they must also be made our heaven itself? Christian reader, I would as willingly make thee sensible of this sin as of any sin in the world, if I could tell how to do it; for the Lord's greatest quarrel with us is in this point. Therefore I most earnestly beseech thee to press upon thine own conscience these following considerations:

II

It is gross idolatry to make any creature or means our rest; to settle the soul upon it, and say, "Now I am well," upon the bare enjoyment of the creature. What

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is this, but to make it our god? Certainly to be the soul's rest is God's own prerogative. And as it is palpable idolatry to place our rest in riches and honours, so it is but a more spiritual and refined idolatry to take up our rest in excellent means, in the Church's prosperity, and in its reformation. When we would have all that out of God which is to be had only in God, what is this but to turn away from Him to the creature, and in our hearts to deny Him? When we fetch more of our comfort and delight from the thoughts of prosperity and those mercies which here we have at a distance from God, than from the forethoughts of our everlasting blessedness in Him; nay, when the thought of that day when we must come to God is our greatest trouble; and we would do anything in the world to escape it; but our enjoyment of creatures, though absent from Him, is the very thing our souls desire; when we had rather talk of Him than come to enjoy Him; and had rather go many miles to hear a powerful sermon of Christ and heaven, than to enter and possess it; oh, what vile idolatry is this!

When we dispute against epicures, academics, and all pagans, how earnestly do we contend that God is the chief good, and the fruition of Him our chief happiness! What clear arguments do we bring to evince it! But do we believe ourselves, or are we Christians in judgment, and pagans in affection, or do we give our senses leave to be the choosers of our happiness while reason and faith stand by? O Christians, how ill must our dear Lord needs take it, when we give Him cause to complain, as sometime He did of our fellow-idolaters, that we have been lost sheep, and have forgotten our resting-place; when we give Him cause to say, why, "My people can find rest in anything rather than in Me; they can find delight in one another but none in Me; they can rejoice

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in My creatures and ordinances but not in Me; yea, in their very labours and duty they seek for rest, and not in Me; they had rather be anywhere than be with Me; are these their gods; have these delivered and redeemed them; will these be better to them than I have been, or than I would be?" If yourselves have but a wife, a husband, a son, that had rather be anywhere than in your company, and is never so merry as when furthest from you, would you not take it ill yourselves? Why, so must our God needs do. For what do we but lay these things in one end of the balance, and God in the other, and foolishly in our choice prefer them before Him? As Elkanah said to Hannah, "Am not I better to thee than ten sons?" so when we are longing after creatures we may hear God say, "Am not I better than all the creatures to thee?"

III

Consider how thou contradictest the end of God in giving these things. He gave them to help thee to Him, and dost thou take up with them in His stead? He gave them that they might be comfortable refreshments in thy journey, and wouldst thou now dwell in thy inn and go no further? Thou dost not only contradict God herein, but lovest that benefit which thou mightest receive by them, yea, and makest them thy great hurt and hindrance. Surely, it may be said of all our comforts and all ordinances, and the blesseddest enjoyments in the Church on earth, as God said to the Israelites of His ark, "The ark of the covenant went before them to search out for them a resting-place." So do all God's mercies here. They are not that rest (as John professeth he was not the Christ), but they are voices crying in this wilderness to bid us prepare, for the kingdom of God, our true rest, is at hand. Therefore to rest here

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were to turn all mercies clean contrary to their own ends, and our own advantages, and to destroy ourselves with that which should help us.

IV

Consider whether it be not the most probable way to cause God either to deny these mercies which we desire ; or to take from us those which we enjoy ; or to embitter them at least, or curse them to us ? Certainly, God is nowhere so jealous as here. If you had a servant whom your own wife loved better than she did yourself, would you not both take it ill of such a wife and rid your house of such a servant ? You will not suffer your child to use a knife till he have wit to do it without hurting him. Why, so if the Lord see you begin to settle in the world, and say, "here I will rest," no wonder if He soon in His jealousy unsettle you. If He love you, no wonder if He take that from you wherewith He sees you about to destroy yourselves.

It hath been my long observation of many, that when they have attempted great works, and have just finished them ; or have aimed at great things in the world, and have just obtained them ; or have lived in much trouble and unsettlement, and have just overcome them ; and begin with some content to look upon their condition, and rest in it, they are usually near to death or ruin. You know the story of the fool in the Gospel ; when a man is once at this language, "Soul take thy ease or rest," the next news usually is, "Thou fool, this night, or this month, or this year, shall they require thy soul, and then whose shall these things be." Oh, what house is there, where this fool dwelleth not ! Dear Christian friends, you to whom I have especially relation, let you and I consider whether this be not our own case. Have not I after such an unsettled life, and after almost five years' living in the weary condition of war, and the un-

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pleasing life of a soldier, and after so many years' groaning under the Church's unreformedness, and the great fears that lay upon us, and after so many longings, and prayers for these days; have I not thought of them with too much content; and been ready to say, "soul take thy rest"? Have not I comforted myself more in the forethoughts of enjoying these than of coming to heaven, and enjoying God? What wonder, then, if God cut me off when I am just sitting down in this supposed rest!

And hath not the like been your condition? Many of you have been soldiers, driven from house and home, endured a life of trouble and blood, been deprived of ministry and means, longing to see the Church's settling. Did you not reckon up all the comforts you should have at your return, and glad your hearts with such thoughts more than with the thoughts of your coming to heaven? Why, what wonder if God now somewhat cross you, and turn some of your joy into sadness! Many a servant of God hath been destroyed from the earth by being over-valued and over-loved. I pray God you may take warning for the time to come, that you rob not yourselves of all your mercies. I am persuaded our discontents and murmurings with unpleasing condition, and our covetous desires after more, are not so provoking to God, nor so destructive to the sinner, as our too sweet enjoying, and rest of spirit in a pleasing state. If God have crossed any of you in wife, children, goods, friends, &c., either by taking them from you, or the comfort of them, or the benefit and blessing, try whether this above all other be not the cause, for wheresoever your desires stop, and you say, "Now I am well," that condition you make your God, and engage the jealousy of God against it. Whether you be friends to God or enemies, you can never expect that God should wink at such idolatry, or suffer you quietly to enjoy your idols.

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V

Consider, if God should suffer thee thus to take up thy rest here, it were one of the surest plagues and greatest curses that could possibly befall thee. It were better for thee if thou never hadst a day of ease or content in the world, for then weariness might make thee seek after the true rest. But if He should suffer thee to sit down and rest here, where were thy rest when this deceives thee? A restless wretch thou wouldst be through all eternity. "To have their portion in this life" "and their good things on the earth" is the lot of the most miserable, perishing sinners. And doth it become Christians, then, to expect so much here? Our rest is our heaven; and where we take our rest there we make our heaven. And wouldst thou have but such a heaven as this? Certainly, as Saul's messengers found but Michal's man of straw when they expected David; so wilt thou find but a rest of straw, of wind, of vanity, when thou most needest rest. It will be but as a handful of waters to a man that is drowning, which will help to destroy, but not to save him. But that is the next.

VI

Consider, thou seekest rest where it is not to be found, and so wilt lose all thy labour, and, if thou proceed, thy soul's eternal rest too. I think I shall easily evince this by these clear demonstrations following:

Our rest is only in the full obtaining of our ultimate end, but that is not to be expected in this life, therefore, neither is rest to be here expected. Is God to be enjoyed in the best reformed church, in the purest and powerfulest ordinances here, as He is in heaven? I know you will

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all confess, "He is not." How little of God not only the multitude of the blind world, but sometimes the saints themselves do enjoy, even under the most excellent means, let their own frequent complainings testify. And how poor comforters are the best ordinances and enjoyments without God, the truly spiritual Christian knows. Will a stone rest in the air in the midst of its fall, before it comes to the earth? No, because its centre is its end. Should a traveller take up his rest in the way? No, because his home is his journey's end. When you have all that creatures and means can afford, have you that you sought for? Have you that you believed, pray, suffer for? I think you dare not say so. Why, then, do we once dream of resting here? We are like little children strayed from home, and God is now fetching us home; and we are ready to turn into any house, stay and play with every thing in our way, and sit down on every green bank; and much ado there is to get us home.

As we have not yet obtained our end so are we in the midst of labours and dangers; and is there any resting here? What painful work doth lie upon our hands! Look to our brethren, to godly, to ungodly, to the Church, to our souls, to God; and what a deal of work in respect of each of these doth lie before us; and can we rest in the midst of all our labours? Indeed we may take some refreshing and ease ourselves sometimes in our troubles, if you will call that rest; but that is not the settling rest we now are speaking of. We may rest on earth as the ark is said to have rested in the midst of Jordan, a short and small rest, no question; or as the angels of heaven are desired to turn in, and rest them on earth; they would have been loath to have taken up their dwelling there. Should Israel have settled his rest in the wilderness, among serpents, and enemies, and weariness, and famine? Should Noah have made the ark

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his home, and have been loath to come forth when the waters were fallen? Should the mariner choose his dwelling on the sea, and settle his rest in the midst of rocks, and sands, and raging tempests? Though he may adventure through all these for a commodity of worth, yet I think he takes it not for his rest. Should a soldier rest in the midst of fight, when he is in the very thickest of his enemies, and the instruments of death compass him about? I think he cares not how soon the battle is over. And though he may adventure upon war for the obtaining of peace, yet I hope he is not so mad as to take that instead of peace. And are not Christians such travellers, such mariners, such soldiers? Have we not fears within and troubles without; are we not in the thickest of continual dangers; we cannot eat, drink, sleep, labour, pray, hear, confer, &c. but in the midst of snares and perils; and shall we sit down and rest here? O Christian, follow thy work, look to thy danger, hold on to the end, win the field, and come off the ground, before thou think of a settling rest.

I read indeed that Peter on the Mount, when he had seen a glimpse of glory, said, "It is good for us to be here." But sure when he was on the sea, in the midst of waves, he doth not then say it is good to be here; no, then he hath other language, "Save, Master, we perish." And even his desires to rest on the Mount are noted in Scripture to come from hence, "He knew not what he said"; it was on earth, though with Christ in His transfiguration. And I dare say the like of thee, whenever thou talkest of resting on earth; "Thou knowest not what thou sayest." I read that Christ, when He was on the cross, comforted the converted thief with this, "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise"; but if He had only comforted him with telling him that he should rest there on that cross, would he not have taken it for a

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derision? Methinks it should be ill resting in the midst of sicknesses and pains, persecution and distresses; one would think it should be no contentful dwelling for lambs among wolves. The wicked have some slender pretence for their sin in this kind; they are among their friends, in the midst of their portion, enjoying all the happiness that they are like to enjoy; but is it so with the godly? Surely, the world is at best but a step-mother to them; nay, an open enemy. But if nothing else would convince us, yet sure the remainders of sin which doth so easily beset us should quickly satisfy a believer that here is not his rest. What, a Christian, and rest in a state of sinning! it cannot be. Or do they hope for a perfect freedom here; that is impossible. I say therefore to every one that thinketh of rest on earth, as Micah, "Arise ye, depart, this is not your rest, because it is polluted."¹

The nature of all these things may convince you that they cannot be a Christian's true rest; they are too poor to make us rich; and too low to raise us to happiness; and too empty to fill our souls; and too base to make us blessed; and of too short continuance to be our eternal contents. They cannot subsist themselves without support from heaven; how then can they give subsistence to our souls? Sure if prosperity, or whatsoever we here can desire, be too base to make us gods of, then are they too base to be our rest.

That which is the soul's true rest must be sufficient to afford it perpetual satisfaction; but all things below do delight us only with fresh variety. The content which any creature affordeth doth wax old and abate after a short enjoyment. We pine away for them, as Amnon for his sister, and when we have satisfied our desire we are weary of them and loathe them. If God should rain

¹ Micah ii. 10.

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down angels' food, after a while our souls would loathe that dry manna. The most dainty fare, the most costly clothing would not please us were we tied to them alone. The most sumptuous house, the softest bed, were we confined to them, would be but a prison. One recreation pleaseth not long; we must have supply of new, or our delights will languish; nay, our delight in our society and friendship, especially if carnal, is strongest while fresh.

And in the ordinances of God themselves, so far as we delight in them for themselves and not for God, if novelty support not, our delight grows dull. If we hear still the same minister; or if in preaching and praying he use oft the same expressions; or if he preach oft the same sermon; how dull grows our devotion, though the matter be never so good, and at first did never so highly please us! If we read the most excellent and pleasing books, the third or fourth reading is usually more heartless than the first or second; nay, in our general way of Christianity, our first godly acquaintance, our first preachers, our first books, our first duties, have too commonly our strongest affections. All creatures are to us as the flowers to the bee; there is but little of that matter which affords them honey on any flower, and therefore they must have supply of fresh variety, and take of each a superficial taste, and so to the next. Yea, some having gone through variety of states, and tasted of the pleasures of their own country, do travel for fresh variety abroad; and when they come home, they usually betake themselves to some solitary corner, and sit down, and cry with Solomon, "Vanity and vexation!" and with David, "I have seen an end of all perfection." And can this be a place of rest for the soul?

Those that know the creature least do affect it most; the more it is known the less it satisfieth; those only are taken with it, who can see no further than its

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outward beauty, not beholding its inward vanity; it is like a comely picture, if you stand too near it, it appears less beautiful; we are prone to over-admire the persons of men, places of honour, and other men's happy condition; but it is only while we do but half know them; stay but a while till we know them thoroughly, and have discovered the evil as well as the good, and the defects as well as the perfections, and then do we cease our admiration.

VII

To have creatures and means without God who is their end, is so far from being our happiness, that it is an aggravation of our misery; even as to have food without strength, and starve in the midst of plenty, and as Pharaoh's kine, to devour all, and be lean still. What the better were you, if you had the best minister on earth, the best society, the purest Church, and therewithal the most plentiful estate, but nothing of God? If God should say, "Take My creatures, My word, My servants, My ordinances, but not Myself," would you take this for a happiness? If you had the word of God, and not the Word which is God; or the bread of the Lord, and not the Lord which is the true bread; or could cry with the Jews, "The Temple of the Lord," and had not the Lord of the Temple; this were a poor happiness. Was Capernaum the more happy, or the more miserable, for seeing the mighty works which they had seen, and hearing the words of Christ which they did hear? Surely, that which aggravates our sin and misery cannot be our rest.

If all this be nothing, do but consult with experience, both other men's and your own. Too many thousands and millions have made trial; but did ever one of these

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find a sufficient rest for his soul on this earth? Delights I deny not but they have found, and imperfect temporary content, but rest and satisfaction they never found; and shall we think to find that which never man could find before us? Ahab's kingdom is nothing to him except he had also Naboth's vineyard; and did that satisfy him, think you, when he obtained it? If we had conquered to ourselves the whole world, we should perhaps do as Alexander is fabled to have done, sit down and weep because there is never another world to conquer.

If I should send you forth as Noah's dove, to go through the earth, to look for a resting-place, you would return with a confession that you can find none. Go, ask honour, "Is there rest here?" Why you may as well rest on the top of the tempestuous mountains, or in *Ætna's* flames, or on the pinnacle of the temple. If you ask riches, "Is there rest here?" Even such as is in a bed of thorns; or were it a bed of down yet you must arise in the morning and leave it to the next guest that shall succeed you. Or if you inquire of worldly pleasure and ease, can they give you any tidings of true rest? Even such as the fish or bird hath in the net, or in swallowing down the deceitful bait; when the pleasure is at the sweetest death is the nearest; it is just such a content and happiness as the exhilarating vapours of the wine do give to a man that is drunk; it causeth a merry and cheerful heart, it makes him forget his wants and miseries, and conceive himself the happiest man in the world, till his sick vomitings have freed him of his disease, or sleep have assuaged and subdued those vapours which deluded his phantasy and perverted his understanding, and then he awakes a more unhappy man than ever he was before; such is the rest and happiness that all worldly pleasures do afford. As the phantasy may be delighted in a pleasant dream when all the senses are captivated

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by sleep, so may the flesh or sensitive appetite when the reasonable soul is captivated by security; but when the morning comes the delusion vanisheth, and where is the pleasure and happiness then? Or if you should go to learning, to purest, plentifullest, powerfulllest ordinances, or compass sea and land to find out the perfectest church and holiest saints, and inquire whether there your soul may rest, you might happily receive from these indeed an olive branch of hope, as they are means to your rest, and have relation to eternity, but in regard of any satisfaction in themselves you would remain as restless as ever before. Oh, how well might all these answer many of us with that indignation, as Jacob did Rachel, "Am I instead of God?" Or as the king of Israel said of the messengers of the king of Assyria when he required him to restore Naaman to health, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends to me to recover a man of his leprosy?" so may the highest perfections on earth say, "Are we God, or instead of God, that this man comes to us to give a soul rest?"

Go, take a view of all estates of men in the world, and see whether any of them have found this rest. Go to the husbandman, and demand of him; behold his circular endless labours, his continual care and toil and weariness, and you will easily see, that there is no rest; go to the tradesman, and you shall find the like. If I should send you lower, you would judge your labour lost. Or go to the conscionable painful minister, and there you will yet more easily be satisfied; for though his spending, killing, endless labours are exceeding sweet, yet is it not because they are his rest, but in reference to his people's and his own eternal rest, at which he aims, and to which they may conduce. If you should ascend to magistracy and inquire at the throne, you would find there is no condition so restless, and your

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hearts would even pity poor princes and kings. Doubtless neither court nor country, towns or cities, shops or fields, treasuries, libraries, solitariness, society, studies, or pulpits, can afford any such thing as this rest. If you could inquire of the dead of all generations, or if you could ask the living through all dominions, they would all tell you, "Here is no rest"; and all mankind may say, "All our days are sorrow, and our labour is grief, and our hearts take not rest." Go to Geneva, go to New England, find out the church which you think most happy, and we may say of it, as lamenting Jeremiah of the church of the Jews, "She dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest, all her persecutors overtake her." The holiest prophet, the blesseddest apostle would say, as one of the most blessed did, "Our flesh had no rest; without were fightings, within were fears." If neither Christ nor His apostles, to whom was given the earth and the fulness thereof, had rest here, why should we expect it?

Or if other men's experiences move you not, do but take a view of your own. Can you remember the estate that did fully satisfy you? Or if you could, will it prove a lasting state? For my own part, I have run through several places and states of life, and though I never had the necessities which might occasion discontent, yet did I never find a settlement for my soul; and I believe we may all say of our rest, as Paul of our hopes, "If it were in this life only, we were of all men most miserable." Or if you will not credit your past experience, you may try in your present or future wants. When conscience is wounded, God offended, your bodies weakened, your friends afflicted, see if these can yield you rest. If then either Scripture, or reason, or the experience of yourselves and all the world, will [not] satisfy us, we may see there is no resting here. And yet how guilty are the generality

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of professors of this sin! How many halts and stops do we make before we will make the Lord our rest! How must God even drive us, and fire us out of every condition, lest we should sit down and rest there! If He give us prosperity, riches, or honour, we do in our hearts dance before them, as the Israelites before their calf, and say, "These are thy Gods," and conclude it is good being here. If He embitter all these to us by crosses, how do we strive to have the cross removed, and the bitterness taken away, and are restless till our condition be sweetened to us that we may sit down again and rest where we were? If the Lord, seeing our perverseness, shall now proceed in the cure, and take the creature quite away, then how do we labour, and care, and cry, and pray, that God would restore it, that, if it may be, we may make it our rest again! And while we are deprived of its actual enjoyment, and have not our former idol to delight in, yet, rather than come to God, we delight ourselves in our hopes of recovering our former state; and as long as there is the least likelihood of obtaining it, we make those very hopes our rest.

If the poor, by labouring all their days, have but hopes of a fuller estate when they are old (though a hundred to one they die before they have obtained it, or certainly at least immediately after), yet do they labour with patience, and rest themselves on these expectations. Or if God do take away both present enjoyments and all hopes of ever recovering them, how do we search about, from creature to creature, to find out something to supply the room, and to settle upon, instead thereof! Yea, if we can find no supply, but are sure we shall live in poverty, in sickness, in disgrace, while we are on earth, yet will we rather settle in this misery and make a rest of a wretched being than we will leave all and come to God. A man would think that a multitude of poor people, who beg

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their bread, or can scarce with their hardest labour have sustenance for their lives, should easily be driven from resting here, and willingly look to heaven for rest; and the sick who have not a day of ease, nor any hope of recovery left them. But oh, the cursed averseness of these souls from God! We will rather account our misery our happiness, yea, that which we daily groan under as intolerable, than we will take up our happiness in God. If any place in hell were tolerable, the soul would rather take up its rest there than come to God.

Yea, when He is bringing us over to Him, and hath convinced us of the worth of His ways and service, the last deceit of all is here; we will rather settle upon those ways that lead to Him, and those ordinances which speak of Him, and those gifts which flow from Him than we will come clean over to Himself. Christian, marvel not that I speak so much of resting in these; beware lest it should prove thy own case. I suppose thou art so far convinced of the vanity of riches and honour and carnal pleasure that thou canst more easily disclaim these (and it is well if it be so); but for thy more spiritual mercies in thy way of profession, thou lookest on these with less suspicion, and thinkest they are so near to God that thou canst not delight in them too much, especially seeing most of the world despise them, or delight in them too little. But doth not the increase of those mercies dull thy longings after heaven? If all were according to thy desire in the Church, wouldst thou not sit down and say, "I am well, Soul, take thy rest"; and think it a judgment to be removed to heaven? Surely if thy delight in these excel not thy delight in God; or if thou wouldst gladly leave the most happy condition on earth, to be with God; then art thou a rare man, a Christian indeed.

I know the means of grace must be loved and valued,

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and the usual enjoyment of God is in the use of them; and he that delighteth in any worldly thing more than in them is not a true Christian: but when we are content with duty instead of God; and had rather be at a sermon than in heaven; and a member of a church here than of that perfect Church; and rejoice in ordinances but as they are part of our earthly prosperity; this is a sad mistake. Many a one of us were most willing to go to heaven in the former days of persecution, when we had no hopes of seeing the church reformed, and the Kingdom delivered: but now we are in hopes to have all things almost as we desire, the case is altered; and we begin to look at heaven as strangely and sadly, as if it would be to our loss to be removed to it. Is this the right use of reformation? Or is this the way to have it continued or perfected? Should our deliverances draw our hearts from God? Oh, how much better were it in every trouble to fetch our chief arguments of comfort from the place where our chiefest rest remains; and when others comfort the poor with hopes of wealth, or the sick with hopes of health and life let us comfort ourselves with the hopes of heaven. So far rejoice in the creature as it comes from God or leads to Him or brings thee some report of His love; so far let thy soul take comfort in ordinances as God doth accompany them with quickening or comfort, or gives Himself unto thy soul by them; still remembering, when thou hast even what thou dost desire, yet this is not heaven; yet these are but the first fruits. Is it not enough that God alloweth us all the comfort of travellers, and accordingly to rejoice in all His mercies, but we must set up our staff as if we were at home? While we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord; and while we are absent from Him, we are absent from our rest. If God were as willing to be absent from us, as we from Him, and if He were as loath to be our rest, as

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we are loath to rest in Him, we should be left to an eternal, restless separation.

In a word, as you are sensible of the sinfulness of your earthly discontents, so be you also of your irregular contents, and pray God to pardon them much more. And above all the plagues and judgments of God on this side hell, see that you watch and pray against this, *of settling anywhere short of heaven, or reposing your souls to rest on anything below God*. Or else, when the bough which you tread on breaks, and the things which you rest upon deceive you, you will perceive your labour all lost, and your sweetest contents to be preparatives to your woe, and your highest hopes will make you ashamed. Try, if you can persuade Satan to leave tempting, and the world to cease both troubling and seducing, and sin to cease inhabiting and acting; if you can bring the glory of God from above, or remove the Court from heaven to earth, and secure the continuance of this through eternity, then settle yourselves below, and say, "Soul, take thy rest here"; but till then admit not such a thought.

CHAPTER X

REPROVING OUR UNWILLINGNESS TO DIE

I

Is there a rest remaining for the people of God? Why are we then so loath to die, and to depart from hence that we may possess this rest? If I may judge of others' hearts by my own, we are exceeding guilty in this point. We linger, as Lot in Sodom, till God being merciful to us, doth pluck us away against our wills. How rare is it to meet with a Christian, though of strongest parts, and longest profession, that can die with an unfeigned willingness! Especially if worldly calamity constrain them not to be willing! Indeed, we sometimes set a good face on it, and pretend a willingness when we see there is no remedy, and that our unwillingness is only a disgrace to us, but will not help to prolong our lives: but if God had enacted such a law for the continuance of our lives on earth as is enacted for the continuance of the Parliament, that we should not be dissolved till our own pleasure; and that no man should die till he were truly willing; I fear heaven might be empty for the most of us; and if our worldly prosperity did not fade, our lives on earth would be very long, if not eternal. We pretend desires of being better prepared, and of doing God some greater service, and to that end we beg one year more, and another, and another; but still our promised preparation and service is as far to seek as ever before, and we remain as unwilling to die, as we were

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when we begged our first reprieve. If God were not more willing of our company than we are of His, how long should we remain thus distant from Him? And as we had never been sanctified if God had staid till we were willing; so if He should refer it wholly to ourselves, it would at least be long before we should be glorified. I confess that death of itself is not desirable; but the soul's rest with God is, to which death is the common passage. And because we are apt to make light of this sin, and to plead our common nature for to patronize it, let me here set before you its aggravations; and also propound some further considerations, which may be useful to you and myself against it.

II

Consider what a deal of gross infidelity doth lurk in the bowels of this sin, either paganish unbelief of the truth of that eternal blessedness and of the truth of the Scripture which doth promise it to us, or at least a doubting of our own interest; or most usually somewhat of both these. And though Christians are usually most sensible of the latter, and therefore complain most against it, yet I am apt to suspect the former to be the main radical master-sin and of greatest force in this business. Oh, if we did but verily believe that the promise of this glory is the word of God and that God doth truly mean as He speaks and is fully resolved to make it good; if we did verily believe that there is indeed such blessedness prepared for believers as the Scripture mentioneth, sure we should be as impatient of living as we are now fearful of dying, and should think every day a year till our last day should come; we should as hardly refrain from laying violent hands on ourselves, or from

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the neglecting of the means of our health and life, as we do now from over-much carefulness and seeking of life by unlawful means. If the eloquent oration of a philosopher concerning the soul's immortality and the life to come could make his affected hearer presently to cast himself headlong from the rock as impatient of any longer delay, what would a serious Christian's belief do, if God's law against self-murder did not restrain? Is it possible that we can truly believe that death will remove us from misery to such glory, and yet be loath to die? If it were the doubts of our own interest which did fear us, yet a true belief of the certainty and excellence of this rest would make us restless till our interest be cleared. If a man that is desperately sick to-day did believe he should arise sound the next morning, or a man to-day in despicable poverty had assurance that he should to-morrow arise a prince, would they be afraid to go to bed? Or rather think it the longest day of their lives till that desired night and morning come? The truth is, though there is much faith and Christianity in our mouths yet there is much infidelity and paganism in our hearts, which is the main cause that we are so loath to die.

III

And as the weakness of our faith, so also the coldness of our love, is exceedingly discovered by our unwillingness to die. Love doth desire the nearest conjunction, the fullest fruition, and closest communion; where these desires are absent, there is only a naked pretence of love; he that ever felt such a thing as love working in his breast hath also felt these desires attending it. If we love our friend we love his company; his presence is comfortable; his absence is troublesome. When he

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goes from us we desire his return; when he comes to us we entertain him with welcome and gladness; when he dies we mourn and usually over-mourn.

To be separated from a faithful friend is to us as the rending of a member from our bodies; and would not our desires after God be such if we really loved Him? Nay, should it not be much more than such, as He is above all friends most lovely? The Lord teach us to look closely to our hearts and take heed of self-deceit in this point; for certainly whatever we pretend or conceit, if we love either father, mother, husband, wife, child, friend, wealth, or life more than Christ we are yet none of His sincere disciples. When it comes to the trial, the question will not be, who hath preached most, or heard most, or talked most, but who hath loved most? when our account is given in Christ will not take sermons, prayers, fastings, no, nor the giving of our goods, nor the burning of our bodies instead of love. And do we love Him and yet care not how long we are from Him? If I be deprived of my bosom-friend methinks I am as a man in the wilderness, solitary and disconsolate; and is my absence from God no part of my trouble, and yet can I take Him for my chiefest friend?

If I delight but in some garden or walk or gallery I would be much in it; if I love my books I am much with them and almost unweariedly poring on them. The food which I love I would often feed on; the clothes that I love I would often wear; the recreations which I love I would often use them; the business which I love I would be much employed in; and can I love God, and that above all these, and yet have no desires to be with Him? Is it not a far likelier sign of hatred than of love, when the thoughts of our appearing before God are our most grievous thoughts; and when we take ourselves as undone, because we must die and come unto

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Him? Surely, I should scarce take him for an unfeigned friend who were as well contented to be absent from me, as we ordinarily are to be absent from God. Was it such a joy to Jacob to see the face of Joseph in Egypt, and shall we so dread the sight of Christ in glory, and yet say we love Him?

I dare not conclude that we have no love at all when we are so loath to die; but I dare say, were our love more we should die more willingly. Yea, I dare say, did we love God but as strongly as a worldling loves his wealth, or an ambitious man his honour, or a voluptuous man his pleasure, yea, as a drunkard loves his swinish delight, or an unclean person his brutish lust, we should not then be so exceeding loath to leave the world and go to God. Oh, if this holy flame of love were thoroughly kindled in our breasts, instead of our pressing fears, our dolorous complaints, and earnest prayers against death, we should join in David's wilderness lamentations, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?" The truth is, as our knowledge of God is exceeding dark, and our faith in Him exceeding feeble, so is our love to Him but little, and therefore are our desires after Him so dull.

IV

It appears we are little weary of sinning when we are so unwilling to be freed by dying. Did we take sin for the greatest evil we should not be willing of its company so long; did we look on sin as our cruellest enemy and on a sinful life as the most miserable life, sure we should then be more willing of a change. But oh, how far are our hearts from our doctrinal profession in this point

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also! We preach and write and talk against sin, and call it all that naught is, and when we are called to leave it we are loath to depart; we brand it with the most odious names that we can imagine (and all far short of expressing its vileness), but when the approach of death puts us to the trial we choose a continuance with these abominations before the presence and fruition of God. But as Nemon smote his soldier for railing against Alexander his enemy, saying, "I hired thee to fight against him and not to rail against him"; so may God smite us also when He shall hear our tongues reviling that sin which we resist so slothfully and part with so unwillingly. Christians, seeing we are conscious that our hearts deserve a smiting for this, let us join together to chide and smite our own hearts, before God do judge and smite them.

O foolish sinful heart, hast thou been so long a sink of sin, a cage of all unclean lusts, a fountain uncessantly streaming forth the bitter and deadly waters of transgression, and art thou not yet aweary? Wretched soul, hast thou been so long wounded in all thy faculties, so grievously languishing in all thy performances, so fruitful a soil for all iniquities, and art thou not yet more weary? Hast thou not yet transgressed long enough, nor long enough provoked thy Lord, nor long enough abused love, wouldst thou yet grieve the Spirit more, and sin against thy Saviour's blood, and more increase thine own wounds, and still lie under thy grievous imperfections? Hath thy sin proved so profitable a commodity, so necessary a companion, such a delightful employment, that thou dost so much dread the parting day? Hath thy Lord deserved this at thy hands, that thou shouldst choose to continue in the suburbs of hell rather than live with Him in light, and rather stay and drudge in sin and abide with His and thy own professed enemy than come away and dwell with

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God? May not God justly grant thee thy wishes, and seal thee a lease of thy desired distance, and nail thy ear to these doors of misery, and exclude thee eternally from His glory?

Foolish sinner, who hath wronged thee, God, or sin? Who hath wounded thee and caused thy groans, who hath made thy life so woful, and caused thee to spend thy days in dolour, is it Christ, or is it thy corruption? And art thou yet so loath to think of parting? Shall God be willing to dwell with man, and the Spirit to abide in thy peevish heart, and that where sin doth straiten his room and a cursed inmate inhabit with him which is ever quarrelling and contriving against him, and shall man be loath to come to God, where is nothing but perfect blessedness and glory? Is not this to judge ourselves unworthy of everlasting life? If they in Acts xiii. 46, who put the gospel from them, did judge themselves unworthy, do not we who fly from life and glory?

V

It shews that we are insensible of the vanity of the creature, and of the vexation accompanying our residence here, when we are so loath to hear or think of a removal. Whatever we say against the world, or how grievous soever our complaints may seem, we either believe not, or feel not what we say, or else we should be answerably affected to it. We call the world our enemy, and cry out of the oppression of our task-masters, and groan under our sore bondage; but either we speak not as we think, or else we imagine some singular happiness to consist in the possession of worldly things for which all this should be endured. Is any man loath to leave his prison, or to remove his dwelling from cruel enemies, or to escape the

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hands of murderous robbers? Do we take the world indeed for our prison, our cruel, spoiling, murderous foe, and yet are we loath to leave it? Do we take this flesh for the clog of our spirits, and a veil that is drawn betwixt us and God, and a continual in-dwelling traitor to our souls, and yet are we loath to lay it down? Indeed Peter was smitten by the angel before he arose and left his prison, but it was more from his ignorance of his intended deliverance than any unwillingness to leave the place. I have read of Joseph's long imprisonment, and Daniel's casting into the den of lions, and Jeremiah's sticking fast in the dungeon, and Jonah's lying in the belly of the whale, and David from the deep, crying to God, but I remember not that any were loath to be delivered. I have read, indeed, that they suffered cheerfully, and rejoiced in being afflicted, destitute and tormented, yea, and that some of them would not accept of deliverance, but not from any love to the suffering, or any unwillingness to change their condition; but because of the hard terms of their deliverance, and from the hope they had of a better resurrection. Though Paul and Silas could sing in the stocks, and comfortably bear their cruel scourgings, yet I do not believe they were unwilling to go forth, nor took it ill when God relieved them.

Ah, foolish wretched soul, doth every prisoner groan for freedom, and every slave desire his jubilee, and every sick man long for health, and every hungry man for food, and dost thou alone abhor deliverance? Doth the seaman long to see the land, doth the husbandman desire the harvest, and the labouring man to receive his pay, doth the traveller long to be at home, and the runner long to win the prize, and the soldier long to win the field, and art thou loath to see thy labours finished and to receive the end of thy faith and sufferings, and to obtain the thing for which thou livest? Are all thy sufferings only seeming,

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have thy gripes, thy griefs and groans been only dreams? If they were, yet methinks we should not be afraid of waking. Fearful dreams are not delightful. Or is it not rather the world's delights that are all mere dreams and shadows, is not all its glory as the light of a glow-worm, a wandering fire, yielding but small directing light, and as little comforting heat in all our doubtful and sorrowful darkness?

Or hath the world in these its latter days laid aside its ancient enmity? Is it become of late more kind, hath it left its thorny rending nature? Who hath wrought this great change, and who hath made this reconciliation? Surely not the great Reconciler; He hath told us, in the world we shall have trouble, and in Him only we shall have peace. We may reconcile ourselves to the world, at our peril, but it will never reconcile itself to us. O foolish unworthy soul! who hadst rather dwell in this land of darkness, and rather wander in this barren wilderness than be at rest with Jesus Christ; who hadst rather stay among the wolves and daily suffer the scorpions' stings than to praise the Lord with the hosts of heaven! If thou didst well know what heaven is and what earth is, it would not be so.

VI

This unwillingness to die doth actually impeach us of high treason against the Lord. Is it not a choosing of earth before Him, and taking these present things for our happiness, and consequently making them our very god? If we did indeed make God our god, that is, our end, our rest, our portion, our treasure; how is it possible but we should desire to enjoy Him? It behoves us the rather to be fearful of this, it being utterly inconsistent with saving grace, to value anything before God, or to make the creature our highest end. Many other sins foul and

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great may possibly yet consist with sincerity; but so, I am certain, cannot that. But concerning this I have spoke before.

VII

And all these defects being thus discovered, what a deal of dissembling doth it moreover show? We take on us to believe undoubtedly the exceeding eternal weight of glory; we call God our chiefest good, and say we love Him above all; and for all this we fly from Him, as if it were from hell itself. Would you have any man believe you when you call the Lord your only hope, and speak of Christ as all in all, and talk of the joy that is in His presence, and yet would endure the hardest life rather than die and come in His presence? What self-contradiction is this, to talk so hardly of the world and flesh, to groan and complain of sin and suffering, and yet fear no day more than that which we expect should bring our final freedom?

What shameless gross dissembling is this, to spend so many hours and days in hearing sermons, reading books, conferring with others, and all to learn the way to a place which we are loath to come to; to take on us all our lifetime to walk towards heaven, to run, to strive, to fight for heaven which we are loath to come to? What apparent palpable hypocrisy is this, to lie upon our knees in public and private, and spend one hour after another in prayer for that which we would not have? If one should overhear thee in thy daily devotions crying out, "Lord, deliver me from this body of death, from this sin, this sickness, this poverty, these cares and fears, how long Lord shall I suffer these?" and withal should hear thee praying against death, can He believe thy tongue agrees with thy heart except thou have so far lost thy reason as to expect all this here, or except the Papists' doctrine

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were true, that we are able to fulfil the law of God, or our late perfectionists are truly enlightened, who think they can live and not sin; but if thou know these to be undoubtedly false how canst thou deny thy gross dissembling?

VIII

Consider, how do we wrong the Lord and His promises, and disgrace His ways in the eyes of the world? As if we would actually persuade them to question whether God be true of His word or no, whether there be any such glory as Scripture mentions; when they see those who have professed to live by faith, and have boasted of their hopes in another world, and persuaded others to let go all for these hopes, and spoken disgracefully of all things below in comparison of these unexpressible things above, I say, when they see these very men so loath to leave their hold of present things, and to go to that glory which they talked and boasted of, how doth it make the weak to stagger, and confirm the world in their unbelief and sensuality, and make them conclude: sure, if these professors did expect so much glory, and make so light of the world as they seem, they would not themselves be so loath of a change. Oh, how are we ever able to repair the wrong which we do to God and poor souls by this scandal! And what an honour to God, what a strengthening to believers, what a conviction to unbelievers would it be, if Christians in this did answer their professions and cheerfully welcome the news of rest?

IX

It evidently discovers that we have been careless loiterers, that we have spent much time to little purpose, and that we have neglected and lost a great many of [our]

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warnings. Have we not had all our lifetime to prepare to die, so many years to make ready for one hour, and are we so unready and unwilling yet? What have we done? Why have we lived that the business of our lives is so much undone? Had we any greater matters to mind? Have we not foolishly wronged our souls in this? Would we have wished more frequent warnings? How oft hath death entered the habitations of our neighbours, how oft hath it knocked at our own doors! We have first heard that such an one is dead, and then such an one, and such an one, till our towns have changed most of their inhabitants; and was not all this a sufficient warning to tell us that we were also mortals, and our own turn would shortly come? Nay, we have seen death raging in towns and fields, so many hundred a day dead of the pestilence, so many thousand slain of the sword; and did we not know it would reach to us at last? How many distempers have vexed our bodies, frequent languishings, consuming weaknesses, wasting fevers, here pain and there trouble, that we have been forced to receive the sentence of death! And what were all these but so many messengers sent from God to tell us we must shortly die; as if we had heard a lively voice, bidding us, "delay no more, but make you ready"; and are we unready and unwilling after all this? O careless dead-hearted sinners! unworthy neglecters of God's warnings, faithless betrayers of our own souls!

All these heinous aggravations do lie upon this sin of unwillingness to die, which I have laid down to make it hateful to my own soul (which is too much guilty of it) as well as yours. And for a further help to our prevailing against it I shall adjoin these following considerations:

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X

Consider, not to die were never to be happy. To escape death were to miss of blessedness, except God should translate us as Enoch and Elias, which he never did before or since. If our hope in Christ were in this life only we were then of all men most miserable; the epicure hath more pleasure to his flesh than the Christian; the drunkard, the whoremaster, and the jovial lads do swagger it out with gallantry and mirth when a poor saint is mourning in a corner. Yea, the very beasts of the field do eat and drink and skip and play and care for nothing, when many a Christian dwells with sorrows; so that if you would not die and go to heaven what would you have more than an epicure, or a beast? What doth it avail us to fight with beasts, as men, if it were not for our hopes of a life to come? Why do we pray and fast and mourn, why do we suffer the contempt of the world, why are we the scorn and hatred of all, if it were not for our hopes after we are dead? Why are we Christians, and not pagans and infidels, if we do not desire a life to come? Why Christian, wouldst thou lose thy faith, and lose thy labour in all thy duties, and all thy sufferings; wouldst thou lose thy hope, and lose all the end of thy life, and lose all the blood of Christ, and be contented with the portion of a worldling, or a brute? If thou say no to this, how canst thou then be loath to die? As good old Milius said when he lay a-dying, and was asked whether he were willing to die or no; "*Illius est nolle mori qui nolit ire ad Christum*;" a saying of Cyprian's which he oft repeated, "Let him be loath to die, who is loath to be with Christ."

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XI

Consider, is God willing by death to glorify us, and are we unwilling to die that we may be glorified? Would God freely give us heaven, and are we unwilling to receive it? As the prince who would have taken the lame beggar into his coach and he refused, said to him, "*Optime mereris qui in luto hæreas*. Thou well deservest to stick in the dirt." So may God to the refusers of rest: You well deserve to live in trouble. Methinks if a prince were willing to make you his heir you should scarce be unwilling to accept it. Sure the refusing of such a kindness, must needs discover ingratitude and unworthiness. As God hath resolved against them who make excuses when they should come to Christ, "Verily none of these that were bidden shall taste of My supper"; so is it just with Him to resolve against us who frame excuses when we should come to glory. Ignatius, when he was condemned to be torn with wild beasts, was so afraid, lest by the prayers and means of his friends he should lose the opportunity and benefit of martyrdom, that he often entreats them to let him alone, and not hinder his happiness; and tells them he was afraid of their love lest it would hurt him, and their carnal friendship would keep him from death.

XII

The Lord Jesus was willing to come from heaven to earth for us, and shall we be unwilling to remove from earth to heaven for ourselves and Him? Sure if we had been once possessed of heaven, and God should have sent us to earth again, as He did His Son for our sakes, we

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should then have been loath to remove indeed. It was another kind of change than ours is which Christ did freely submit unto; to clothe Himself with the garments of flesh, and to take upon Him the form of a servant, to come from the bosom of the Father's love, to bear His wrath which we should have borne. Shall He come down to our hell, from the height of glory to the depth of misery, to bring us up to His eternal rest, and shall we be after this unwilling? Sure Christ had more cause to be unwilling. He might have said, "What is it to Me if these sinners suffer? If they value their flesh above their spirits, and their lusts above My Father's love, if they needs will sell their souls for nought, who is it fit should be the loser, and who should bear the blame and curse? Should I whom they have wronged? Must they wilfully transgress My law, and I undergo their deserved pain? Is it not enough that I bear the trespass from them, but I must also bear My Father's wrath, and satisfy the justice which they have wronged? Must I come down from heaven to earth, and clothe Myself with human flesh, be spit upon and scorned by man, and fast and weep and sweat and suffer and bleed and die a cursed death, and all this for wretched worms who would rather hazard all they had, and venture their souls and God's favour, than they would forbear but one forbidden morsel? Do they cast away themselves so slightly, and must I redeem them again so dearly?"

Thus we see that Christ had much to have pleaded against His coming down for man, and yet He pleaded none of this. He had reason enough to have made Him unwilling, and yet did He voluntarily condescend. But we have no reason against our coming to Him, except we will reason against our hopes, and plead for a perpetuity of our own calamities. Christ came down to fetch us up, and would we have Him lose His blood and labour, and

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go away again without us? Hath He bought our rest at so dear a rate; is our inheritance purchased with the blood of God; and are we after all this loath to enter? Ah, sirs, it was Christ and not we that had cause to be loath. The Lord forgive and heal this foolish ingratitude.

XIII

Consider, do we not combine with our most cruel, mortal foes; and jump with them in their most malicious design while we are loath to die and go to heaven? Where is the height of their malice, and what is the scope of all temptations, and what is the devil's daily business? Is it not to keep our souls from God? And shall we be well content with this, and join with Satan in our desires? What though it be not those eternal torments, yet it is the one half of hell which we wish to ourselves while we desire to be absent from heaven and God. If thou shouldst take counsel of all thine enemies, if thou shouldst beat thy brains both night and day, in studying to do thyself a mischief, what greater than this could it possibly be, to continue here on earth from God, excepting only hell itself? Oh, what sport is this to Satan that his desires and thine should so concur; that when he sees he cannot get thee to hell he can so long keep thee out of heaven, and make thee the earnest petitioner for it thyself. Oh, gratify not the devil so much to thy own displeasure.

XIV

Do not our daily fears of death make our lives a continual torment, the fears of death, as Erasmus saith, being a sorer evil than death itself? And thus as Paul

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did die daily in regard of preparation, and in regard of the necessary sufferings of his life; so do we in regard of the torments and the useless sufferings which we make ourselves. Those lives which might be full of joys in the daily contemplation of the life to come and the sweet delightful thoughts of bliss, how do we fill them up with terrors through all these causeless thoughts and fears? Thus do we consume our own comforts, and prey upon our truest pleasures. When we might lie down, and rise up, and walk abroad with our hearts full of the joys of God we continually fill them with perplexing fears. For he that fears dying must be always fearing, because he hath always cause to expect it. And how can that man's life be comfortable who lives in continual fear of losing his comforts?

XV

Moreover, all these are self-created sufferings; as if it were not enough to be the deservers, but we must also be the executioners of our own calamities! As if God had not inflicted enough upon us, but we must inflict more upon ourselves! Is not death bitter enough to the flesh of itself, but we must double and treble and multiply its bitterness? Do we complain so much of the burden of our troubles, and yet daily add unto the weight? Sure the state of poor mortals is sufficiently calamitous; they need not make it so much worse. The sufferings laid upon us by God do all lead to happy issues; the progress is from suffering to patience, from thence to experience, and so to hope, and at last to glory. But the sufferings which we do make ourselves have usually issues answerable to their causes; the motion is circular and endless, from sin to suffering, from suffering to sin, and so to suffering again, and so *in infinitum*. And not only so,

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but they multiply in their course; every sin is greater than the former, and so every suffering also greater. This is the natural progress of them, which if mercy do intercept, no thanks to us. So that except we think that God hath made us to be our own tormentors we have small reason to nourish our fears of death.

XVI

Consider further, they are all but useless, unprofitable fears. As all our care cannot make one hair white or black, nor add one cubit to our stature, so can neither our fear prevent our sufferings, nor delay our dying time an hour; willing or unwilling we must away. Many a man's fears have hastened his end, but no man's ever did avert it. It is true, a cautelous fear or care concerning the danger after death hath profited many, and is very useful to the preventing of that danger; but for a member of Christ and an heir of heaven to be afraid of entering his own inheritance, this is a sinful, useless fear.

XVII

But though it be useless in respect of good, yet to Satan it is very serviceable. Our fears of dying ensnare our souls, and add strength to many temptations; nay, when we are called to die for Christ, and put to it in a day of trial, it may draw us to deny the known truth and forsake the Lord God Himself. You look upon it now as a small sin, a common frailty of human nature; but if you look to the dangerous consequences of it, methinks it should move you to other thoughts. What made Peter deny his Lord; what makes apostates in suffering,

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times forsake the truth; and the green blade of unrooted faith to wither before the heat of persecution? Fear of imprisonment and poverty may do much but fear of death will do much more. When you see the gibbet or hear the sentence, if this fear of dying prevail in you, you will straight begin to say as Peter, "I know not the man." When you see the faggots set and fire ready, you will say as that apostate to the martyr, "Oh, the fire is hot, and nature is frail," forgetting that the fire of hell is hotter. Sirs, as light as you make of it, you know not of what force these fears are to separate your souls from Jesus Christ. Have we not lately had frequent experience of it?

How many thousands have fled in fight, and turned their back on a good cause, where they knew the honour of God was concerned, and their country's welfare was the prize for which they fought, and the hopes of their posterity did lie at the stake, and all through unworthy fear of dying! Have we not known those who, lying under a wounded conscience and living in the practice of some known sin, durst scarce look the enemy in the face, because they durst not look death in the face; but have trembled and drawn back and cried, "Alas, I dare not die; if I were in the case of such or such, I durst die." He that dare not die dare scarce fight valiantly. Therefore we have seen in our late wars that there is none more valiant than these two sorts: those who have conquered the fear of death by the power of faith, and those who have extinguished it by desperate profaneness, and cast it away through stupid security. So much fear as we have of death, usually so much cowardice in the cause of God. However, it is an evident temptation and snare. Beside the multitude of unbelieving contrivances and discontents at the wise disposals of God, and hard thoughts of most of His providences, which this sin doth make us guilty of; it also loseth us much precious time and that for

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the most part near our end. When time should be most precious of all to us, and when it should be employed to better purpose, then do we vainly and sinfully waste it in the fruitless issues of these distracting fears. So that you see how dangerous a snare these fears are, and how fruitful a parent of many evils.

XVIII

Consider, what a competent time the most of us have had; some thirty, some forty, some fifty or sixty years. How many come to the grave younger for one that lives to the shortest of these? Christ Himself, as is generally thought, lived but thirty-three years on earth. If it were to come, as it is past, you would think thirty years a long time. Did you not long ago in your threatening sickness think with yourselves, "Oh if I might enjoy but one seven years more, or ten years more!" and now you have enjoyed perhaps more than you then begged, and are you nevertheless unwilling yet; except you would not die at all, but desire an immortality here on earth, which is a sin inconsistent with the truth of grace. If your sorrow be merely this, that you are mortal, you might as well have lamented it all your lives, for sure you could never be ignorant of this. Why should not a man that would die at all be as well willing at thirty or forty, if God see it meet, as at seventy or eighty? Nay, usually when the longest day is come men are as loath to depart as ever. He that loseth so many years hath more cause to bewail his own neglect than to complain of the shortness of his time, and were better lament the wickedness of his life than the brevity. Length of time doth not conquer corruption; it never withers nor decays through age. Except we receive an addition of grace as well as time we

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naturally grow the older the worse. Let us then be contented with our allotted proportion.

And as we are convinced that we should not murmur against our assigned degree of wealth, of health, of honour, and other things here, so let us not be discontented with our allowed proportion of time. O my soul, depart in peace. Hast thou not here enjoyed a competent share? As thou wouldst not desire an unlimited state in wealth and honour, so desire it not in point of time. Is it fit that God or thou should be the sharer? If thou wert sensible how little thou deservest an hour of that patience which thou hast enjoyed, thou wouldst think thou hast had a large part. Wouldst thou have thy age called back again; canst thou eat thy bread and have it too? Is it not Divine wisdom that sets the bounds? God will not let one have all the work nor all the offering, nor all the honour of the work. He will honour Himself by variety of instruments, by various persons, and several ages, and not by one person or age. Seeing thou hast acted thine own part and finished thine appointed course, come down contentedly that others may succeed who must have their turns as well as thou. As of all other outward things, so also of that time and life, thou mayest as well have too much as too little; only of God and eternal life thou canst never enjoy too much nor too long. Great receivings will have great accounts; where the lease is longer the fine and rent must be the greater. Much time hath much duty. Is it not as easy to answer for the receivings and the duties of thirty years, as of an hundred? Beg therefore for grace to improve it better, but be content with thy share of time.

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XIX

Consider, thou hast had a competency of the comforts of life and not of naked time alone. God might have made thy life a misery, till thou hadst been as weary of possessing it as thou art now afraid of losing it. If He had denied thee the benefits and ends of living thy life would have been but a slender comfort. They in hell have life as well as we, and longer far than they desire. God might have suffered thee to have consumed thy days in ignorance, or to have spent thy life to the last hour before He brought thee home to Himself, and given thee the saving knowledge of Christ; and then thy life had been short though thy time long. But He hath opened thine eyes in the morning of thy days, and acquainted thee betimes with the trade of thy life. I know the best are but negligent loiterers, and spend not their time according to its worth; but yet he that hath an hundred years' time and loseth it all, lives not so long as he that hath but twenty and bestows it well. It is too soon to go to hell at an hundred years old, and not too soon to go to heaven at twenty. The means are to be valued in reference to their end; that is the best means which speediest and surest obtaineth the end. He that hath enjoyed most of the ends of life hath had the best life, and not he that hath lived longest. You that are acquainted with the life of grace, what if you live but twenty or thirty years? Would you change it for a thousand years of wickedness?

God might have let you have lived like the ungodly world, and then you would have had cause to be afraid of dying. We have lived in a place and time of light; in Europe, not in Asia, Africa, or America; in England, not in Spain or Italy; in the age when knowledge doth most abound, and not in our forefathers' days of dark-

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ness; we have lived among Bibles, sermons, books, and Christians. As one acre of fruitful soil is better than many of barren commons; as the possession of a kingdom for one year is better than a lease of a cottage for twenty; so twenty or thirty years, living in such a place or age as we, is better than Methuselah's age in the case of most of the world besides. And shall we not then be contented with our portion? If we who are ministers of the Gospel have seen abundant fruit of our labours; if God hath blessed our labour in seven years more than some others in twenty or thirty; if God have made us the happy, though unworthy, means of converting and saving more souls at a sermon than some better men in all their lives; what cause have we to complain of the shortness of our time in the work of God? Would unprofitable, unsuccessful preaching have been comfortable? Will it do us good to labour to little purpose, so we may but labour long? If our desires of living are for the service of the Church, as our deceitful hearts are still pretending, then sure if God honour us to do the more service though in the lesser time, we have our desire. God will have each to have his share; when we have had ours let us rest contented.

Persuade then thy backward soul to its duty, and argue down these dreadful thoughts. Unworthy wretch, hath thy Father allowed thee so large a part, and caused thy lot to fall so well, and given thee thine abode in pleasant places, and filled up all thy life with mercies, and dost thou now think thy share too small? Is not that which thy life doth want in length made up in breadth, and weight, and sweetness? Lay all together, and look about thee, and tell me how many of thy neighbours have more, how many in all the town or country have had a better share than thou. Why mightest not thou have been one of the thousands

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whose carcasses thou hast seen scattered as dung on the earth? Or why mightest not thou have been one that is useless in the Church, and an unprofitable burden to the place thou livest in?

What a multitude of hours of consolation, of delightful Sabbaths, of pleasant studies, of precious companions, of wondrous deliverances, of excellent opportunities, of fruitful labours, of joyful tidings, of sweet experiences, of astonishing providences hath thy life partaken of; so that many a hundred who have each of them lived an hundred years have not all together enjoyed so much! And yet art thou not satisfied with thy lot? Hath thy life been so sweet that thou art loath to leave it? Is that the thanks thou returnest to Him who sweetened it to draw thee to His own sweetness? Indeed, if this had been all thy portion I could not blame thee to be discontented; and yet let me tell thee too, that of all these poor souls who have no other portion, but receive all their good things in this life, there is few or none even of them who ever had so full a share as thyself. And hast thou not then had a fair proportion for one that must shortly have heaven besides? O foolish soul! would thou wert as covetous after eternity as thou art for a fading perishing life; and after the blessed presence of God as thou art for continuance with earth and sin. Then thou wouldst rather "look through the windows, and cry through the lattices, 'Why is His chariot so long a coming; why tarry the wheels of His chariots?'" How long, Lord, how long!

XX

Consider, what if God should grant thy desire, and let thee live yet many years, but withal should strip thee of the comforts of life and deny thee the mercies which thou

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hast hitherto enjoyed. Would this be a blessing worth the begging for? Might not God in judgment give thee life, as He gave the murmuring Israelites quails; or as He ofttimes gives men riches and honour when He sees them over-earnest for it? Might He not justly say to thee, "Seeing thou hadst rather linger on earth than come away and enjoy My presence; seeing thou art so greedy of life, take it, and a curse with it; never let fruit grow on it more, nor the sun of comfort shine upon it, nor the dew of My blessing ever water it; let thy table be a snare, let thy friends be thy sorrow; let thy riches be corrupted, and the rust of thy silver eat thy flesh. Go, hear sermons as long as thou wilt, but let never sermon do thee good more; let all thou hearest make against thee and increase the smart of thy wounded spirit; if thou love preaching better than heaven, go and preach till thou be weary, but never profit soul more." Sirs, what if God should thus chastise our inordinate desires of living, were it not just; and what good would our lives then do us? Seest thou not some that spend their days on their couch in groaning; and some in begging by the highway sides; and others in seeking bread from door to door; and most of the world in labouring for food and raiment, and living only that they may live, and losing the ends and benefits of life? Why, what good would such a life do thee were it never so long; when thy soul shall serve thee only, instead of salt, to keep the body from stinking? God might give thee life till thou art weary of living, and as glad to be rid of it as Judas or Achitophel; and make thee like many miserable creatures in the world, who can hardly forbear laying violent hands on themselves. Be not therefore so importunate for life, which may prove a judgment instead of a blessing.

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XXI

Consider, how many of the precious saints of God, of all ages and places, have gone before thee. Thou art not to enter an untrodden path, nor appointed first to break the ice. Except only Enoch and Elias, which of the saints have escaped death? And art thou better than they? There are many millions of saints dead, more than do now remain on earth. What a number of thine own bosom friends and intimate acquaintance and companions in duty are now there? And why shouldst thou be so loath to follow? Nay, hath not Jesus Christ Himself gone this way, hath He not sanctified the grave to us, and perfumed the dust with His own body, and art thou loath to follow Him too? Oh rather, let us say as 'Thomas, "Let us also go, and die with Him;" or rather, let us suffer with Him, that we may be glorified together with Him.

Many such like considerations might be added, as that Christ hath taken out the sting; how light the saints have made of it; how cheerfully the very pagans have entertained it, &c. But because all that is hitherto spoken is also conducive to the same purpose, I pass them by. If what hath been said will not persuade, Scripture and reason hath little force.

I have said the more on this subject, finding it so needful to myself and others; finding that among so many Christians, who could do and suffer much for Christ, there is yet so few that can willingly die; and of many who have somewhat subdued other corruptions, so few have got the conquest of this. This caused me to draw forth these arrows from the quiver of Scripture and spend them against it.

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XXII

I will only yet answer some objections, and so conclude :

“Oh, if I were but certain of heaven I should then never stick at dying.”

Search, for all that, whether some of the forementioned causes may not be in fault as well as this.

Didst thou not say so long ago? Have you not been in this song this many years? If you are yet uncertain whose fault is it? You have had nothing else to do with your lives, nor no greater matter than this to mind. Were you not better presently fall to the trial, till you have put the question out of doubt? Must God stay while you trifle, and must His patience be continued to cherish your negligence? If thou have played the loiterer, do so no longer; go, search thy soul, and follow the search close, till thou come to a clear discovery. Begin to-night, stay not till the next morning. Certainty comes not by length of time, but by the blessing of the Spirit upon wise and faithful trial. You may linger out thus twenty years more and be still as uncertain as now you are.

A perfect certainty may not be expected; we shall still be deficient in that as well as in other things. They who think the apostle speaks absolutely, and not comparatively, of a perfect assurance in the very degree when he mentions a plerophory or full assurance, I know no reason but they may expect perfection in all things else as well as this. When you have done all, you will know this but in part. If your belief of that Scripture which saith, “Believe and be saved,” be imperfect; and if your knowledge whether your own deceitful hearts do sincerely believe or not, be imperfect; or if but one

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of these two be imperfect; the result or conclusion must needs be so too. If you would then stay till you are perfectly certain, you may stay for ever: if you have obtained assurance but in some degree, or got but the grounds for assurance laid, it is then the speediest and surest way to desire rather to be quickly in rest; for then, and never till then, will both the grounds and assurance be fully perfect.

Both your assurance and the comfort thereof is the gift of the Spirit, who is a free bestower; and God's usual time to be largest in mercy is when His people are deepest in necessity. A mercy in season is the sweetest mercy. I could give you here abundance of late examples of those who have languished for assurance and comfort; some all their sickness, and some most of their lives; and when they have been near to death they have received in abundance. Never fear death then through imperfections of assurance; for that is the most usual time of all when God most fully and sweetly bestows it.

XXIII

“Oh, but the Church's necessities are great; God hath made me useful in my place; so that the loss will be to many; or else, methinks, I could willingly die.”

This may be the case of some, but yet remember the heart is deceitful. God is oft pretended, when ourselves are intended. But if this be it that sticks with thee indeed, consider, wilt thou pretend to be wiser than God; doth not He know how to provide for His Church? Cannot He do His work without thee, or find out instruments enough besides thee? Think not too highly of thyself because God hath made thee useful. Must the Church needs fall when thou art gone? Art thou

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the foundation on which it is built? Could God take away a Moses, an Aaron, David, Elias, &c., and find supply for all their places; and cannot He also find supply for thine? This is to derogate from God too much, and to arrogate too much unto thyself. Neither art thou so merciful as God, nor canst love the Church so well as He. As His interest is infinitely beyond thine, so is His tender care and bounty. But of this before.

Yet mistake me not in all that I have said: I deny not but that it is lawful and necessary for a Christian upon both the forementioned grounds to desire God to delay His death; both for a further opportunity of gaining assurance, and also to be further serviceable to the Church.¹ Time and life is a most precious mercy; not so much because of what we here enjoy, but because eternity of joy or torment dependeth on this time, when it must go with man forever in heaven or hell according to the provision he makes on earth; and they that will find a treasure in heaven, must now lay it up there.

I do not blame a man that is well in his wits, if he be loath to die, till he hath some comfortable assurance that it shall certainly go well with him in another world. And every man's assurance, as I have proved, is imperfect. And therefore I doubt not but we may pray for recovery from sicknesses. And may rejoice in it and give thanks for it as a great mercy. And may pray hard for our godly and ungodly friends in their sickness. And must value our time highly, and improve it as a mercy which we must be accountable for. And every godly man is so useful to the Church, ordinarily, that even for the Church's service he may desire to live longer, as Paul did, even till he come to the full age

¹ See Phil. ii. 26, 27.

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of man, and while he is able to serve the Church, and it hath need of him. No man should be over-hasty to a state that must never be changed, when both assurance of glory and his fitness for it are still imperfect; and ordinarily the saints grow fitter in their age. But then this must not be in love of earth, but we must take it as our present loss to be kept from heaven, though it may tend to the Church's and our own future advantage, and so may be desired; so that you must still see that heaven be valued and loved above earth even when you have cause to pray for longer time, as she that longs to be married to a prince may desire delay for preparation.

But, first, this is nothing to their case who are still delaying and never willing, whose true discontents are at death itself, more than at the unseasonableness of dying. Secondly, though such desires are sometimes lawful, yet must they be carefully bounded and moderated; to which end are the former considerations. We must not be too absolute and peremptory in our desires, but cheerfully yield to God's disposal. The rightest temper is that of Paul's, to be in a strait between two, desiring to depart and be with Christ, and yet to stay, while God will have us, to do the Church the utmost service. But alas! we are seldom in this strait; our desires run out all one way, and that for the flesh, and not the Church; our straits are only for fear of dying; and not betwixt the earnest desires of dying, and of living. He that desireth life only to prepare for heaven doth love heaven better than life on earth; for the end is still more beloved than all the means.

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XXIV

“But is not death a punishment of God for sin? Doth not Scripture call it the king of fears, and nature, above all other evils, abhor it?”

I will not meddle with that which is controversial in this; whether death be properly a punishment or not. But grant that, in itself considered, it may be called evil, as being naturally the dissolution of the creature, yet being sanctified to us by Christ, and being the season and occasion of so great a good, as is the present possession of God in Christ; it may be welcomed with a glad submission, if not with desire. Christ affords us grounds enough to comfort us against this natural evil; and therefore indues us with the principle of grace to raise us above the reach of nature.

For all those low and poor objections, as leaving house, goods, and friends, leaving our children unprovided, &c., I pass them over as of lesser moment than to take much with men of grace.

XXV

Lastly, understand me in this also, that I have spoke all this to the faithful soul. I persuade not the ungodly from fearing death. It is a wonder rather that they fear it no more, and spend not their days in continual horror, as is said before. Truly but that we know a stone is insensible, and a hard heart is dead and stupid, or else a man would admire how poor souls can live in ease and quietness that must be turned out of these bodies into everlasting flames; or that be not sure at least if they should die this night, whether they shall lodge in heaven or hell the next; especially when so many are called and

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so few chosen ; and the righteous themselves are scarcely saved. One would think such men should eat their bread with trembling ; and the thoughts of their danger should keep them waking in the night ; and they should fall presently a-searching themselves, and enquiring of others, and crying to God, that if it were possible they might quickly be out of this danger, and so their hearts be freed from horror ! For a man to quake at the thoughts of death that looks by it to be dispossessed of his happiness, and knoweth not whither he is next to go, this is no wonder. But for the saints to fear their passage by death to rest, this is an unreasonable hurtful fear.

CHAPTER XI

MOTIVES TO A HEAVENLY LIFE

I

WE have now, by the guidance of the Word of the Lord and by the assistance of His Spirit, shewed you the nature of the Rest of the saints, and acquainted you with some duties in relation thereto. We come now to the close of all, to press you to the great duty which I chiefly intended when I begun this subject; and have here reserved it to the last place because I know hearers are usually of slippery memories, yet apt to retain the last that is spoken, though they forget all that went before. Dear friends, it is pity that either you or I should forget anything of that which doth so nearly concern us as this eternal rest of the saints doth. But if you must needs forget something, let it be anything else rather than this; let it be rather all that I have hitherto said (though I hope of better) than this one ensuing use.

Is there a rest, and such a rest, remaining for us? Why, then, are our thoughts no more upon it, why are not our hearts continually there, why dwell we not there in constant contemplation? Sirs, ask your hearts in good earnest what is the cause of this neglect; are we reasonable in this; or are we not? Hath the Eternal God provided us such a glory and promised to take us up to dwell with Himself, and is not this worth the

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thinking on? Should not the strongest desires of our hearts be after it, and the daily delights of our souls be there? Do we believe this, and can we yet forget and neglect it? What is the matter? Will not God give us leave to approach this light, or will He not suffer our souls to taste and see? Why then, what means all His earnest invitations; why doth He so condemn our earthly-mindedness, and command us to set our affections above? Ah, vile hearts, if God were against it, we were likelier to be for it; when He would have us to keep our station, then we are aspiring to be like God, and are ready to invade the Divine prerogatives; but when He commands our hearts to heaven, then they will not stir an inch. Like our predecessors, the sinful Israelites, when God would have them march for Canaan, then they mutiny and will not stir; either they fear the giants, or the walled cities, or want necessities, something hinders them; but when God bids them not to go, then will they needs be presently marching, and fight they will, though it be to their overthrow.

If the forethoughts of glory were forbidden fruit, perhaps we should be sooner drawn unto them; and we should itch, as the Bethshemites, to be looking into this ark. Sure I am, where God hath forbidden us to place our thoughts and our delights, thither it is easy enough to draw them. If He say, love not the world nor the things of the world, we dote upon it nevertheless. We have love enough if the world require it, and thoughts enough to pursue our profits. How delightfully and unweariedly can we think of vanity, and day after day employ our minds about the creature! And have we no thoughts of this our rest? How freely and how frequently can we think of our pleasures, our friends, our labours, our flesh, our lusts, our common studies, our news, yea, our very miseries, our wrongs, our sufferings and our

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fears. But where is the Christian whose heart is on his rest?

Why, sirs, what is the matter? Why are we not taken up with the views of glory, and our souls more accustomed to these delightful meditations? Are we so full of joy that we need no more, or is there no matter in heaven for our joyous thoughts? Or rather, are not our hearts carnal and blockish? Earth will to earth. Had we more spirit, it would be otherwise with us. As the Jews use to cast to the ground the book of Esther before they read it because the name of God is not in it; and as Augustine cast by Cicero's writings because they contained not the name of Jesus; so let us humble and cast down these sensual hearts, that have in them no more of Christ and glory. As we should not own our duties any further than somewhat of Christ is in them, so should we no further own our hearts; and as we should delight in the creatures no further than they have reference to Christ and eternity, so should we no further approve of our own hearts. If there were little of Christ and heaven in our mouths, but the world were the only subject of our speeches; then all would account us to be ungodly; why then may we not call our hearts ungodly, that have so little delight in Christ and heaven? A holy tongue will not excuse or secure a profane heart. Why did Christ pronounce His disciples' eyes and ears so blessed, but as they were the doors to let in Christ by His works and words into their heart? Oh, blessed are the eyes that so see, and the ears that so hear that the heart is thereby raised to this blessed heavenly frame. Sirs, so much of your hearts as is empty of Christ and heaven, let it be filled with shame and sorrow, and not with ease.

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II

But let me turn my reprehension to exhortation that you would turn this conviction into reformation. And I have the more hope, because I here address myself to men of conscience, that dare not wilfully disobey God, and to men whose relations to God are many and near, and therefore methinks there should need the fewer words to persuade their hearts to Him. Yea, because I speak to no other men but only them whose portion is there, whose hopes are there, and who have forsaken all that they may enjoy this glory ; and shall I be discouraged from persuading such to be heavenly-minded ? Why, fellow-Christians, if you will not hear and obey, who will ? Well may we be discouraged to exhort the poor, blind ungodly world, and may say as Moses, “ Behold the children of Israel not have hearkened unto me, how then shall Pharaoh hear me ? ”

Whoever thou art therefore that readest these lines, I require thee, as thou tenderest thine allegiance to the God of Heaven, as ever thou hopest for a part in this glory, that thou presently take thy heart to task ; chide it for its wilful strangeness to God ; turn thy thoughts from the pursuit of vanity, bend thy soul to study eternity, busy it about the life to come ; habituate thyself to such contemplations, and let not those thoughts be seldom and cursory, but settle upon them ; dwell here, bathe thy soul in heaven's delights ; drench thine affections in these rivers of pleasure, or rather in the sea of consolation ; and if thy backward soul begin to flag and thy loose thoughts to fly abroad, call them back, hold them to their work, put them on, bear not with their laziness, do not connive at one neglect.

And when thou hast once in obedience to God tried this work, and followed on till thou hast got acquainted

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with it, and kept a close guard upon thy thoughts till they are accustomed to obey, and till thou hast got some mastery over them, thou wilt then find thyself in the suburbs of heaven, and as it were in a new world; thou wilt then find indeed that there is sweetness in the work and way of God, and that the life of Christianity is a life of joy. Thou wilt meet with those abundant consolations which thou hast prayed, and panted, and groaned after; and which so few Christians do ever here obtain because they know not this way to them, or else make not conscience of walking in it.

You see the work now before you. This, this is that I would fain persuade your souls to practise. Beloved friends and Christian neighbours who hear me this day, let me bespeak your consciences in the name of Christ, and command you by the authority I have received from Christ, that you faithfully set upon this weighty duty, and fix your eye more stedfastly on your rest, and daily delight in the forethoughts thereof. I have persuaded you to many other duties, and, I bless God, many of you have obeyed; and I hope never to find you at that pass as to say, when you perceive the command of the Lord, that you will not be persuaded nor obey; if I should, it were high time to bewail your misery. Why, you may almost as well say, "We will not obey," as sit still and not obey.

Christians, I beseech you, as you take me for your teacher, and have called me hitherto, so hearken to this doctrine; if ever I shall prevail with you in anything, let me prevail with you in this, to set your hearts where you expect a rest and treasure. Do you not remember that when you called me to be your teacher you promised me under your hands, that you would faithfully and conscientiously endeavour the receiving every truth, and obeying every command, which I should from the Word of God manifest to you. I now charge your promise upon you.

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I never delivered to you a more apparent truth, nor pressed upon you a more apparent duty than this. If I knew you would not obey, what should I do here preaching? Nor that I desire you to receive it chiefly as from me, but as from Christ, on whose message I come. Methinks, if a child should shew you Scripture and speak to you the Word of God, you should not dare to disobey it. Do not wonder that I persuade you so earnestly; though indeed if we were truly reasonable in spiritual things, as we are in common, it would be a real wonder that men should need so much persuasion to so sweet and plain a duty.

But I know the employment is high, the heart is earthly, and will still draw back, the temptations and hindrances will be many and great, and therefore I fear, before we have done, and laid open more fully the nature of the duty, that you will confess all these persuasions little enough. The Lord grant they prove not so too little as to fail of success, and leave you as they find you. Say not, "We are unable to set our own hearts on heaven, this must be the work of God only, and therefore all your exhortation is in vain, for I tell you, though God be the chief disposer of your hearts, yet next under Him you have the greatest command of them yourselves, and a great power in the ordering of your own thoughts, and for determining your own wills in their choice. Though without Christ you can do nothing, yet under Him you may do much and must do much, or else it will be undone and you undone through your neglect. Do your own parts, and you have no cause to distrust whether Christ will do His. Do not your own consciences tell you when your thoughts fly abroad that you might do more than you do to restrain them; and when your hearts lie flat and neglect eternity and seldom mind the joys before you, that most of this neglect is wilful?"

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If you be to study a set speech you can force your thoughts to the intended subject ; if a minister be to study a sermon he can force his thoughts to the most saving truths, and that without any special grace ; might not a true Christian then mind more the things of the life to come, if he did not neglect to exercise that authority over his own thoughts which God hath given him, especially in such a work as this, where he may more confidently expect the assistance of Christ, who useth not to forsake His people in the work He sets them on. If a carnal minister can make it his work to study about Christ and heaven through all his lifetime, and all because it is the trade he lives by, and knows not how to subsist without it ; why then, methinks a spiritual Christian should study as constantly the joys of heaven because it is the very business he lives for, and that the place he must be in for ever. If the cook can find in his heart to labour and sweat about your meat, because it is the trade that maintains him, though perhaps he taste it not himself ; methinks then, you for whom it is prepared should willingly bestow that daily pains to taste its sweetness and feed upon it ; and if it were about your bodily food, you would think it no great pains neither. A good stomach takes it for no great labour to eat and drink of the best till it be satisfied, nor needs it any great invitation thereto. Christians, if your souls were sound and right they would perceive incomparably more delight and sweetness in knowing, thinking, believing, loving, and rejoicing in your future blessedness in the fruition of God, than the soundest stomach finds in its food, or the strongest senses in the enjoyment of their objects ; so little painful would this work be to you, and so little should I need to press you to it.

It is no great pains to you to think of a friend, or anything else that you dearly love, and as little would it

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be to think of glory, if your love and delight were truly there. If you do but see some jewel, or treasure, you need not long exhortations to stir up your desires; the very sight of it is motive enough. If you see the fire when you are cold, or see a house in a stormy day, or see a safe harbour from the tempestuous seas, you need not be told what use to make of it; the sight doth presently direct your thoughts; you think, you look, you long, till you do obtain it. Why should it not be so in the present case? Sirs, one would think, to shew you this crown and glory of the saints should be motive enough to make you desire it; to shew you that harbour where you may be safe from all dangers should soon teach you what use to make of it, and should bend your daily studies towards it; but because I know, while we have flesh about us, and any remnants of that carnal mind which is enmity to God and to this noble work, that all motives are little enough; and because my own, and others' sad experiences tell me, how hardly the best are drawn to a constancy and faithfulness in this duty, I will here lay down some moving considerations, which if you will but vouchsafe to ponder thoroughly and deliberately weigh with an impartial judgment, I doubt not but they will prove effectual with your hearts, and make you resolve upon this excellent duty. I pray you friends, let them not fall to the ground, but take them up and try them, and if you find they concern you, make much of them and obey them accordingly.

III

Consider, a heart set upon heaven will be one of the most unquestionable evidences of thy sincerity, and a clear discovery of a true work of saving grace upon thy soul. You are much in enquiring after marks of sincerity,

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and I blame you not; it is dangerous mistaking when a man's salvation lies upon it. You are oft asking, "How shall I know that I am truly sanctified?" Why, here is a mark that will not deceive you if you can truly say that you are possessed of it, even a heart set upon heaven. Would you have a sign infallible, not from me or from the mouth of any man but from the mouth of Jesus Christ Himself, which all the enemies of the use of marks can lay no exception against? Why, here is such an one, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Know once assuredly where your heart is, and you may easily know that your treasure is there. God is the saint's treasure and happiness, heaven is the place where they must fully enjoy Him, a heart therefore set upon heaven is no more but a heart set upon God, desiring after this full enjoyment. And surely a heart set upon God through Christ is the truest evidence of saving grace. External actions are easiest discovered, but those of the heart are the surest evidences. When thy learning will be no good proof of thy grace, when thy knowledge, thy duties and thy gifts will fail thee, when arguments from thy tongue and thy hand may be confuted, yet then will this argument from the bent of thy heart prove thee sincere.

Take a poor Christian that can scarce speak true English about religion, that hath a weak understanding, a failing memory, a stammering tongue; yet his heart is set on God, he hath chosen Him for his portion, his thoughts are on eternity, his desires there, his dwelling there; he cries out, Oh, that I were there! he takes that day for a time of imprisonment wherein he hath not taken one refreshing view of eternity; I had rather die in this man's condition and have my soul in his soul's case, than in the case of him that hath the most eminent gifts, and is most admired for parts and duty, whose

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heart is not thus taken up with God. The man that Christ will find out at the last day, and condemn for want of a wedding garment will be he that wants this frame of heart; the question will not then be, "How much you have known, or professed, or talked," but, "How much have you loved, and where was your heart?"

Why then, Christians, as you would have a sure testimony of the love of God and a sure proof of your title to glory, labour to get your hearts above. God will acknowledge that you really love Him, and take you for faithful friends indeed when He sees your hearts are set upon Him. Get but your hearts once truly in heaven, and without all question yourselves will follow. If sin and Satan keep not thence your affections, they will never be able to keep away your persons.

IV

Consider, a heart in heaven is the highest excellence of your spirits here, and the noblest part of your Christian disposition. As there is not only a difference between men and beasts, but also among men, between the noble and the base; so there is not only a common excellence, whereby a Christian differs from the world, but also a peculiar nobleness of spirit, whereby the more excellent differ from the rest; and this lies especially in a higher and more heavenly frame of spirit. Only man, of all inferior creatures, is made with a face directed heavenward; but other creatures have their faces to the earth. As the noblest of creatures, so the noblest of Christians are they that are set most direct for heaven. As Saul is called a choice and goodly man, higher by the head than all the company, so is he the most choice and goodly Christian whose head and heart is thus the highest.

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Men of noble birth and spirits do mind high and great affairs, and not the smaller things of low poverty; their discourse is of the counsels and matters of state, of the government of the commonwealth, and public things, and not of the countryman's petty employments. Oh, to hear such an heavenly saint, who hath fetched a journey into heaven by faith, and hath been rapt up to God in his contemplations, and is newly come down from the views of Christ. What discoveries will he make of those superior regions! What ravishing expressions drop from his lips! How high and sacred is his discourse! Enough to make the ignorant world astonished, and say, "Much study hath made them mad;" and enough to convince an understanding hearer that they have seen the Lord; and to make one say, "No man could speak such words as these except he had been with God." This, this is the noble Christian, as Bucholcer's hearers concluded when he had preached his last sermon, being carried between two into the church because of his weakness, and there most admirably discoursed of the blessedness of souls departed this life, "*Cæteros concionatores à Bucholcero semper omnes, illo autem die etiam ipsum à sese superatum,*" that Bucholcer did ever excel other preachers, but that day he excelled himself; so may I conclude of the heavenly Christian, he ever excelleth the rest of men, but when he is nearest heaven he excelleth himself.

As those are the most famous mountains that are highest; and those the fairest trees that are tallest; and those the most glorious pyramids and buildings whose tops do reach nearest to heaven; so is he the choicest Christian whose heart is most frequently and most delightfully there. If a man have lived near the king, or have travelled to see the Sultan of Persia or the great Turk, he will make this a matter of boasting, and thinks

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himself one step higher than his private neighbours that live at home. What shall we then judge of him that daily travels as far as heaven, and there hath seen the King of kings; that hath frequent admittance into the Divine presence, and feasteth his soul upon the tree of life? For my part, I value this man before the ablest, the richest, the most learned in the world.

V

Consider, a heavenly mind is a joyful mind; this is the nearest and the truest way to live a life of comfort; and without this you must needs be uncomfortable. Can a man be at the fire, and not be warm; or in the sunshine, and not have light? Can your heart be in heaven, and not have comfort? The countries of Norway, Iceland, and all the northward are cold and frozen, because they are farther from the power of the sun; but in Egypt, Arabia, and the southern parts it is far otherwise, where they live more near its powerful rays. What could make such frozen uncomfortable Christians but living so far as they do from heaven? And what makes some few others so warm in comforts, but their living higher than others do; and their frequent access so near to God? When the sun in the spring draws near our part of the earth how do all things congratulate its approach! The earth looks green and casteth off her mourning habit, the trees shoot forth, the plants revive, the pretty birds how sweetly sing they; the face of all things smiles upon us, and all the creatures below rejoice.

Beloved friends, if we would but try this life with God, and would but keep these hearts above, what a spring of joy would be within us, and all our graces be fresh and green! How would the face of our souls be

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changed, and all that is within us rejoice! How should we forget our winter sorrows, and withdraw our souls from our sad retirements! How early should we rise (as those birds in the spring) to sing the praise of our great Creator! O Christian, get above; believe it, that region is warmer than this below. Those that have been there have found it so, and those that have come thence have told us so; and I doubt not but that thou hast sometime tried it thyself. I dare appeal to thy own experience, or to the experience of any soul that knows what the true joys of a Christian are; when is it that you have largest comforts? Is it not after such an exercise as this, when thou hast got up thy heart, and conversed with God, and talked with the inhabitants of the higher world, and viewed the mansions of the saints and angels, and filled thy soul with the forethoughts of glory? If thou know by experience what this practice is, I dare say thou knowest what spiritual joy is. David professeth that the light of God's countenance would make his heart more glad than theirs that have corn, and wine, and oil: "Thou shalt fill me full of joy with Thy countenance." If it be the countenance of God that fills us with joy, then sure they that draw nearest, and most behold it, must needs be fullest of these joys.

Sirs, if you never tried this art nor lived this life of heavenly contemplation, I never wonder that you walk uncomfortably; that you are all complaining, and live in sorrows, and know not what the joy of the saints means. Can you have comfort from God, and never think of Him? Can heaven rejoice you, when you do not remember it? Doth anything in the world glad you, when you think not on it? Must not everything first enter your judgment and consideration before it can delight your heart and affection? If you were possessed of all the treasure of the earth; if you had

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title to the highest dignities and dominions, and never think on it; sure it would never rejoice you. Whom should we blame, then, that we are so void of consolation, but our own negligent unskilful hearts? God hath provided us a crown of glory, and promised to set it shortly on our heads, and we will not so much as think on it; He holdeth it out in the Gospel to us, and biddeth us behold and rejoice; and we will not so much as look at it; and yet we complain for want of comfort. What a perverse course is this both against God and our own joys! I confess, though in fleshly things the presenting of a comforting object is sufficient to produce an answerable delight, yet in spirituals we are more disabled. God must give the joy itself as well as afford us matter for joy; but yet withal, it must be remembered, that God doth work upon us as men, and in a rational way doth raise our comforts. He enableth and exciteth us to mind and study these delightful objects, and from thence to gather our own comforts, as the bee doth gather her honey from the flowers; therefore he that is most skilful and painful in this gathering art is usually the fullest of this spiritual sweetness.

Where is the man that can tell me from experience that he has solid and usual joy in any other way but this; and that God worketh it immediately on his affections, without the means of his understanding and considering? It is by believing that we are filled with joy and peace; and no longer than we continue our believing. It is in hope that the saints rejoice, yea, in this hope of the glory of God, and no longer than they continue hoping. And here let me warn you of a dangerous snare, an opinion which will rob you of all your comfort; some think if they should thus fetch in their own comfort by believing and hoping, and work it out of Scripture promises, and extract it by their own thinking and

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studying, that then it would be a comfort only of their own hammering out, as they say, and not the genuine joy of the Holy Ghost. A desperate mistake, raised upon a ground that would overthrow almost all duty as well as this, which is their setting the workings of God's Spirit, and their own spirits in opposition, when their spirits must stand in subordination to God's; they are conjunct causes co-operating to the producing of one and the same effect. God's Spirit worketh our comforts by setting our own spirits a-work upon the promises, and raising our thoughts to the place of our comforts. As you would delight a covetous man by shewing him gold, or a voluptuous man with fleshly delights; so God useth to delight His people by taking them as it were by the hand, and leading them into heaven, and shewing them Himself and their rest with Him.

God useth not to cast in our joys while we are idle, or taken up with other things. It is true, He sometime doth it suddenly but yet usually in the foresaid order, leading it into our hearts by our judgment and thoughts. And His sometime sudden extraordinary casting of comforting thoughts into our hearts should be so far from hindering endeavours in a meditating way, that it should be a singular motive to quicken us to it; even as a taste given us of some cordial or choicer food will make us desire and seek the rest. God feedeth not saints as birds do their young, bringing it to them, and putting it into their mouths, while they lie still in the nest, and only gape to receive it. But as He giveth to man the fruits of the earth, the increase of their land in corn and wine, while we plough, and sow, and weed, and water, and dung, and dress, and then with patience expect His blessing; so doth He give the joys of the soul.

Yet I deny not, that if any should so think to work

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out his own comforts by meditation, as to attempt the work in his own strength, and not do all in subordination to God, nor perceive a necessity of the Spirit's assistance, the work would prove to be like the workman ; and the comfort he would gather would be like both, even mere vanity ; even as the husbandman's labour without the sun and rain and blessing of God.

So then you may easily see that close meditation on the matter and cause of our joy is God's way to procure solid joy. For my part, if I should find my joy of another kind, I should be very prone to doubt of its sincerity. If I find a great deal of comfort in my heart, and know not how it came thither, nor upon what rational ground it was raised, nor what considerations do feed and continue it, I should be ready to question how I know whether this be from God. And though as the cup in Benjamin's sack, it might come from love, yet it would leave me but in fears and amazements, because of the uncertainty. As I think our love to God should not be like that of fond lovers who love violently, but they know not why ; so I think a Christian's joy should be a grounded rational joy, and not to rejoice and know not why. Though perhaps in some extraordinary case God may cast in such an extraordinary kind of joy, yet I think it is not His usual way.

And if you observe the spirit of most forlorn, uncomfortable, despairing Christians you shall find the reason to be their ungrounded expectation of such unusual kind of joys ; and accordingly are their spirits variously tossed and most unconstantly tempered ; sometime when they meet with such joys (or at least think so) then they are cheerful and lifted up ; but because these are usually short-lived joys therefore they are straight as low as hell ; and ordinarily that is their more lasting temper. And thus they are tossed, as a vessel at sea,

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up and down, but still in extremes; whereas alas, God is most constant, Christ the same, heaven the same, and the promise the same. And if we took the right course for fetching in our comfort from these, sure our comforts would be more settled and constant, though not always the same.

Whoever thou art, therefore, that readest these lines, I entreat thee in the name of the Lord, and as thou valuest the life of constant joy and that good conscience which is a continual feast, that thou wouldst but seriously set upon this work, and learn this art of heavenly mindedness; and thou shalt find the increase an hundredfold, and the benefit abundantly exceed thy labour. But this is the misery of man's nature; though every man naturally abhorreth sorrow, and loves the most merry and joyful life, yet few do love the way to joy, or will endure the pains by which it is obtained. They will take the next that comes to hand, and content themselves with earthly pleasures, rather than they will ascend to heaven to seek it; and yet when all is done, they must have it there, or be without it.

VI

Consider, a heart in heaven will be a most excellent preservative against temptations, a powerful means to kill thy corruptions, and to save thy conscience from the wounds of sin. God can prevent our sinning though we be careless, and keep off the temptation which we would draw upon ourselves; and sometimes doth so, but this is not His usual course, nor is this our safest way to escape. When the mind is either idle or ill employed the devil needs not a greater advantage; when he finds the thoughts let out on lust, revenge, ambition, or deceit, what an

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opportunity hath he to move for execution, and to put on the sinner to practise what he thinks on! Nay, if he find the mind but empty there is room for anything that he will bring in; but when he finds the heart in heaven, what hope that any of his motions should take. Let him entice to any forbidden course, or show us the bait of any pleasure, the soul will return Nehemiah's answer, "I am doing a great work, and cannot come." Several ways will this preserve us against temptation; first, by keeping the heart employed; secondly, by clearing the understanding and so confirming the will; thirdly, by prepossessing the affections with the highest delights; and fourthly, by keeping us in the way of God's blessing.

By keeping the heart employed. When we are idle, we tempt the devil to tempt us. As it is an encouragement to a thief to see your doors open, and nobody within; and as we use to say, "Careless persons make thieves"; so it will encourage Satan to find your hearts idle. But when the heart is taken up with God it cannot have while to hearken to temptations; it cannot have while to be lustful and wanton, ambitious or worldly; if a poor man have a suit to any of you he will not come when you are taken up in some great man's company or discourse; that is but an ill time to speed.

If you were but busied in your lawful callings you would not be so ready to hearken to temptations; much less if you were busied above with God. Will you leave your plough and harvest in the field, or leave the quenching of a fire in your houses, to run with children a-hunting of butterflies? Would a judge be persuaded to rise from the bench, when he is sitting upon life and death, to go and play among the boys in the streets? No more will a Christian when he is busy with God, and taking a survey of his eternal rest, give ear to the alluring charms of Satan. "*Non vacat exiguis*," &c., is a character of

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the truly prudent man; the children of that kingdom should never have while for trifles; but especially when they are employed in the affairs of the kingdom. And this employment is one of the saints' chief preservatives against temptations. For as Gregory saith, "*Nunquam Dei amor otiosus est; operatur enim magna, si est: Si vero operari renuit, non est amor*"; the love of God is never idle; it worketh great things when it truly is; and when it will not work it is not love. Therefore being still thus working, it is still preserving.

A heavenly mind is the freest from sin because it is of clearest understanding in spiritual matters of greatest concernment. A man that is much in conversing above hath truer and livelier apprehensions of things concerning God and his soul than any reading or learning can beget; though perhaps he may be ignorant in divers controversies and matters that less concern salvation, yet those truths which must stablish his soul, and preserve him from temptation he knows far better than the greatest scholars. He hath so deep an insight into the evil of sin, the vanity of the creature, the brutishness of fleshly, sensual delights, that temptations have little power on him; for these earthly vanities are Satan's baits, which though they may take much with the undiscerning world, yet with the clear-sighted they have lost their force. "In vain," saith Solomon, "the net is spread in the sight of any bird," and usually in vain doth Satan lay his snares to entrap the soul that plainly sees them.

When a man is on high he may see the further; we use to set our discovering sentinels on the highest place that is near unto us that they may discern all the motions of the enemy; in vain doth the enemy lay his ambuscades when we stand over him on some high mountain, and clearly discover all he doth; when the heavenly mind is above with God he may far easier from thence discern

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every danger that lies below, and the whole method of the devil in deceiving; nay, if he did not discover the snare yet were he likelier far to escape it than any others that converse below. A net or bait that is laid on the ground is unlikely to catch the bird that flies in the air; while she keeps above she is out of the danger, and the higher the safer; so it is with us. Satan's temptations are laid on the earth, earth is the place, and earth the ordinary bait; how shall these ensnare the Christian who hath left the earth, and walks with God? But alas! we keep not long so high, but down we must to the earth again, and then we are taken.

If conversing with wise and learned men is the way to make one wise and learned, then no wonder if he that converseth with God become wise. If men that travel about the earth do think to return home with more experience and wisdom, how much more he that travels to heaven! As the very air and climate that we most abide in do work our bodies to their own temper, no wonder if he that is much in that sublime and purer region have a purer soul and quicker sight; and if he have an understanding full of light who liveth with the Sun, the Fountain, the Father of light. As certain herbs and meats we feed on do tend to make our sight more clear, so the soul that is fed with angels' food must needs have an understanding much more clear than they that dwell and feed on earth. And therefore you may easily see that such a man is in far less danger of temptation, and Satan will hardlier beguile his soul; even as a wise man is hardlier deceived than fools and children. Alas, the men of the world that dwell below and know no other conversation but earthly, no wonder if their understandings be darkened and they be easily drawn to every wickedness; no wonder if Satan take them captive at his will, and lead them about, as we see a dog lead a blind

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man with a string. The foggy air and mists of earth do thicken their sight; the smoke of worldly cares and business, blinds them, and the dungeon which they live in, is a land of darkness. How can worms and moles see, whose dwelling is always in the earth? While this dust is in men's eyes, no wonder if they mistake gain for godliness, sin for grace, the world for God, their own wills for the law of Christ, and in the issue hell for heaven! If the people of God will but take notice of their own hearts they shall find their experiences confirming this that I have said.

Christians, do you not sensibly perceive that when your hearts are seriously fixed on heaven you presently become wiser than before? Are not your understandings more solid, and your thoughts more sober; have you not truer apprehensions of things than you had? For my own part, if ever I be wise, it is when I have been much above, and seriously studied the life to come. Methinks I find my understanding, after such contemplations, as much to differ from what it was before, as I before differed from a fool or idiot. When my understanding is weakened and befooled with common employment and with conversing long with the vanities below, methinks, a few sober thoughts of my Father's house and the blessed provision of His family in heaven doth make me (with the prodigal) to come to myself again. Surely, when a Christian withdraws himself from his earthly thoughts and begins to converse with God in heaven, he is, as Nebuchadnezzar, taken from the beasts of the field to the throne, and his understanding returneth to him again. Oh, when a Christian hath had but a glimpse of eternity, and then looks down on the world again, how doth he befool himself for his sin, for neglects of Christ, for his fleshly pleasures, for his earthly cares! How doth he say to his laughter, "Thou art mad!" and to his vain mirth,

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“What dost thou?” How could he even tear his very flesh, and take revenge on himself for his folly! How verily doth he think that there is no man in bedlam so truly mad as wilful sinners and lazy betrayers of their own souls, and unworthy slights of Christ and glory!

This is it that makes a dying man to be usually wiser than other men are, because he looks on eternity as near, and, knowing he must very shortly be there, he hath more deep and heart-piercing thoughts of it than ever he could have in health and prosperity. Therefore it is, that the most deluded sinners that were cheated with the world, and bewitched with sin, do then most ordinarily come to themselves so far as to have a righter judgment than they had; and that many of the most bitter enemies of the saints would give a world to be such themselves; and would fain die in the condition of those whom they hated; even as wicked Balaam, when his eyes are opened to see the perpetual blessedness of the saints, will cry out, “O that I might die the death of the righteous, and that my last end might be like his.” As witches when they are taken and in prison, or at the gallows, have no power left them to bewitch any more, so we see commonly the most ungodly men, when they see they must die and go to another world, their judgments are so changed, and their speech so changed, as if they were not the same men; as if they were come to their wits again, and sin and Satan had power to bewitch them no more. Yet let the same men recover and lose their apprehension of the life to come, and how quickly do they lose their understandings with it. In a word, those that were befooled with the world and the flesh are far wiser when they come to die, and those that were wise before are now wise indeed.

If you would take a man's judgment about sin, or grace, or Christ, or heaven, go to a dying man, and ask him which you were best to choose. Ask him, whether

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you were best be drunk or no; or be lustful, or proud, or revengeful, or no? Ask him whether you were best pray, and instruct your families, or no; or to sanctify the Lord's Day, or no? Though some to the death may be desperately hardened, yet for the most part I had rather take a man's judgment than about these things than at any other time. For my own part, if my judgment be ever solid, it is when I have the most serious apprehensions of the life to come; nay, the sober mention of death sometimes will a little compose the most distracted understanding. Sirs, do you not think, except men are stark devils, but that it would be a harder matter to entice a man to sin when he lies a-dying than it was before? If the devil, or his instruments, should then tell him of a cup of sack, of merry company, of a stage-play, or morrice-dance, do you think he would then be so taken with the motion? If he should then tell him of riches, or honours, or shew him a pair of cards, or dice, or a whore, would the temptation, think you, be as strong as before? Would he not answer, "Alas! what is all this to me who must presently appear before God, and give account of all my life, and straightways be in another world."

Why Christian, if the apprehension of the nearness of eternity will work such strange effects upon the ungodly, and make them wiser than to be deceived so easily as they were wont to be in time of health; oh, then what rare effects would it work with thee, and make thee scorn the baits of sin, if thou couldst always dwell in the views of God and in lively thoughts of thine everlasting state! Surely, a believer, if he improve his faith, may ordinarily have truer and more quickening apprehensions of the life to come in the time of his health, than an unbeliever hath at the hour of his death.

Furthermore, a heavenly mind is exceedingly forti-

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fied against temptations, because the affections are so thoroughly prepossessed with the high delights of another world. Whether Satan do not usually by the sensitive appetite prevail with the will, without any further prevailing with the reason than merely to suspend it, I will not now dispute; but doubtless when the soul is not affected with good, though the understanding do never so clearly apprehend the truth, it is easy for Satan to entice that soul. Mere speculations, be they never so true, which sink not into the affections are poor preservatives against temptations. He that loves most, and not he that only knows most, will most easily resist the motions of sin. There is in a Christian a kind of spiritual taste whereby he knows these things, besides his mere discursive reasoning power; the will doth as sweetly relish goodness, as the understanding doth truth, and here lies much of a Christian's strength. If you should dispute with a simple man, and labour to persuade him that sugar is not sweet, or that wormwood is not bitter, perhaps you might by sophistry over-argue his mere reason, but yet could you not persuade him against his sense; whereas a man that hath lost his taste is easier deceived for all his reason. So is it here; when thou hast had a fresh delightful taste of heaven thou wilt not be so easily persuaded from it; you cannot persuade a very child to part with his apple while the taste of its sweetness is yet in his mouth. Oh, that you would be persuaded to try this course, to be much in feeding on the hidden manna and to be frequently tasting the delights of heaven. It is true, it is a great way off from our sense, but faith can reach as far as that. How would this raise thy resolutions, and make thee laugh at the fooleries of the world, and scorn to be cheated with such childish toys!

Reader, I pray thee tell me in good sadness, dost thou think if the devil had set upon Peter in the Mount, when

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he saw Christ in His Transfiguration and Moses and Elias talking with Him, would he so easily have been drawn to deny his Lord? What, with all that glory in his eye? No, the devil took a greater advantage, when he had him in the High Priest's hall, in the midst of danger and evil company, when he had forgotten the sight of the Mount; and then he prevails. So if he should set upon a believing soul when he is taken up in the Mount with Christ, what would such a soul say? "Get thee behind me, Satan, wouldst thou persuade me from hence with trifling pleasures, and steal my heart from this my rest, wouldst thou have me sell these joys for nothing? Is there any honour or delight like this, or can that be profit which loseth me this?" Some such answer would the soul return. But alas, Satan stays till we are come down, and the taste of heaven is out of our mouths, and the glory we saw is even forgotten, and then he easily deceives our hearts. What if the devil had set upon Paul when he was in the third heaven, and seeing those unutterable things, could he then, do you think, have persuaded his heart to the pleasures, or profits, or honours of the world? If his prick in the flesh, which he after received, were not affliction but temptation, sure it prevailed not, but sent him to heaven again for preserving grace. Though the Israelites below may be enticed to idolatry, and from eating and drinking to rise up to play, yet Moses in the Mount with God will not do so; and if they had been where he was, and had but seen what he there saw, perhaps they would not so easily have sinned. If ye give a man aloes after honey, or some loathsome thing when he hath been feeding on junkets, will he not soon perceive and spit it out? Oh, if we could keep the taste of our soul continually delighted with the sweetness above, with what disdain should we spit out the baits of sin!

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Besides, whilst the heart is set on heaven a man is under God's protection; and therefore if Satan then assault him God is more engaged for his defence, and will doubtless stand by us, and say, "My grace is sufficient for thee." When a man is in the way of God's blessing, he is in the less danger of sin's enticing.

So that now, upon all this, let me entreat thee, Christian reader, if thou be a man that is haunted with temptation (as doubtless thou art, if thou be a man), if thou perceive thy danger, and wouldst fain escape it, oh, use much this powerful remedy, keep close with God by a heavenly mind, learn this art of diversion, and when the temptation comes, go straight to heaven and turn thy thoughts to higher things; thou shalt find this a surer help than any other resisting whatsoever. As men will do with scolding women, let them alone and follow their business as if they heard not what they said, and this will sooner put them to silence than if they answered them word for word, so do by Satan's temptations. It may be, he can over-talk you and over-wit you in dispute, but let him alone and study not his temptations, but follow your business above with Christ, and keep your thoughts to their heavenly employment, and you will this way sooner vanquish the temptation than if you argued or talked it out with the tempter; not but that sometime it is most convenient to over-reason him; but in ordinary temptations to known sin, you shall find it far better to follow this your work, and neglect the allurements, and say as Gryneus (out of Chrysost), when he sent back Pistorius's letters, not so much as opening the seal, "*Inhonestum est, honestam matronam cum meretrice litigare*": it is an unseemly thing for an honest matron to be scolding with a whore; so it is a dishonest thing for a son of God, in apparent cases to stand wrangling with the devil, and to be so far at his beck as to dispute with him at his pleasure, even as oft as he will be pleased to

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tempt us. Christian, if thou remember that of Solomon, Prov. xv. 24, thou hast the sum of what I intend, "The way of life is above to the wise, to avoid the path of hell beneath"; and withal remember Noah's example, "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation" (and no wonder), for "Noah walked with God"; so I may say to thee, even as God to Abraham, "Walk before God, and thou wilt be upright."

VII

Consider, the diligent keeping of your hearts on heaven will preserve the vigour of all your graces, and put life into all your duties. It is the heavenly Christian that is the lively Christian, it is our strangeness to heaven that makes us so dull, it is the end that quickeneth to all the means, and the more frequently and clearly this end is beheld the more vigorous will all our motion be! How doth it make men unweariedly labour, and fearlessly venture, when they do but think of the gainful prize! How will the soldier hazard his life, and the mariner pass through storms and waves; how cheerfully do they compass sea and land; and no difficulty can keep them back, when they think of an uncertain perishing treasure! Oh, what life then would it put into a Christian's endeavours if he would frequently forethink of his everlasting treasure! We run so slowly and strive so lazily because we so little mind the prize.

When a Christian hath been tasting the hidden manna and drinking of the streams of the paradise of God, what life doth this ambrosia and nectar put into him! How fervent will his spirit be in prayer when he considers that he prays for no less than heaven! If Enoch, Elias, or any of the saints who are now in heaven, and have partaken of the vision of the living God, should be sent

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down to the earth again to live on the terms as we now do, would they not strive hard and pray earnestly rather than lose that blessed rest? No wonder, for they would know what it is they pray for. It is true, we cannot know it here so thoroughly as they, yet if we would but get as high as we can, and study but that which may now be known, it would strangely alter both our spirits and our duties. Observe but the man who is much in heaven, and you shall see he is not like other Christians; there is somewhat of that which he hath seen above appeareth in all his duty and conversation. Nay, take but the same man immediately when he is returned from these views of bliss, and you shall easily perceive that he excels himself, as if he were not indeed the same as before. If he be a preacher, how heavenly are his sermons, what clear descriptions, what high expressions, what savoury passages hath he of that rest! If he be a private Christian, what heavenly conference, what heavenly prayers, what a heavenly carriage hath he! May you not even hear in a preacher's sermons, or in the private duties of another, when they have been most above? When Moses had been with God in the Mount, he had derived so much glory from God that made his face to shine, that the people could not behold him.

Beloved friends, if you would but set upon this employment, even so would it be with you; men would see the face of your conversation shine, and say, "Surely he hath been with God." As the body is apt to be changed into the temper of the air it breathes in, and the food it lives on, so will your spirits receive an alteration according to the objects which they are exercised about. If your thoughts do feed on Christ and heaven, you will be heavenly; if they feed on earth, you will be earthly. It is true, a heavenly nature goes before this heavenly employment, but yet the work will make it more heavenly.

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There must be life before we can feed, but our life is continued and increased by feeding. Therefore, reader, let me here inform thee, that if thou lie complaining of deadness and dulness, that thou canst not love Christ, nor rejoice in His love ; that thou hast no life in prayer, nor any other duty, and yet never triedst this quickening course, or at least art careless and inconstant in it ; why, thou art the cause of thy own complaints ; thou dearest and dullest thine own heart ; thou deniest thyself that life which thou talkest of. “Is not thy life hid with Christ in God ?” Whither must thou go but to Christ for it, and whither is that, but to heaven where He is ? Thou wilt not come to Christ, “that thou mayest have life.” If thou wouldst have light and heat, why art thou then no more in the sunshine ? If thou wouldst have more of that grace which flows from Christ, why art thou no more with Christ for it ? Thy strength is in heaven, and thy life in heaven, and there thou must daily fetch it, if thou wilt have it.

For want of this recourse to heaven, thy soul is as a candle that is not lighted, and thy duties as a sacrifice which hath no fire. Fetch one coal daily from this altar, and see if thy offering will not burn. Light thy candle at this flame, and feed it daily with oil from hence, and see if it will not gloriously shine. Keep close to this reviving fire, and see if thy affections will not be warm. Thou bewailest thy want of love to God, and well thou mayest, for it is a heinous crime, a killing sin. Why, lift up thy eye of faith to heaven, behold His beauty, contemplate His excellences, and see whether His amiableness will not fire thy affections, and His perfect goodness ravish thy heart. As the eye doth incense the sensual affections by its over-much gazing on alluring objects, so doth the eye of our faith in meditation inflame our affections towards our Lord, by the frequent gazing on that highest beauty.

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Whoever thou art, that art a stranger to this employment, be thy parts and profession never so great, let me tell thee, thou spendest thy life but in trifling or idleness ; thou seemest to live, but thou art dead. I may say of thee, as Seneca of idle Vacia, "*scis latere, vivere nescis*"; thou knowest how to lurk in idleness, but how to live thou knowest not. And as the same Seneca would say, when he passed by that sluggard's dwelling, "*Ibi situs est Vacia*," so may it be said of thee, there lies such an one, but not there lives such an one; for thou spendest thy days liker to the dead than the living. One of Draco's laws to the Athenians was, that he who was convicted of idleness should be put to death. Thou dost execute this on thy own soul whilst by thy idleness thou destroyest its liveliness.

Thou mayest many other ways exercise thy parts but this is the way to exercise thy graces; they all come from God as their fountain, and lead to God as their ultimate end, and are exercised on God as their chiefest object, so that God is their all in all. From heaven they come, and heavenly their nature is, and to heaven they will direct and move thee. And as exercise maintaineth appetite, strength and liveliness to the body, so doth it also to the soul. "Use limbs, and have limbs;" is the known proverb. And use grace and spiritual life in these heavenly exercises, and you shall find it quickly cause their increase. The exercise of your mere abilities of speech will not much advantage your graces; but the exercise of these heavenly soul-exalting gifts will inconceivably help to the growth of both. For as the moon is then most full and glorious when it doth most directly face the sun, so will your souls be, both in gifts and graces, when you do most nearly view the face of God. This will feed your tongue with matter, and make you abound and overflow both in preaching, praying, and conferring.

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Besides, the fire which you fetch from heaven for your sacrifices is no false or strange fire; as your liveliness will be much more, so will it be also more sincere. A man may have a great deal of fervour in affections and duties, and all prove but common and unsound when it is raised upon common grounds and motives. Your zeal will partake of the nature of those things by which it is acted; the zeal therefore which is kindled by your meditations on heaven is more like to prove a heavenly zeal; and the liveliness of the spirit which you fetch from the face of God must needs be the divinest, sincerest life.

Some men's fervency is drawn only from their books, and some from the pricks of some stinging affliction, and some from the mouth of a moving minister, and some from the encouragement of an attentive auditory; but he that knows this way to heaven, and derives it daily from the pure fountain, shall have his soul revived with the water of life, and enjoy that quickening which is the saints' peculiar. By this faith thou mayest offer Abel's sacrifice, more excellent than that of common men, and by it obtain witness that thou art righteous, God testifying of thy gifts that they are sincere. When others are ready, as Baal's priests, to beat themselves and cut their flesh because their sacrifice will not burn, then if thou canst get but the spirit of Elias, and in the chariot of contemplation canst soar aloft till thou approachest near to the quickening spirit, thy soul and sacrifice will gloriously flame, though the flesh and the world should cast upon them the water of all their opposing enmity. Say not now, how shall we get so high, or how can mortals ascend to heaven? For faith hath wings, and meditation is its chariot; its office is to make absent things as present. Do you not see how a little piece of glass, if it do but rightly face the sun, will so contract its beams and heat as to set on fire that which is behind it, which without

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it would have received but little warmth? Why, thy faith is as the burning-glass to thy sacrifice, and meditation sets it to face the sun; only take it not away too soon, but hold it there a while, and thy soul will feel the happy effect.

The slanderous Jews did raise a foolish tale of Christ, that He got in the Holy of Holies, and thence stole the true name of God, and, lest He should lose it, cut a hole in His thigh and sewed it therein; and by the virtue of this, He raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, cast out devils, and performed all His miracles. Surely, if we can get into the Holy of Holies, and bring thence the name and image of God, and get it closed up in our hearts, this would enable us to work wonders; every duty we performed would be a wonder; and they that heard would be ready to say, "Never man spake as this man speaketh." The spirit would possess us, as those flaming tongues, and make us every one to speak, not in the variety of the confounded languages, but in the primitive pure language of Canaan, the wonderful works of God. We should then be in every duty, whether prayer, exhortation, or brotherly reproof, as Paul was at Athens, his spirit (*παρωξύνετο*) was stirred within him; and should be ready to say, as Jeremiah did, "His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay."

Christian reader, art thou not thinking when thou seest a lively believer, and hearest his soul-melting prayers and soul-ravishing discourse, "Oh, how happy a man is this, oh, that my soul were in this blessed plight!" Why, I here direct and advise thee from God; try this fore-mentioned course, and set thy soul conscionably to this work, and thou shalt be in as good a case. Wash thee frequently in this Jordan and thy leprous dead soul

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will revive; and thou shalt know that there is a God in Israel, and that thou mayest live a vigorous and joyous life, if thou wilfully cast not by this duty, and so neglect thine own mercies. If thou be not a lazy reserved hypocrite, but most truly value this strong and active frame of spirit, shew it then by thy present attempting this heavenly exercise. Say not now, but thou hast heard the way to obtain this life into thy soul, and into thy duties. If thou wilt yet neglect it, blame thyself.

But alas, the multitude of professors come to a minister, just as Naaman came to Elisha; they ask us, "How shall I know I am a child of God? How shall I overcome a hard heart, and get such strength and life of grace?" But they expect that some easy means should do it; and think we should cure them with the very answer to their question, and teach them a way to be quickly well. But when they hear of a daily trading in heaven, and the constant meditation on the joys above, this is a greater task than they expected, and they turn their backs as Naaman to Elisha, or the young man on Christ, and few of the most conscionable will set upon the duty. Will not preaching, and praying, and conference serve, say they, without this dwelling still in heaven? Just as country people come to physicians; when they have opened their case and made their moan they look he should cure them in a day or two, or with the use of some cheap and easy simple; but when they hear of a tedious method of physic and of costly compositions and bitter potions, they will hazard their lives with some sottish empiric who tells them an easier and cheaper way; yea, or venture on death itself, before they will obey such difficult counsel. Too many that we hope well of, I fear, will take this course here. If we could give them life, as God did, with a word, or could heal their souls, as charmers do their bodies, with easy

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stroking and a few good words, then they would readily hear and obey. I entreat thee, reader, beware of this folly; fall to the work; the comfort of spiritual health will countervail all the trouble of the duty. It is but the flesh that repines and gainsays, which, thou knowest, was never a friend to thy soul. If God had set thee on some grievous work shouldst thou not have done it for the life of thy soul? How much more when He doth but invite thee heavenward to Himself.

VIII

Consider, the frequent believing views of glory are the most precious cordial in all afflictions. First, to sustain our spirits and make our sufferings far more easy. Secondly, to stay us from repining, and make us bear with patience and joy. And, thirdly, to strengthen our resolutions that we forsake not Christ for fear of trouble.

Our very beast will carry us more cheerfully in travel when he is coming homeward where he expecteth rest. A man will more quietly endure the lancing of his sores, the cutting out the stone, when he thinks on the ease that will afterwards follow. What then will not a believer endure when he thinks of the rest to which it tendeth? What if the way be never so rough, can it be tedious if it lead to heaven? O sweet sickness, sweet reproaches, imprisonments, or death, which is accompanied with these tastes of our future rest! This doth keep the suffering from the soul, so that it can work upon no more but our fleshly outside, even as alexipharmical medicines preserve the heart, that the contagion reach not the vital spirits. Surely, our sufferings trouble not the mind according to the degrees of bodily pain, but as the soul is more or less fortified with this

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preserving antidote. Believe it, reader, thou wilt have a doleful sickness, thou wilt suffer heavily, thou wilt die most sadly, if thou have not at hand the foretastes of rest. For my own part (if thou regard the experience of one that hath often tried) had it not been for that little, alas, too little taste which I had of rest, my sufferings would have been grievous, and death more terrible. I may say as David, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." And as the same David, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. I cried unto Thee, O Lord, I said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living." I may say of the promise of this rest, as David of God's law; "Unless this had been my delight, I had perished in mine affliction." "One thing," saith he, "I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple. For in time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret of His tabernacle He shall hide me, He shall set me up upon a rock. And then shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore shall I offer in that His tabernacle sacrifices of joy, and sing, yea sing praises unto the Lord."

Therefore as thou wilt then be ready with David to pray, "Be not far from me, for trouble is near," so let it be thy own chiefest care not to be far from God and heaven, when trouble is near, and thou wilt then find Him to be unto thee a very present help in trouble. "Then though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither should fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive should fail and the fields should yield no meat, the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there were no herd

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in the stalls; yet thou mightest rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of thy salvation." All sufferings are nothing to us, so far as we have the foresight of this salvation. No bolts nor bars nor distance of place can shut out these supporting joys, because they cannot confine our faith and thoughts, although they may confine our flesh. Christ and faith are both spiritual, and therefore prisons and banishments cannot hinder their intercourse. Even when persecution and fear hath shut the doors, Christ can come in, and stand in the midst, and say to His disciples, "Peace be unto you." And Paul and Silas can be in heaven, even when they are locked up in the inner prison, and their bodies scourged, and their feet in the stocks. No wonder if there be more mirth in their stocks than on Herod's throne, for there was more of Christ and heaven. The martyrs find more rest in the flames than their persecutors can in their pomp and tyranny, because they foresee the flames they escape, and the rest which that fiery chariot is conveying them to. It is not the place that gives the rest, but the presence and beholding of Christ in it. If the Son of God will walk with us in it, we may walk safely in the midst of those flames which shall devour those that cast us in.

Why then, Christian, keep thy soul above with Christ, be as little as may be out of His company, and then all conditions will be alike to thee. For that is the best estate to thee in which thou possessest most of Him. The moral arguments of a heathen philosopher may make the burden somewhat lighter, but nothing can make us soundly joy in tribulation except we can fetch our joy from heaven. How came Abraham to leave his country, and follow God he knew not whither? Why, because "he looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." What made Moses choose affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures

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of sin for a season, and to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt? Why, because he had respect to the recompense of reward. What made him to forsake Egypt, and not to fear the wrath of the king? Why, he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. How did they quench the violence of fire, and out of weakness were made strong? Why would they not accept deliverance when they were tortured? Why, they had their eye on a better resurrection which they might obtain. Yea, it is most evident that our Lord Himself did fetch His encouragement to sufferings from the foresight of His glory, "for to this end He both died and rose and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living." "Even Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Who can wonder that pain and sorrow, poverty and sickness should be exceeding grievous to that man who cannot reach to see the end? Or that death should be the king of terrors to him who cannot see the life beyond it? He that looks not on the end of his sufferings as well as on the suffering itself, he needs must lose the whole consolation; and if he see not the quiet fruit of righteousness which it afterward yieldeth, it cannot to him be joyous, but grievous. This is the noble advantage of faith; it can look on the means and end together. This also is the reason why we oft pity ourselves more than God doth pity us, though we love not ourselves so much as He doth; and why we would have the cup to pass from us, when He will make us drink it up. We pity ourselves with an ignorant pity, and would be saved from the cross, which is the way to save us. God sees our glory as soon as our suffering, and sees our suffering as it conduceth to our glory. He sees our cross and our

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crown at once, and therefore pitieth us the less, and will not let us have our wills.

Sirs, believe it, this is the great reason of our mistakes, impatience, and censuring of God, of our sadness of spirit at sickness and at death, because we gaze on the evil itself, but fix not our thoughts on what is beyond it. We look only on the blood and ruin and danger in our wars, but God sees these with all the benefits to souls, bodies, church, state, and posterity, all with one single view. We see the ark taken by the Philistines, but see not their god falling before it and themselves returning it home with gifts. They that saw Christ only on the cross or in the grave do shake their heads, and think Him lost; but God saw Him dying, buried, rising, glorified, and all this with one view. Surely faith will imitate God in this, so far as it hath the glass of a promise to help it. He that sees Joseph only in the pit or in the prison will more lament his case than he that sees his dignity beyond it. Could old Jacob have seen so far, it might have saved him a great deal of sorrow. He that sees no more than the burying of the corn under ground, or the threshing, the winnowing, and grinding of it, will take both it and the labour for lost; but he that foresees its springing and increase, and its making into bread for the life of man, will think otherwise. This is our mistake; we see God burying us under ground, but we foresee not the spring when we shall all revive; we feel Him threshing and winnowing and grinding us, but we see not when we shall be served to our Master's table. If we should but clearly see heaven as the end of all God's dealings with us, surely none of His dealings could be so grievous.

Think of this, I entreat thee, reader. If thou canst but learn this way to heaven, and get thy soul acquainted there, thou needest not be unfurnished of the choicest

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cordials to revive thy spirits in every affliction; thou knowest where to have them whenever thou wantest; thou mayest have arguments at hand to answer all that the devil or flesh can say to thy discomfort. Oh, if God would once raise us to this life, we should find that though heaven and sin are at a great distance; yet heaven and a prison or remotest banishment heaven and the belly of a whale in the sea, heaven and a den of lions, a consuming sickness, or invading death, are at no such distance. But as Abraham so far off saw Christ's day, and rejoiced; so we in our most forlorn estate might see that day when Christ shall give us rest, and therein rejoice. I beseech thee, Christian, for the honour of the gospel and for the comfort of thy soul, that thou be not to learn this heavenly art when in the greatest extremity thou hast most need to use it. I know thou expectest suffering days, at least thou lookest to be sick and die; thou wilt then have exceeding need of consolation. Why, whence dost thou think to draw thy comforts? If thou broach every other vessel, none will come. It is only heaven that can afford thee store. The place is far off, the well is deep, and if then thou have not wherewith to draw, nor hast got thy soul acquainted with the place, thou wilt find thyself at a fearful loss.

It is not an easy nor a common thing, even with the best sort of men, to die with joy. As ever thou wouldst shut up thy days in peace, and close thy dying eyes with comfort, die daily. Live now above, be much with Christ and thy own soul, and the saints about thee shall bless the day that ever thou tookest this counsel. When God shall call thee to a sick-bed and a grave, thou shalt perceive Him saying to thee, as Isa. xxvi. 20, "Come my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." It is he that, with

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Stephen, doth see heaven opened and Christ sitting at the right hand of God who will comfortably bear the storm of stones. Thou knowest not yet what trials thou mayest be called to. The clouds begin to rise again, and the times to threaten us with fearful darkness; few ages so prosperous to the Church but that still we must be saved so "as by fire," and go to heaven by the old road. Men that would fall if the storm should shake them do frequently meet with that which tries them. Why, what wilt thou do if this should be thy case? Art thou fitted to suffer imprisonment or banishment; to bear the loss of goods and life? How is it possible thou shouldst do this, and do it cordially and cheerfully, except thou hast a taste of some greater good, which thou lookest to gain by losing these? Will the merchant throw his goods overboard till he sees he must otherwise lose his life? And wilt thou cast away all thou hast before thou hast felt the sweetness of that rest which else thou must lose by saving these?

Nay, and it is not a speculative knowledge, which thou hast got only by reading or hearing of heaven, which will make thee part with all to get it; as a man that only hears of the sweetness of pleasant food, or reads of the melodious sounds of music, this doth not much excite his desires; but when he hath tried the one by his taste, and the other by his ear, then he will more lay out to get them; so if thou shouldst know only by the hearing of the ear what is the glory of the inheritance of the saints, this would not bring thee through sufferings and death; but if thou take this trying, tasting course, by daily exercising thy soul above, then nothing will stand in thy way, but thou wouldst on till thou were there, though through fire and water. What state more terrible than that of an apostate, when God hath told us, "if any man draw back, His soul shall have no pleasure in him." Because they take not their pleasure in God, and fill

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not themselves with the delights of His ways, and of His heavenly paths, which “drop fatness,” “therefore do they prove backsliders in heart, and are filled with the bitterness of their own ways.” Nay, if they should not be brought to trial, and so not actually deny Christ, yet they are still interpretatively such, because they are such in disposition, and would be such in action, if they were put to it.

I assure thee, reader, for my part, I cannot see how thou wilt be able to hold out to the end if thou keep not thine eye upon the recompense of reward, and use not frequently to taste this cordially; for the less thy diligence is in this, the more doubtful must thy perseverance needs be; for the joy of the Lord is thy strength, and that joy must be fetched from the place of thy joy; and if thou walk without thy strength, how long dost thou think thou art like to endure?

IX

Consider, it is he that hath his conversation in heaven, who is the profitable Christian to all about him, with him you may take sweet counsel, and go up to the celestial house of God. When a man is in a strange country, far from home, how glad is he of the company of one of his own nation; how delightful is it to them to talk of their country, of their acquaintance and the affairs of their home; why, with a heavenly Christian thou mayest have such discourse, for he hath been there in the spirit, and can tell thee of the glory and rest above. What pleasant discourse was it to Joseph to talk with his brethren in a strange land, and to enquire of his father, and his brother Benjamin? Is it not so to a Christian to talk with his brethren that have been above, and enquire after his Father and Christ his Lord?

When a worldling will talk of nothing but the world and a politician of nothing but the affairs of the state,

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and a mere scholar of human learning, and a common professor of duties and of Christians, the heavenly man will be speaking of heaven, and the strange glory which his faith hath seen, and our speedy and blessed meeting there. I confess, to discourse with able men, of clear understandings and piercing wits, about the controverted difficulties in religion, yea, about some criticisms in languages and sciences, is both pleasant and profitable, but nothing to this heavenly discourse of a believer. Oh, how refreshing and savoury are his expressions; how his words do pierce and melt the heart; how they transform the hearers into other men, that they think they are in heaven all the while? How doth his doctrine drop as the rain, and his speech distil as the gentle dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass; while his tongue is expressing the name of the Lord, and ascribing greatness to his God? Is not his feeling, sweet discourse of heaven, even like that box of precious ointment, which being opened to pour on the head of Christ, doth fill the house with the pleasure of its perfume? All that are near may be refreshed by it. His words are like the precious ointment on Aaron's head, that ran down upon his beard and the skirts of his garments; even like the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descendeth from the celestial mount Zion, where the Lord hath commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. This is the man who is as Job, when the candle of God did shine upon his head, and when by His light he walked through darkness; when the secret of God was upon his tabernacle; and when the Almighty was yet with him; then the ear that heard him did bless him; and the eye that saw him gave witness to him.

Happy the people that have a heavenly minister; happy the children and servants that have a heavenly father or master; happy the man that hath heavenly associates; if

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they have but hearts to know their happiness. This is the companion who will watch over thy ways, who will strengthen thee when thou art weak, who will cheer thee when thou art drooping, and comfort thee with the same comforts, wherewith he hath been so often comforted himself. This is he that will be blowing at the spark of thy spiritual life, and always drawing thy soul to God, and will be saying to thee, as the Samaritan woman, "Come and see one that hath told me all that ever I did," one that hath ravished my heart with His beauty; one that hath loved our souls to the death; is not this the Christ? Is not the knowledge of God and Him eternal life? Is not it the glory of the saints to see His glory? If thou come to this man's house and sit at his table, he will feast thy soul with the dainties of heaven; thou shalt meet with a better than Plato's philosophical feast, even a taste of that feast of fat things, "of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined," "that thy soul may be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and thou mayest praise the Lord with joyful lips." If thou travel with this man on the way, he will be directing and quickening thee in thy journey to heaven; if thou be buying or selling or trading with him in the world, he will be counselling thee to lay out for the inestimable treasure. If thou wrong him he can pardon thee, remembering that Christ hath not only pardoned great offences to him, but will also give him this invaluable portion. If thou be angry, he is meek, considering the meekness of his heavenly pattern; or if he fall out with thee, he is soon reconciled, when he remembereth that in heaven you must be everlasting friends. This is the Christian of the right stamp; this is the servant that is like his Lord; these be the innocent that save the island, and all about them are the better where they dwell.

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O sirs, I fear the men I have described are very rare, even among the religious, but were it not for our own shameful negligence such men we might all be. What families, what towns, what commonwealths, what churches should we have, if they were but composed of such men ; but that is more desirable than hopeful, till we come to that land which hath no other inhabitants save what are incomparably beyond this. Alas, how empty are the speeches, and how unprofitable the society of all other sorts of Christians in comparison of these ! A man might perceive by his divine song and high expressions, that Moses had been oft with God, and that God had showed him part of His glory. Who could have composed such spiritual Psalms, and poured out praises as David did, but a man after God's own heart ; and a man that was near the heart of God, and, no doubt, had God also near his heart ? Who could have preached such spiritual doctrine, and dived into the precious mysteries of salvation, as Paul did, but one who had been called with a light from heaven, and had been rapt up into the third heavens in the spirit, and there had seen the unutterable things ? If a man should come down from heaven amongst us, who had lived in the possession of that blessed state, how would men be desirous to see or hear him ; and all the country far and near would leave their business and crowd about him ; happy would he think himself that could get a sight of him ; how would men long to hear what reports he would make of the other world ; and what he had seen ; and what the blessed there enjoy. Would they not think this man the best companion, and his discourse to be of all most profitable ? Why, sirs, every true believing saint shall be there in person, and is frequently there in spirit, and hath seen it also in the glass of the Gospel ; why then, do you value their company no more ; and why do you enquire no more of them ; and why do you relish

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their discourse no better? Well, for my part, I had rather have the fellowship of a heavenly-minded Christian than of the most learned disputers, or princely commanders.

X

Consider, there is no man so highly honoureth God as he who hath his conversation in heaven; and without this we deeply dishonour Him. Is it not a disgrace to the father when the children do feed on husks, and are clothed in rags, and accompany with none but rogues and beggars? Is it not so to our Father, when we who call ourselves His children, shall feed on earth, and the garb of our souls be but like that of the naked world? And when our hearts shall make this clay and dust their more familiar and frequent company, who should always stand in our Father's presence, and be taken up in His own attendance? Sure it beseems not the spouse of Christ to live among His scullions and slaves, when they may have daily admittance into His presence-chamber; He holds forth the sceptre, if they will but enter. Sure, we live below the rates of the Gospel, and not as becometh the children of a king, even of the great King of all the world. We live not according to the height of our hopes, nor according to the plenty that is in the promises, nor according to the provision of our Father's house, and the great preparations made for His saints. It is well we have a Father of tender bowels, who will own His children even in dirt and rags; it is well the foundation of God stands sure, and that the Lord knoweth who are His; or else He would hardly take us for His own, so far do we live below the honour of saints. If He did not first challenge His interest in us, neither ourselves nor others could know us to be His people.

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But, oh, when a Christian can live above, and rejoice his soul in the things that are unseen, how doth God take Himself to be honoured by such an one? The Lord may say, "What, this man believes Me; I see he can trust Me, and take My word; he rejoiceth in My promise before he hath possession; he can be glad and thankful for that which his bodily eyes did never see; this man's rejoicing is not in the flesh; I see he loves Me, because he minds Me; his heart is with Me, he loves My presence; and he shall surely enjoy it in My kingdom for ever." "Because thou hast seen," saith Christ to 'Thomas, "thou hast believed; but blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." How did God take Himself honoured by Caleb and Joshua, when they went into the promised land, and brought back to their brethren a taste of the fruits, and gave it commendation, and encouraged the people! And what a promise and recompense do they receive! For those that honour Him, He will honour.

XI

Consider, if thou make not conscience of this duty of diligent keeping thy heart in heaven; first, thou disobeyest the flat commands of God; secondly, thou lovest the sweetest parts of Scripture; thirdly, and dost frustrate the most gracious discoveries of God.

God hath not left it as a thing indifferent and at thy own choice, whether thou wilt do it or not. He hath made it thy duty as well as the means of thy comfort, that so a double bond might tie thee not to forsake thy own mercies. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above; set your affections on things above, not on things on earth." The same God that hath commanded thee to believe and to be a Christian, hath

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commanded thee to set thy affections above; the same God that hath forbidden thee to murder, to steal, to commit adultery, incest, or idolatry, hath forbidden thee the neglect of this great duty; and darest thou wilfully disobey Him? Why makest thou not conscience of the one as well as of the other?

Besides, thou lovest the most comfortable passages of the Word. All those most glorious descriptions of heaven, all those discoveries of our future blessedness, all God's revelations of His purposes towards us, and His frequent and precious promises of our rest, what are they all but lost to thee? Are not these the stars in the firmament of the Scripture, and the most golden lines in that book of God? Of all the Bible, methinks, thou shouldst not part with one of those promises or predictions; no, not for a world. As heaven is the perfection of all our mercies, so the promises of it in the Gospel are the very soul of the Gospel. That word which was sweeter to David than the honey and the honeycomb, and to Jeremiah "the joy and rejoicing of his heart," the most pleasant part of this thou lovest.

Yea, thou dost frustrate the preparations of Christ for thy joy, and makest Him to speak in vain. Is a comfortable word from the mouth of God of so great worth that all the comforts of the world are nothing to it; and dost thou neglect and overlook so many of them? Reader, I entreat thee to ponder it, why God should reveal so much of His counsel, and tell us beforehand of the joys we shall possess, but only that He would have us know it for our joy? If it had not been to make comfortable our present life, and fill us with the delights of our foreknown blessedness, He might have kept His purpose to Himself, and never have let us know till we come to enjoy it, nor have revealed it to us till death had discovered it, what He meant to do with us

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in the world to come. Yea, when we had got possession of our rest He might still have concealed its eternity from us, and then the fears of losing it again would have bereaved us of much of the sweetness of our joys. But it hath pleased our Father to open His counsel, and to let us know the very intent of His heart, and to acquaint us with the eternal extent of His love; and all this that our joy may be full, and we might live as the heirs of such a kingdom. And shall we now overlook all, as if He had revealed no such matter? Shall we live in earthly cares and sorrows, as if we knew of no such thing; and rejoice no more in these discoveries than if the Lord had never writ it? If thy prince had sealed thee but a patent of some lordship, how oft wouldst thou be casting thine eye upon it, and make it thy daily delight to study it, till thou shouldst come to possess the dignity itself; and hath God sealed thee a patent of heaven, and dost thou let it lie by thee, as if thou hadst forgot it? Oh, that our hearts were as high as our hopes, and our hopes as high as these infallible promises!

XII

Consider, it is but equal that our hearts should be on God when the heart of God is so much on us. If the Lord of glory can stoop so low as to set His heart on sinful dust, sure one would think we should easily be persuaded to set our hearts on Christ and glory, and to ascend to Him in our daily affections, who vouchsafeth to condescend to us. Oh, if God's delight were no more in us than ours is in Him, what should we do, what a case were we in? Christian, dost thou not perceive that the heart of God is set upon thee, and that He is still minding thee with tender love, even when thou forgettest both thyself

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and Him? Dost thou not find Him following thee with daily mercies, moving upon thy soul, providing for thy body, preserving both? Doth He not bear thee continually in the arms of love, and promise that all shall work together for thy good, and suit all His dealings to thy greatest advantage, and give His angels charge over thee? And canst thou find in thy heart to cast Him by, and be taken up with the joys below, and forget thy Lord, who forgets not thee? Fie upon this unkind ingratitude! Is not this the sin that Isaiah so solemnly doth call both heaven and earth to witness against? "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." If the ox or ass do straggle in the day, they likely come to their home at night; but we will not so much as once a day, by our serious thoughts, ascend to God.

When He speaks of His own respects to us, hear what He saith: "When Zion saith, the Lord hath forsaken, my Lord hath forgotten me: Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget; behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me." But when He speaks of our thoughts to Him, the case is otherwise. "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten Me days without number." As if He should say, "You would not forget the clothes on your backs, you will not forget your braveries and vanities, you will not rise one morning but you will remember to cover your nakedness; and are these of more worth than your God, or of more concernment than your eternal life, and yet you can forget these day after day?" O brethren, give not God cause to expostulate with us, as Isa. lxx. 11, "Ye are

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they that have forsaken the Lord, and that forget My holy mountain"; but rather admire His minding of thee, and let it draw thy mind again to Him, and say as Job vii. 17, 18, "What is man that Thou shouldst magnify him, and that Thou shouldst set Thy heart upon him, and that Thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" So let thy soul get up to God, and visit Him every morning, and thy heart be towards Him every moment.

XIII

Consider, should not our interest in heaven and our relation to it continually keep our hearts upon it, besides that excellence which is spoken of before? Why, there our Father keeps His court. Do we not call Him our Father which art in heaven? Ah ungracious, unworthy children that can be so taken up in their play below, as to be mindless of such a Father! Also there is Christ our Head, our Husband, our Life; and shall we not look towards Him and send to Him as oft as we can, till we come to see Him face to face? If He were, by transubstantiation, in the Sacraments, or other ordinances, and that as gloriously as He is in heaven, then there were some reason for our lower thoughts; but when the heavens must receive Him till the restitution of all things, let them also receive our hearts with Him. There also is our mother. For "Jerusalem which is above is the mother of us all." And there are multitudes of our elder brethren. There are our friends and our ancient acquaintance, whose society in the flesh we so much delighted in, and whose departure hence we so much lamented. And is this no attractive to thy thoughts? If they were within thy reach on earth thou

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wouldst go and visit them; and why wilt thou not oftener visit them in spirit, and rejoice beforehand to think of thy meeting them there again? Saith old Bullinger, "*Socrates gaudet sibi moriendum esse, propterea quod Homerum, Hesiodum, et alios præstantissimos viros se visurum crederet: quanto magis ego gaudeo, qui certus sum me visurum esse Christum, Servatorem meum, æternum Dei filium, in assumptâ carne; et præterea tot sanctissimos et eximios Patriarchas?*" &c. Socrates rejoiced that he should die, because he believed he should see Homer, Hesiod, and other excellent men; how much more do I rejoice, who am sure to see Christ my Saviour, the eternal Son of God, in His assumed flesh; and besides, so many holy and excellent men!

When Luther desired to die a martyr, and could not obtain it, he comforted himself with these thoughts, and thus did write to them in prison, "*Vestra vincula mea sunt, vestri carceres et ignes mei sunt, dum confiteor, et prædico, vobisque simul compatiar et congratulor.*" Yet this is my comfort, your bonds are mine, your prisons and fires are mine, while I confess and preach the doctrine for which you suffer, and while I suffer and congratulate with you in your sufferings. Even so should a believer look to heaven, and contemplate the blessed state of the saints, and think with himself, "Though I am not yet so happy as to be with you, yet this is my daily comfort, you are my brethren and fellow-members in Christ, and therefore your joys are my joys, and your glory by this near relation is my glory, especially while I believe in the same Christ, and hold fast the same faith and obedience by which you were thus dignified; and also while I rejoice in spirit with you, and in my daily meditations congratulate your happiness."

Moreover, our house and home is above. "For we know if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved,

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we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Why do we then look no oftener towards it, and groan not earnestly, "desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven"? Sure, if our home were far meaner, we should yet remember it, because it is our home. You use to say, "Home is homely, be it never so poor," and should such a home then be no more remembered? If you were but banished into a strange land, how frequent thoughts would you have of home; how oft would you think of your old companions; which way ever you went, or what company soever you came in, you would still have your hearts and desires there; you would even dream in the night that you were at home, that you saw your father, or mother, or friends, that you were talking with wife, or children, or neighbours; and why is it not thus with us in respect of heaven? Is not that more truly and properly our home, where we must take up our everlasting abode, than this which we are looking every hour when we are separated from, and shall see it no more? We are strangers, and that is our country. We are heirs, and that is our inheritance, even an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us.

We are here in continual distress and want, and there lies our substance, even that better and more enduring substance. We are here fain to be beholden to others, and there lies our own perpetual treasure. Yea, the very hope of our souls is there; all our hope of relief from our distresses; all our hope of happiness when we are here miserable; all this hope is laid up for us in heaven, whereof we hear in the true Word of the Gospel. Why, beloved Christians, have we so much interest, and so seldom thoughts; have we so near relation, and so little affection; are we not ashamed of this? Doth it become us to be delighted in the company of strangers so as to

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forget our Father, and our Lord; or to be so well pleased with those that hate and grieve us as to forget our best and dearest friends; or to be so besotted with borrowed trifles, as to forget our own profession and treasure; or to be so taken up with a strange place as not once a day to look toward home; or to fall so in love with tears and wants as to forget our eternal joy and rest? Christians, I pray you think whether this become us, or whether this be the part of a wise or thankful man? Why, here thou art like to other men, as the heir under age who differs not from a servant, but there it is that thou shalt be promoted, and fully estated in all that was promised.

Surely, God useth to plead His propriety in us, and from thence to conclude to do us good, even because we are His own people whom He hath chosen out of all the world; and why then do we not plead our interest in Him, and thence fetch arguments to raise up our hearts, even because He is our own God, and because the place is our own possession? Men use in other things to over-love and over-value their own, and too much to mind their own things. Oh, that we could mind our own inheritance, and value it but half as it doth deserve!

XIV

Lastly, consider, there is nothing else that is worth the setting our hearts on. If God have them not, who or what shall have them? If thou mind not thy rest, what wilt thou mind? As the disciples said of Christ: "Hath any man given Him meat to eat that we know not of?" So say I to thee: "Hast thou found out some other God, or heaven that we know not of, or something that will serve thee instead of rest? Hast thou found on earth an eternal happiness; where is it; and what is it made of;

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or who was the man that found it out; or who was he that last enjoyed it; where dwelt he; and what was his name? Or art thou the first that hast found this treasure, and that ever discovered heaven on earth?" Ah, wretch, trust not to thy discoveries, boast not of thy gain, till experience bid thee boast; or rather take up with the experience of thy forefathers who are now in the dust and deprived of all, though sometime they were as lusty and jovial as thou.

I would not advise thee to make experiments at so dear rates as all those do that seek after happiness below; lest when the substance is lost, thou find too late that thou didst catch but a shadow; lest thou be like those men that will needs search out the philosopher's stone, though none could effect it that went before them; and so buy their experience with the loss of their own estates and time, which they might have had at a cheaper rate, if they would have taken up with the experience of their predecessors. So I would wish thee not to disquiet thyself in looking for that which is not on earth, lest thou learn thy experience with the loss of thy soul which thou mightest have learned at easier terms, even by the warnings of God in His Word, and loss of thousands of souls before thee. It would pity a man to see that men will not believe God in this, till they have lost their labour, and heaven, and all; nay, that many Christians who have taken heaven for their resting place, do lose so many thoughts needlessly on earth; and care not how much they oppress their spirits, which should be kept nimble and free for higher things. As Luther said to Melancthon when he overpressed himself with the labours of his ministry, so may I much more say to thee who oppressest thyself with the cares of the world: "*Vellem te adhuc decies plus obrui: Adeo me nihil tui miseret, qui toties monitus, ne onerares teipsum tot oneribus, et nihil audis, omnia bene*

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monita contemnis. Erit cum sero stultum tuum hunc zelum frustra damnabis, quo jam ardes solus omnia portare, quasi ferrum aut saxum sis." "It were no matter if thou wert oppressed ten times more; so little do I pity thee, who being so often warned that thou shouldst not load thyself with so many burdens, dost no whit regard it, but contemnest all these wholesome warnings; thou wilt shortly, when it is too late, condemn this thy foolish forwardness, which makes thee so desirous to bear all this as if thou wert made of iron or stone."

Alas, that a Christian should rather delight to have his heart among these thorns and briars, than in the bosom of his crucified, glorified Lord! Surely, if Satan should take thee up to the mountain of temptation, and shew thee the kingdoms and glory of the world, he could shew thee nothing that is worthy thy thoughts, much less to be preferred before thy Rest. Indeed so far as duty and necessity require it, we must be content to mind the things below; but who is he that contains himself within the compass of those limits? And yet if we bound our cares and thoughts as diligently as ever we can, we shall find the least to be bitter and burdensome; even as the least wasp hath a sting, and the smallest serpent hath his poison. As old Hiltenius said of Rome, "*Est proprium Romance potestatis ut sit ferrum, et licet digiti minorentur ad parvitatem acus, tamen manent ferrei.*" "It is proper to the Roman power to be of iron, and though the fingers of it be diminished to the smallness of a needle, yet they are iron still." The like may I say of our earthly cares, it is their property to be hard and troublous, and so they will be when they are at the least.

Verily, if we had no higher hopes than what is on earth, I should take man for a most silly creature; and his work and wages, all his travel and his felicity, to be no better than dreams and vanity, and scarce worth the

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minding or mentioning. Especially to thee a Christian should it seem so, whose eyes are opened by the Word and Spirit to see the emptiness of all these things, and the precious worth of the things above. Oh, then be not detained by these silly things, but if Satan present them to thee in a temptation, send them away from whence they came, as Pellicanus did send back the silver bowl which the bishop had sent him for a token with this answer, "*Astricti sunt quotquot Tiguri cives et inquilini, bis singulis annis, solemni juramento, ne quis eorum ullum munus ab ullo Principe accipiat.*" "All that are citizens and inhabitants of Tigurum, are solemnly sworn twice a year, not to receive any gift from any prince abroad." So say thou, "We the citizens and inhabitants of heaven are bound by solemn and frequent covenants, not to have our hearts enticed or entangled with any foreign honours or delights, but only with those of our own country. If thy thoughts should, like the laborious bee, go over the world from flower to flower, from creature to creature, they would bring thee no honey or sweetness home, save what they gathered from their relations to eternity.

But you will say perhaps, Divinity is of larger extent than only to treat of the life to come, or the way thereto; there are many controversies of great difficulty which therefore require much of our thoughts, and so they must not be all of heaven.

For the smaller controversies which have vexed our times and caused the doleful divisions among us, I express my mind as that of Graserus, "*Cum in visitatione ægrotorum, et ad emigrationem ex hac vita ad beatam præparationemprehendisset, controversias illas theologicas, quæ scientiam quidem infantem pariunt, conscientias vero fluctuantes non sedant, quæque hodie magna animorum contentione agitantur, et magnos tumultus in rebus publicis excitant, nullum prorsus usum habere, quinimo conscientias*

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simpliciorum non aliter ac olim in Papatu humana figmenta intricare: Cæpit ab eis toto animo abhorreere, et in publicis concionibus tantum ea proponere, quæ ad fidem salvificam in Christum accendendam, et ad pietatem veram juxta verbum Dei exercendam, veramque consolationem in vita et morte præstandam faciebant.”

“When he had found in his visiting the sick, and in his own preparations for well dying, that the controversies in divinity which beget a swelling knowledge, but do not quiet troubled consciences, and which are at this day agitated with such contention of spirits, and raise such tumults in commonwealths, are indeed utterly useless; yea, and moreover do entangle the consciences of the simple, just as the human inventions in Popery formerly did, he begun with full bent of mind to shun or abhor them, and in his public preaching to propound only those things which tended to the kindling a true faith in Jesus Christ and to the exercise of true godliness according to the Word of God, and to the procuring of true consolation both in life and death.” I can scarce express my own mind more plainly than in this historian’s expressions of the mind of Graserus.

While I had some competent measure of health, and looked at death as at a greater distance, there was no man more delighted in the study of controversy; but when I saw dying men have no mind on it, and how unsavoury and uncomfortable such conference was to them, and when I had oft been near to death myself, and found no delight in them, further than they confirmed or illustrated the doctrine of eternal glory, I have minded them ever since the less. Though every truth of God is precious, and it is the sin and shame of professors that are no more able to defend the truth, yet should all our study of controversy be still in relation to this perpetual Rest, and consequently be kept within its bounds and,

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with most Christians, not have the twentieth part of our time or thoughts. Who that hath tried both studies doth not cry out, as Summerhard was wont to do of the Popish school divinity, "*Quis me miserum tandem liberabit ab ista rixosa theologia?*" Who will once deliver me, wretch, from this wrangling kind of divinity?" And as it is said of Bucholcer, "*Cum eximiis à Deo dotibus esset decoratus, in certamen tamen cum rabiosis illius seculi theologis descendere noluit. Desii, inquit, disputare, cæpi supputare: quoniam illud dissipationem, hoc collectionem significat. Vidit enim ab iis controversias moveri, quas nulla unquam amoris Dei scintilla calefecerat: vidit ex diuturnis theologorum rixis, utilitatis nihil, detrimenti plurimum in ecclesias redundasse;*" i.e.: Though he was adorned by God with excellent gifts, yet would he never enter into contention with the furious divines of that age. I have ceased, saith he, my disputations, and now begin my supputation; for that signifieth "dissipation," but this "collection." For he saw, that those men were the movers of controversies, who had never been warmed with one spark of the love of God; he saw that from the continual brawls of divines, no benefit, but much hurt did accrue to the churches. And it is worth the observing which the historian adds: "*Qua propter omnis ejus cura in hoc erat, ut auditores fidei suæ commissos, doceret bene vivere et beate mori; Et annotatum in adversariis amici ejus reppererunt, permultos in extremo agone constitutos gratias ipsi hoc nomine egisse, quod ipsius ductu servatorem suum Jesum agnovissent, cujus in cognitione pulchrum vivere, mori vero longe pulcherrimum ducerent. Atque haud scio annon hoc ipsum longe Bucholcero coram Deo sit gloriosius futurum, quam si aliquot contentiosorum libellorum myriadas posteritatis memoriæ consecrasset;*" i.e.: Therefore this was all his care, that he might teach his hearers committed to

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his charge, *to live well, and die happily*: and his friends found noted down in his papers a great many of persons, who in their last agony did give him thanks for this very reason, that by his direction they had come to the knowledge of Jesus their Saviour, in the knowledge of whom *they esteem it sweet to live, but to die far more sweet*. And I cannot tell whether this very thing will not prove more glorious to Bucholcer before God, than if he had consecrated to the memory of posterity many myriads of contentious writings.

And as the study of controversies is not the most pleasant nor the most profitable, so much less the public handling of them, for, do it with the greatest meekness and ingenuity, yet shall we meet with such unreasonable men as the said Bucholcer did, "*qui arrepta ex aliquibus voculis calumniandi materia, hæreseos insimulare et traducere optimum virum non erubescerent; frustra obtestante ipso, dextrè data, dextrè acciperent*;" i.e.: who taking occasion of reproach from some small words, were not ashamed to traduce the good man, and accuse him of heresy, while he in vain obtested with them that they should take in good part what was delivered with a good intention. Siracides saith in Ecclesiasticus, chap xxvi., that a scolding woman shall be sought out for to drive away the enemies; but experience of all ages tells us, to our sorrow, that the wrangling divine is their chiefest inlet, and no such scare-crow to them at all.

So then it is clear to me that there is nothing worth our minding but heaven, and the way to heaven.

All the question will be about the affairs of Church and State. Is not this worth our minding, to see what things will come to, and how God will conclude our differences?

So far as they are considered as the providences of God, and as they tend to the settling of the Gospel, and government of Christ, and so to the saving of our own,

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and our posterity's souls, they are well worth our diligent observation. But these are only their relations to eternity. Otherwise I should look upon all the stirs and commotions in the world, but as the busy gadding of a heap of ants, or the swarming of a nest of wasps or bees; the spurn of a man's foot destroys all their labour; or as an interlude or tragedy of a few hours long. They first quarrel, and then fight, and let out one another's blood, and bring themselves more speedily and violently to their graves, which, however, they could not long have delayed; and so come down, and the play is ended. And the next generation succeeds them in their madness, and makes the like bustle in the world for a time; and so they also come down, and lie in the dust. Like the Roman gladiators that would kill one another by the hundreds, to make the beholders a solemn shew; or as the young men of Joab and Abner, that must play before them, by stabbing one another to the heart, and fall down and die, and there is an end of the sport. And is this worth a wise man's observance?

Surely, our very bodies themselves, for which we make all this ado in the world, are very silly pieces: look upon them, not as they are set out in a borrowed bravery, but as they lie rotting in a ditch, or a grave; and you will say, they are silly things indeed. Why, then, sure all our dealings in the world, our buyings and sellings, and eating and drinking, our building and marrying, our wealth and honours, our peace and our war, so far as they relate not to the life to come, but tend only to the support and pleasing of this silly flesh, must needs themselves be silly things, and not worthy the frequent thoughts of a Christian; for the means, as such, is meaner than their end.

And now doth not thy conscience say, as I say, that there is nothing but heaven and the way to it that is worth thy minding?

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XV

Thus I have given thee these twelve arguments to consider of, and, if it may be, to persuade thee to a heavenly mind. I now desire thee to view them over, read them deliberately, and read them again, and then tell me, are they reason or are they not? Reader, stop here while thou answerest my question. Are these considerations weighty, or not? Are these arguments convincing, or not? Have I proved it thy duty, and of flat necessity, to keep thy heart on things above, or have I not? Say yea, or nay, man! If thou say nay, I am confident thou contradictest thine own conscience, and speakest against the light that is in thee, and thy reason tells thee thou speakest falsely. If thou say yea, and acknowledge thyself convinced of the duty, bear witness, then, that I have thine own confession. That very tongue of thine shall condemn thee, and that confession be pleaded against thee if thou now go home, and cast this off, and wilfully neglect such a confessed duty; and these twelve considerations shall be as a jury to convict thee, which I propounded, hoping they might be effectual to persuade thee.

I have not yet fully laid open to you the nature and particular way of that duty which I am all this while persuading you to, that is the next thing to be done; all that I have said hitherto is but to make you willing to perform it. I know the whole work of man's salvation doth stick most at his own will; if we could once get over this block well, I see not what could stand before us. Be soundly willing, and the work is more than half done.

I have now a few plain directions to give you, for to help you in doing this great work; but alas, it is in vain to mention them except you be willing to put them in

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practice. What sayest thou, reader? Art thou willing, or art thou not? Wilt thou obey, if I shew thee the way of thy duty? However, I will set them down, and tender them to thee, and the Lord persuade thy heart to the work.

CHAPTER XII

SOME GENERAL HELPS TO A HEAVENLY LIFE

I

I SHALL now lay thee down some positive helps, and conclude with a directory to the main duty itself. But first, I expect that thou resolve against the fore-mentioned impediments,¹ that thou read them seriously, and avoid them faithfully, or else thy labour will be all in vain; thou dost but go about to reconcile light and darkness, Christ and Belial, and to conjoin heaven and hell in thy spirit; thou mayest sooner bring down heaven to earth, than do this. I must tell thee also, that I here expect thy promise, faithfully to set upon the helps which I shall prescribe thee, and that the reading of them will not bring heaven into thy heart, but in their constant practice the Spirit will do it. It were better for thee I had never written them, and thou hadst never seen this book nor read them, if thou do not buckle thyself to the duty. As thou valuest then the delights of these foretastes of heaven, make conscience of performing these following duties:

Know heaven to be the only treasure, and labour to know also what a treasure it is; be convinced once that thou hast no other happiness, and then be convinced what happiness is there. If thou do not soundly believe it to be the chiefest good, thou wilt never set thy heart

¹ The chapter on "Hindrances to a Heavenly Life" to which this refers is omitted from this edition.

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upon it ; and this conviction must sink into thy affections, for if it be only a notion, it will have little operation. And sure we have reason enough to be easily convinced of this, as you may see in what hath been spoken already. Read over the description and nature of this Rest, in the beginning of this book, and the reasons against thy resting below (in chapter first), and conclude, that this is the only happiness. As long as your judgments do undervalue it your affections must needs be cold towards it. If your judgment do mistake blear-eyed Leah for beautiful Rachel, so will your affections also mistake them. If Eve do once suppose she sees more worth in the forbidden fruit than in the love and fruition of God, no wonder if it have more of her heart than God. If your judgments once prefer the delights of the flesh before the delights in the presence of God, it is impossible then your hearts should be in heaven. As it is the ignorance of the emptiness of things below that makes men so over-value them, so it is ignorance of the high delights above which is the cause that men so little mind them.

If you see a purse of gold, and believe it to be but stones or counters, it will not entice your affections to it ; it is not a thing's excellence in itself, but it is an excellence known that provokes desire. If an ignorant man see a book containing the secrets of art or sciences, yet he values it no more than a common piece, because he knows not what is in it ; but he that knows it doth highly value it, his very mind is set upon it, he can pore upon it day and night, he can forbear his meat and drink and sleep to read it. As the Jews inquired after Elias, when Christ tells them that verily Elias is already come, and ye knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever ye listed ; so men inquire after happiness and delight, when it is offered to them in that promise of rest, and they know it not, but trample it under foot ; and as

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the Jews killed the Messiah, while they waited for the Messiah, and that because they did not know Him, "for had they known Him, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory," so doth the world cry out for rest, and busily seek for delight and happiness, even while they are neglecting and destroying their rest and happiness, and this, because they thoroughly know it not; for did they know thoroughly what it is, they could not so slight the everlasting treasure.

II

Labour as to know heaven to be the only happiness; so also to be thy happiness. Though the knowledge of excellency and suitableness may stir up that love which worketh by desire; yet there must be the knowledge of our interest or propriety, to the setting a-work of our love of complacency. We may confess heaven to be the best condition, though we despair of enjoying it; and we may desire and seek it, if we see the obtainment to be but probable and hopeful; but we can never delightfully rejoice in it till we are somewhat persuaded of our title to it. What comfort is it to a man that is naked, to see the rich attire of others? or to a man that hath not a bit to put in his mouth, to see a feast which he must not taste of? What delight hath a man that hath not a house to put his head in, to see the sumptuous buildings of others? Would not all this rather increase his anguish, and make him more sensible of his own misery? So, for a man to know the excellencies of heaven, and not to know whether he shall ever enjoy them, may well raise desire, and provoke to seek it, but it will raise but little joy and content. Who will set his heart on another man's possessions? If your houses,

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your goods, your cattle, your children were not your own, you would less mind them, and delight less in them.

O therefore Christians, rest not till you can call this rest your own; sit not down without assurance; get alone, and question with thyself; bring thy heart to the bar of trial; force it to answer the interrogatories put to it; set the conditions of the Gospel and qualifications of the saints on one side, and thy performance of those conditions and the qualifications of thy soul on the other side; and then judge how near they resemble. Thou hast the same word before thee to judge thyself by now, by which thou must be judged at the great day. Thou art there before told the questions that must then be put to thee; put these questions now to thyself. Thou mayest there read the very articles, upon which thou shalt be tried; why, try thyself by those articles now. Thou mayest there know, beforehand, on what terms men shall be then acquit and condemned; why try now whether thou art possessed of that which will acquit thee, or whether thou be upon the same terms with those that must be condemned; and accordingly acquit or condemn thyself. Yet be sure thou judge by a true touchstone, and mistake not the Scripture's description of a saint, that thou neither acquit nor condemn thyself upon mistakes. For as groundless hopes do tend to confusion and are the greatest cause of most men's damnation, so groundless doubtings do tend to discomfords, and are the great cause of the disquieting of the saints.

Therefore lay thy grounds of trial safely and advisedly; proceed in the work deliberately and methodically; follow it to an issue resolutely and industriously; suffer not thy heart to give thee the slip, and get away before a judgment, but make it stay to hear its sentence; if once, or twice, or thrice will not do it, nor a few days

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of hearing bring it to issue, follow it on with unwearied diligence, and give not over till the work be done, and till thou canst say knowingly off or on, either thou art, or art not a member of Christ; either that thou hast, or that thou hast not yet title to this rest. Be sure thou rest not in wilful uncertainties. If thou canst not despatch the work well thyself, get the help of those that are skilful; go to thy minister if he be a man of experience; or go to some able experienced friend; open thy case faithfully, and wish them to deal plainly. And thus continue till thou hast got assurance. Not but that some doubtings may still remain, but yet thou mayest have so much assurance as to master them, that they may not much interrupt thy peace. If men did know heaven to be their own inheritance, we should less need to persuade their thoughts unto it, or to press them to set their delight in it. Oh, if men did truly know that God is their own Father, and Christ their own Redeemer and Head, and that those are their own everlasting habitations, and that there it is that they must abide and be happy for ever, how could they choose but be ravished with the forethoughts thereof? If a Christian could but look upon sun and moon and stars, and reckon all his own in Christ, and say: "These are the portion that my Husband doth bestow, these are the blessings that my Lord hath procured me and things incomparably greater than these;" what holy raptures would his spirit feel!

The more do they sin against their own comforts, as well as against the grace of the Gospel, who are wilful maintainers of their own doubtings, and plead for their unbelief, and cherish distrustful thoughts of God, and scandalous injurious thoughts of their Redeemer; who represent the covenant, as if it were of works and not of grace; and represent Christ as an enemy, rather than as

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a Saviour, as if He were glad of advantages against them, and were willing that they should keep off from Him and die in their unbelief; when He hath called them so oft, and invited them so kindly, and borne the hell that they should bear. Ah, wretches that we are! that be keeping up jealousies of the love of our Lord, when we should be rejoicing and bathing our souls in His love, that can question that love which hath been so fully evidenced, and doubt still, whether He that hath stooped so low, and suffered so much, and taken up a nature and office of purpose, be yet willing to be theirs who are willing to be His! As if any man could choose Christ before Christ hath chosen him, or any man could desire to have Christ more than Christ desires to have him, or any man were more willing to be happy than Christ is to make him happy! Fie upon these injurious (if not blasphemous) thoughts!

If ever thou have harboured such thoughts in thy breast, or if ever thou have uttered such words with thy tongue, spit out that venom, vomit out that rancour, cast them from thee, and take heed how thou ever entertainest them more! God hath written the names of His people in heaven, as you use to write your names in your own books, or upon your own goods, or set your marks on your own sheep; and shall we be attempting to rase them out, and to write our names on the doors of hell? But blessed be our God, whose foundation is sure, and who keepeth us by His mighty power through faith unto salvation. Well then, this is my second advice to thee, that thou follow on the work of self-examination, till thou hast got assurance that this rest is thy own; and this will draw thy heart unto it; and feed thy spirits with fresh delights, which else will be but tormented so much the more, to think that there is such rest for others, but none for thee.

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III

Another help to sweeten thy soul with the foretastes of rest is this : labour to apprehend how near it is, think seriously of its speedy approach. That which we think is near at hand, we are more sensible of than that which we behold at a distance. When we hear of war or famine in another country, it troubleth not so much ; or if we hear it prophesied of a long time hence ; so if we hear of plenty a great way off, or of a golden age that shall fall out, who knows when ; this never rejoiceth us. But if judgments or mercies begin to draw near, then they affect us : if we were sure we should see the golden age, then it would take with us. When the plague is in a town but twenty miles off, we do not fear it, nor much perhaps if it be but in another street, but if once it come to the next door, or if it seize on one in our own family, then we begin to think on it more feelingly. It is so with mercies as well as judgments. When they are far off, we talk of them as marvels ; but when they draw close to us, we rejoice in them as truths. This makes men think on heaven so insensibly, because they conceit it at too great a distance ; they look on it as twenty or thirty or forty years off ; and this is it that dulls their sense. As wicked men are fearless and senseless of judgment, because the sentence is not speedily executed, so are the godly deceived of their comforts, by supposing them further off than they are.

This is the danger of putting the day of death far from us, when men will promise themselves longer time in the world than God hath promised them, and judge of the length of their lives by the probabilities they gather from their age, their health, their constitution, and temperature ; this makes them look at heaven as a great way off. If the rich fool in the Gospel had not

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expected to have lived many years, he would sure have thought more of providing for eternity, and less of his present store and possessions; and if we did not think of staying many years from heaven, we should think on it with far more piercing thoughts. This expectation of long life doth both the wicked and the godly a great deal of wrong. How much better were it to receive the sentence of death in ourselves, and to look on eternity as near at hand!

Surely, reader, thou standest at the door, and hundreds of diseases are ready waiting to open the door and let thee in. Are not the thirty or forty years of thy life that are past, quickly gone? Is it not a very little time when thou lookest back on it? And will not all the rest be shortly so too? Do not days and nights come very thick? Dost thou not feel that building of flesh to shake, and perceive thy house of clay to totter? Look on thy glass, see how it runs; look on thy watch, how fast it getteth; what a short moment is between us and our rest; what a step is it from hence to everlastingness! While I am thinking and writing of it, it hasteth near, and I am even entering into it before I am aware. While thou art reading this, it posteth on, and thy life will be gone as a tale that is told. Mayest thou not easily foresee thy dying time, and look upon thyself as ready to depart? It is but a few days till thy friends shall lay thee in the grave, and others do the like for them. If you verily believed you should die to-morrow, how seriously would you think of heaven to-night! The condemned prisoner knew before that he must die, and yet he was then as jovial as any; but when he hears the sentence, and knows he hath not a week to live, then how it sinks his heart within him! So that the true apprehensions of the nearness of eternity doth make men's thoughts of it to be quick and piercing, and put life into

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their fears and sorrows, if they are unfitted; and into their desires and joys, if they have assurance of its glory. When the witch's Samuel had told Saul, "By to-morrow this time thou shalt be with me," this quickly worked to his very heart, and laid him down as dead on the earth. And if Christ should say to a believing soul, "By to-morrow this time thou shalt be with me," this would be a working word indeed, and would bring him in spirit to heaven before. As Melancthon was wont to say of his uncertain station, because of the persecution of his enemies, "*Ego jam sum hic, Dei beneficio, xl. annos, et nunquam potui dicere aut certus esse, me per unam septimanam mansurum esse,*" i.e., I have now been here this forty years, and yet could never say, or be sure, that I shall tarry here for one week; so may we all say of our abode on earth. As long as thou hast continued out of heaven, thou canst not say thou shalt be out of it one week longer. Do but suppose that you are still entering in it, and you shall find it will much help you more seriously to mind it.

IV

Another help to this heavenly life is to be much in serious discoursing of it, especially with those that can speak from their hearts, and are seasoned themselves with an heavenly nature. It is pity, saith Mr. Bolton, that Christians should ever meet together without some talk of their meeting in heaven, or the way to it, before they part. It is pity so much precious time is spent among Christians in vain discourses, foolish janglings, and useless disputes, and not a sober word of heaven among them. Methinks we should meet together of purpose to warm our spirits with discoursing of our rest. To hear a minister or other private Christian set forth

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that blessed glorious state with power and life from the promises of the Gospel, methinks should make us say, as the two disciples, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he was opening to us the Scripture"; while he was opening to us the windows of heaven? If a Felix or wicked wretch will tremble, when he hears his judgment powerfully denounced, why should not the believing soul be revived when he hears his eternal rest revealed?

Get then together, fellow-Christians, and talk of the affairs of your country and kingdom, and comfort one another with such words. If worldlings get together they will be talking of the world; when wantons are together they will be talking of their lusts; and wicked men can be delighted in talking of wickedness; and should not Christians then delight themselves in talking of Christ, and the heirs of heaven in talking of their inheritance? This may make our hearts revive within us; as it did Jacob's to hear the message that called him to Goshen, and to see the chariots that should bring him to Joseph. Oh, that we were furnished with skill and resolution to turn the stream of men's common discourse to these more sublime and precious things! And when men begin to talk of things unprofitable, that we could tell how to put in a word for heaven, and say (as Peter of his bodily food, "Not so, for I eat not that which is common and unclean"), this is nothing to my eternal rest. Oh, the good that we might both do and receive by this course! If it had not been needful to deter us from unfruitful conference, Christ would not have talked of giving an account of every idle word at judgment. Say then as David, when you are in conference, "Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chiefest mirth." And then you shall find the truth of that (Prov. xv. 4), "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life."

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V

Another help to this heavenly life is this: Make it thy business in every duty to wind up thy affections nearer heaven. A man's attainments and receivings from God are answerable to his own desires and ends; that which he sincerely seeks he finds. God's end in the institution of His ordinances was that they be as so many stepping-stones to our rest, and as the stairs by which (in subordination to Christ) we may daily ascend unto it in our affections. Let this be thy end in using them, as it was God's end in ordaining them, and doubtless they will not be unsuccessful. Though men be personally far asunder yet they may even by letters have a great deal of intercourse. How have men been rejoiced by a few lines from a friend, though they could not see him face to face; what gladness have we when we do but read the expressions of his love; or if we read of our friend's prosperity and welfare! Many a one that never saw the fight hath triumphed and shouted, made bonfires, and rung bells, when they have but heard and read of the victory, and may not we have intercourse with God in His ordinances though our persons be yet so far remote? May not our spirits rejoice in the reading those lines which contain our legacy and charter for heaven? With what gladness may we read the expressions of love, and hear of the state of our celestial country? With what triumphant shoutings may we applaud our inheritance, though yet we have not the happiness to behold it? Men that are separated by sea and land can yet, by the mere intercourse of letters, carry on both great and gainful trades, even to the value of their whole estate; and may not a Christian, in the wise improvement of duties, drive on this happy trade for rest?

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Come not therefore with any lower ends to duties; renounce formality, customariness, and applause. When thou kneelest down in secret or public prayer, let it be in hope to get thy heart nearer God before thou risest off thy knees. When thou openest thy Bible or other books, let it be with this hope, to meet with some passage of divine truth, and some such blessing of the Spirit with it, as may raise thine affections nearer heaven, and give thee a fuller taste thereof. When thou art setting thy foot at thy door, to go to the public ordinance and worship, say, "I hope to meet with somewhat from God that may raise my affections before I return; I hope the Spirit will give me the meeting, and sweeten my heart with those celestial delights; I hope that Christ will appear to me in that way, and shine about me with light from heaven, and let me hear His instructing and reviving voice, and cause the scales to fall from mine eyes, that I may see more of that glory than I ever yet saw; I hope before I return to my house, my Lord will take my heart in hand, and bring it within the view of rest, and set it before His Father's presence, that I may return, as the shepherds, from the heavenly vision, glorifying and praising God for all the things I have heard and seen," and say, as those that beheld His miracles, "We have seen strange things to-day"; remember also to pray for thy teacher, that God would put some divine message into his mouth which may leave a heavenly relish on thy spirit. If these were our ends, and this our course when we set to duty, we should not be so strange as we are to heaven.

When the Indians first saw the use of letters by our English, they thought there was sure some spirit in them that men should converse together by a paper; if Christians would take this course in their duties, they might come to such holy fellowship with God, and see so

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much of the mysteries of the kingdom, that it would make the standers-by admire what is in those lines, what is in that sermon, what is in this praying; this fills his heart so full of joy, and that so transports him above himself. Certainly God would not fail us in our duties, if we did not fail ourselves, and then experience would make them sweeter to us.

VI

Another help is this: Make an advantage of every object thou seest, and of every passage of divine providence, and of everything that befalls in thy labour and calling, to mind thy soul of its approaching rest. As all providences and creatures are means to our rest, so do they point us to that as their end. Every creature hath the name of God and of our final rest written upon it, which a considerate believer may as truly discern, as he can read upon a post or hand in a crossway, the name of the town or city which it points to. This spiritual use of creatures and providences is God's great end in bestowing them on man; and he that overlooks this end must needs rob God of His chiefest praise, and deny Him the greatest part of His thanks.

The relation that our present mercies have to our great eternal mercies is the very quintessence and spirits of all these mercies; therefore do they lose the very spirits of their mercies, and take nothing but the husks and bran, who do overlook this relation, and draw not forth the sweetness of it in their contemplations. God's sweetest dealings with us at the present would not be half so sweet as they are, if they did not intimate some further sweetness. As ourselves have a fleshly and a spiritual substance, so have our mercies a fleshly and a spiritual use, and are fitted to the nourishing of both

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our parts. He that receives the carnal part and no more may have his body comforted by them, but not his soul. It is not all one to receive sixpence merely as sixpence, and to receive it in earnest of a thousand pound; though the sum be the same, yet I trow the relation makes a wide difference. Thou takest but the bare earnest, and overlookest the main sum, when thou receivest thy mercies, and forgettest thy crown. Oh, therefore that Christians were skilled in this art! You can open your Bibles, and read there of God, and of glory. Oh, learn to open the creatures, and to open the several passages of providence, to read of God and glory there. Certainly, by such a skilful industrious improvement, we might have a fuller taste of Christ and heaven in every bit of bread that we eat, and in every draught of beer that we drink, than most men have in the use of the sacrament.

If thou prosper in the world, and thy labour succeed, let it make thee more sensible of thy perpetual prosperity. If thou be weary of thy labours, let it make thy thoughts of rest more sweet. If things go cross and hard with thee in the world, let it make thee the more earnestly desire that way when all thy sorrows and sufferings shall cease. Is thy body refreshed with food or sleep? Remember the inconceivable refreshings with Christ. Dost thou hear any news that make thee glad? Remember what glad tidings it will be to hear the sound of the trump of God, and the absolving sentence of Christ our judge. Art thou delighting thyself in the society of the saints? Remember the everlasting, amiable fraternity thou shalt have with perfected saints in rest. Is God communicating Himself to thy spirit? Why, remember that time of thy highest advancement, when thy joy shall be full, as thy communion is full. Dost thou hear the raging noise of the wicked, and the disorders of the vulgar, and the confusions in the world, like the noise

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in a crowd, or the roaring of the waters? Why, think of the blessed agreement in heaven, and the melodious harmony in that choir of God. Dost thou hear or feel the tempest of wars, or see any cloud of blood arising? Remember the day when thou shalt be housed with Christ, where there is nothing but calmness and amiable union, and where we shall solace ourselves in perfect peace under the wings of the Prince of Peace for ever.

Thus you may see what advantages to a heavenly life every condition and creature doth afford us, if we had but hearts to apprehend and improve them. As it is said of the Turks that they will make bridges of the dead bodies of their men to pass over the trenches or ditches in their way, so might Christians of the very ruins and calamities of the times, and of every dead body or misery that they see, make a bridge for the passage of their thoughts to their rest. And as they have taught their pigeons, which they call carriers in divers places, to bear letters of intercourse from friend to friend at a very great distance, so might a wise industrious Christian get his thoughts carried into heaven, and receive, as it were, returns from thence again by creatures of slower wing than doves, by the assistance of the Spirit, the Dove of God. This is the right Dædalian flight; and thus we may take from each bird a feather, and make us wings and fly to Christ.

VII

Another singular help is this: Be much in that angelical work of praise. As the most heavenly spirits will have the most heavenly employment, so the more heavenly the employment the more will it make the spirit heavenly. Though the heart be the fountain of all our actions, and the actions will be usually of the quality of

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the heart; yet do those actions by a kind of reflection work much on the heart from whence they spring. The like also may be said of our speeches. So that the work of praising God, being the most heavenly work, is likely to raise us to the most heavenly temper. This is the work of those saints and angels, and this will be our own everlasting work. If we were more taken up in this employment now we should be liker to what we shall be then. When Aristotle was asked what he thought of music, he answers, "*Jovem neque canere, neque citharam pulsare,*" that Jupiter did neither sing, nor play on the harp; thinking it an unprofitable art to men, which was no more delightful to God. But Christians may better argue from the like ground, that singing of praise is a most profitable duty, because it is so delightful as it were to God Himself, that He hath made it His people's eternal work, for they shall sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. As desire and faith and hope are of shorter continuance than love and joy, so also preaching and prayer and sacraments and all means for confirmation and expression of faith and hope shall cease, when our thanks and praise and triumphant expressions of love and joy shall abide for ever. "The liveliest emblem of heaven that I know upon earth is when the people of God, in the deep sense of His excellency and bounty, from hearts abounding with love and joy, do join together both in heart and voice, in the cheerful and melodious singing of His praises." Those that deny the lawful use of singing the Scripture Psalms in our times do disclose their unheavenly, unexperienced hearts, I think, as well as their ignorant understandings. Had they felt the heavenly delights that many of their brethren in such duties have felt, I think they would have been of another mind. And whereas they are wont to question whether such delights be genuine, or any

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better than carnal or delusive, surely, the very relish of God and heaven that is in them, the example of the saints in Scripture whose spirits have been raised by the same duty, and the command of Scripture for the use of this means, one would think should quickly decide the controversy.

And a man may as truly say of these delights, as they use to say of the testimony of the Spirit, that they witness themselves to be of God, and bring the evidence of their heavenly parentage along with them. And whereas they allow only extemporate Psalms immediately dictated to them by the Spirit, when I am convinced, that the gift of extemporate singing is so common to the Church that any man who is spiritually merry can use it; and when I am convinced that the use of Scripture Psalms is abolished, or prohibited, then I shall more regard their judgment. Certainly, as large as mine acquaintance hath been with men of this spirit, I never yet heard any of them sing a Psalm *ex tempore* that was better than David's, yea, or that was tolerable to a judicious hearer, and not rather a shame to himself and his opinion. But sweet experience will be a powerful argument, and will teach the sincere Christian to hold fast his exercise of this soul-raising duty.

Little do we know how we wrong ourselves, by shutting out of our prayers the praises of God, or allowing them so narrow a room as we usually do, while we are copious enough in our confessions and petitions. Reader, I entreat thee, remember this : let praises have a larger room in thy duties ; keep ready at hand matter to feed thy praise, as well as matter for confession and petition. To this end study the excellencies and goodness of the Lord, as frequently as thy own necessities and vileness ; study the mercies which thou hast received and which are promised, both their own proper worth, and their aggra-

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vating circumstances, as often as thou studieth the sins thou hast committed. Oh, let God's praise be much in your mouths, for in the mouths of the upright His praise is comely. Seven times a day did David praise Him. Yea, his praise was continually of Him. As he that offereth praise, glorifieth God, so doth he most rejoice and glad his own soul. Offer therefore the sacrifice of praise continually. In the midst of the Church let us sing His praise. Praise our God, for He is good; sing praises unto His name, for it is pleasant. Yea, let us rejoice and triumph in His praise.

Do you think that David had not a most heavenly spirit who was so much employed in this heavenly work? Doth it not sometime very much raise your hearts when you do but seriously read that divine song of Moses, and those heavenly iterated praises of David, having almost nothing sometime but praise in his mouth? How much more would it raise and refresh us to be skilled and accustomed in the work ourselves! I confess, to a man of a languishing body, where the heart doth faint, and the spirits are feeble, the cheerful praising of God is more difficult, because the body is the soul's instrument, and when it lies unstrung, or untuned, the music is likely to be accordingly but dull. Yet a spiritual cheerfulness there may be within, and the heart may praise, if not the voice. But where the body is strong, the spirits lively, the heart cheerful, and the voice at command, what advantage have such for this heavenly work! With what alacrity and vivacity may they sing forth praises! Oh, the madness of healthful youth that lay out this vigour of body and mind upon vain delights and fleshly lusts, which is so fit for the noblest work of man! And oh, the sinful folly of many of the saints, who drench their spirits in continual sadness, and waste their days in complaints and groans, and fill their bodies with

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wasting diseases, and so make themselves both in body and mind unfit for this sweet and heavenly work! That when they should join with the people of God in His praises, and delight their souls in singing to His name, they are questioning their worthiness, and studying their miseries, or raising scruples about the lawfulness of the duty; and so rob God of His praise, and themselves of their solace. But the greatest destroyer of our comfort in this duty is our sticking in the carnal delight thereof, and taking up in the tune and melody, and suffering the heart to be all the while idle, which must perform the chiefest part of the work, and which should make use of the melody for its reviving and exhilarating.

VIII

If thou wouldst have thy heart in heaven, keep thy soul still possessed with true believing thoughts of the exceeding, infinite love of God. Love is the attractive of love. No man's heart will be set upon him that hates him, were he never so excellent; nor much upon him that doth not much love him. There are few so vile, but will love those that love them, be they never so mean. No doubt it is the death of our heavenly life to have hard and doubtful thoughts of God; to conceive of Him as a hater of the creature (except only of obstinate rebels), and as one that had rather damn us than save us, and that is glad of an opportunity to do us a mischief, or at least hath no great good will to us; this is to put the blessed God into the similitude of Satan. And who then can set his heart and love upon Him? When in our vile unbelief and ignorance we have drawn the most ugly picture of God in our imaginations, then we complain that we cannot love Him and delight in Him. This is the case of many thousand

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Christians. Alas, that we should thus belie and blaspheme God, and blast our own joys, and depress our spirits! Love is the very essence of God.

The Scripture tells us that God is love; it telleth us that fury dwelleth not in Him; that He delighteth not in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he repent and live. Much more, hath He testified His love to His chosen, and His full resolution effectually to save them. Oh, if we could always think of God but as we do of a friend, as of one that doth unfeignedly love us, even more than we do ourselves, whose very heart is set upon us to do us good, and hath therefore provided us an everlasting dwelling with Himself, it would not then be so hard to have our hearts still with Him! Where we love most heartily, we shall think most sweetly and most freely; and nothing will quicken our love more than the belief of His love to us. Get therefore a truer conceit of the loving nature of God, and lay up all the experiences and discoveries of His love to thee, and then see if it will not further thy heavenly-mindedness.

I fear, most Christians think higher of the love of a hearty friend than of the love of God; and then what wonder if they love their friends better than God, and trust them more confidently than God, and had rather live with them than with God, when they take them for better and trustier friends than God, and of more merciful and compassionate nature!

IX

Another thing I would advise you to is this: Be a careful observer of the drawings of the Spirit, and fearful of quenching its motions, or resisting its workings. If ever thy soul get above this earth, and get acquainted with this living in heaven, the Spirit of God must be to thee as the chariot to Elijah; yea, the very living

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principle by which thou must move and ascend. Oh, then grieve not thy guide, quench not thy life, knock not off thy chariot wheels; if thou do, no wonder if thy soul be at a loss, and all stand still, or fall to the earth. You little think how much the life of all your graces, and the happiness of your souls doth depend upon your ready and cordial obedience to the Spirit. When the Spirit urgeth thee to secret prayer, and thou refusest obedience; when He forbids thee thy known transgressions, and yet thou wilt go on; when He telleth thee which is the way, and which not, and thou wilt not regard, no wonder if heaven and thy soul be strange.

If thou wilt not follow the Spirit while it would draw thee to Christ and to thy duty, how should it lead thee to heaven, and bring thy heart into the presence of God. Oh, what supernatural help, what bold access shall that soul find in its approaches to the Almighty, that is accustomed to a constant obeying of the Spirit! And how backward, how dull, and strange, and ashamed will he be to these addresses, who hath long used to break away from the Spirit that would have guided him! Even as stiff and unfit will they be for this spiritual motion as a dead man to a natural. I beseech thee, Christian reader, learn well this lesson, and try this course; let not the motions of thy body only, but also the very thoughts of thy heart be at the Spirit's beck. Dost thou not feel sometimes a strong impulsion to retire from the world, and draw near to God? Oh, do not thou disobey, but take the offer and hoist up sail while thou mayest have this blessed gale. When this wind blows strongest, thou goest fastest, either forward or backward. The more of this Spirit we resist, the deeper will it wound; and the more we obey, the speedier is our pace; as he goes heaviest that hath the wind in his face, and he easiest that hath it in his back.

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X

Lastly, I advise, as a further help to this heavenly work, that thou neglect not the due care for the health of thy body, and for the maintaining a vigorous cheerfulness in thy spirits. Nor yet over-pamper and please thy flesh. Learn how to carry thyself with prudence to thy body. It is a useful servant if thou give it its due, and but its due; it is a most devouring tyrant, if thou give it the mastery, or suffer it to have what it unreasonably desireth. And it is as a blunted knife, as a horse that is lame, as thy ox that is famished, if thou injuriously deny it what is necessary to its support. When we consider how frequently men offend on both extremes, and how few use their bodies aright, we cannot wonder if they be much hindered in their heavenly conversing. Most men are very slaves to their sensitive appetite, and can scarce deny anything to the flesh, which they can give it on easy rates, without much shame or loss or grief. The flesh thus used is as unfit to serve you as a wild colt to ride on. When such men should converse in heaven, the flesh will carry them to an ale-house, or to their sports, to their profits, or credit, or vain company; to wanton practices, or sights, or speeches, or thoughts. It will thrust a whore, or a pair of cards, or a good bargain into their minds, instead of God.

Look to this, specially, you that are young and healthful and lusty. As you love your souls, remember that in Rom. xiii. 14, which converted Austin, make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil its desires; and that Rom. viii. 4-8, 12-14. Some few others do much hinder their heavenly joy by over-rigorous denying the body its necessities, and so making it unable to serve them. But the most by surfeiting and excess do overthrow and

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disable it. You love to have your knife keen, and every instrument you use in order; when your horse goes lustily, how cheerfully do you travel! As much need hath the soul of a sound and cheerful body. If they who abuse their bodies and neglect their health did wrong the flesh only, the matter were small, but they wrong the soul also; as he that spoils the house, doth wrong the inhabitant. When the body is sick, and the spirits do languish, how heavily move we in these meditations and joys! Yet where God denieth this mercy, we may the better bear it because He oft occasioneth our benefit by the denial.

CHAPTER XIII

CONTAINING THE DESCRIPTION OF THE GREAT DUTY OF HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION

I

THOUGH I hope what is already spoken be not unuseful, and that it will not by the reader be cast aside, yet I must tell you that the main thing intended is yet behind, and that which I aimed at when I set upon this work. I have observed the maxim, that my principal end be last in execution, though it was first in my intention. All that I have said is but for the preparation to this; the doctrinal part is but to instruct you for this; the rest of the uses are but introductions to this; the motives I have laid down are but to make you willing for this; the hindrances mentioned were but so many blocks in the way to this; the general helps, which I last delivered, are but the necessary attendants of this; so that, reader, if thou neglect this that follows, thou dost frustrate the main end of my design, and makest me lose (as to thee) the chief of my labour. I once more entreat thee therefore, as thou art a man that makest conscience of a revealed duty, and that darest not wilfully resist the Spirit, as thou valuest the high delights of a saint, and the soul-ravishing exercise of heavenly contemplation, as all my former moving considerations seem reasonable to thee, and as thou art faithful to the peace and prosperity of thine own soul, that thou diligently study these direc-

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tions following, and that thou speedily and faithfully put them into practice. Practice is the end of all sound doctrine, and all right faith doth end in duty. I pray thee, therefore, resolve before thou readest any further, and promise here, as before the Lord, that if the following advice be wholesome to thy soul, thou wilt conscionably follow it, and seriously set thyself to the work, and that no laziness of spirit shall take thee off, nor lesser business interrupt thy course, but that thou wilt approve thyself a doer of this word, and not an idle hearer only. Is this thy promise, and wilt thou stand to it? Resolve, man, and then I shall be encouraged to give thee my advice.

If I spread not before thee a delicious feast, if I set thee not upon as gainful a trade, and put not into thy hand as delightful an employment as ever thou dealtest with in all thy life, then cast it away, and tell me, I have deceived thee. Only try it thoroughly and then judge. I say again, if in the faithful following of this prescribed course, thou dost not find an increase of all thy graces, and dost not grow beyond the stature of common Christians, and art not made more serviceable in thy place, and more precious in the eyes of all that are discerning; if thy soul enjoy not more fellowship with God, and thy life be not fuller of pleasure and solace, and thou have not comfort readier by thee at a dying hour when thou hast greatest need; then throw these directions back in my face, and exclaim against me as a deceiver for ever. Except God should leave thee uncomfortable for a little season, for the more glorious manifestation of His attributes and thy integrity, and single thee out, as He did Job, for an example and mirror of constancy and patience, which would be but a preparative for thy fuller comfort. Certainly God will not forsake this His own ordinance thus conscionably performed, but will be found

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of those that thus diligently seek Him. God hath, as it were, appointed to meet thee in this way; do not thou fail to give Him the meeting, and thou shalt find by experience that He will not fail.

II

The duty which I press upon thee so earnestly I shall now describe and open to thee, for I suppose by this time thou art ready to inquire "What is this so highly extolled work?" Why, it is the set and solemn acting of all the powers of the soul upon this most perfect object, rest, by meditation.

I will a little more fully explain the meaning of this description, that so the duty may lie plain before thee. The general title that I give this duty is, "Meditation." Not as it is precisely distinguished from cogitation, consideration, and contemplation, but as it is taken in the larger and usual sense for cogitation on things spiritual, and so comprehending consideration and contemplation.

That meditation is a duty of God's ordaining, not only in His written law but also in nature itself, I never met with the man that would deny, but that it is a duty constantly and conscionably practised even by the godly, so far as my acquaintance extends, I must with sorrow deny it. It is in word confessed to be a duty by all, but by the constant neglect denied by most: and I know not by what fatal customary security it comes to pass, that men that are very tender-conscienced towards most other duties, yet do as easily overslip this, as if they knew it not to be a duty at all. They that are presently troubled in mind if they omit but a sermon, a fast, a prayer in public or private, yet were never troubled that they have omitted meditation perhaps all their lifetime to this very day, though it be that duty by which all

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other duties are improved, and by which the soul digesteth truths, and draweth forth their strength for its nourishment and refreshing.

Certainly I think that as a man is but half an hour in chewing and taking into his stomach that meat which he must have seven or eight hours at least to digest, so a man may take into his understanding and memory more truth in one hour than he is able well to digest in many. A man may eat too much, but he cannot digest too well. Therefore God commanded Joshua that the book of the law depart not out of his mouth, but that he meditate therein day and night, that he may observe to do according to that which is written therein. As digestion is the turning of the raw food into chyle and blood, and spirits and flesh; so meditation, rightly managed, turneth the truths received and remembered into warm affection, raised resolution and holy and upright conversation.

Therefore what good those men are like to get by sermons or providences who are unacquainted with, and unaccustomed to this work of meditation, you may easily judge. And why so much preaching is lost among us, and professors can run from sermon to sermon, and are never weary of hearing or reading, and yet have such languishing starved souls, I know no truer nor greater cause than their ignorance, and unconscionable neglect of meditation. If a man have the lientery, that his meat pass from him as he took it in; or if he vomit it up as fast as he eats it, what strength and vigour of body and senses is this man like to have? Indeed he may well eat more than a sounder man, and the small abode that it makes in the stomach may refresh it at the present, and help to draw out a lingering, languishing, uncomfortable, unprofitable life; and so do our hearers that have this disease. Perhaps they hear more than otherwise they needed; and the clear discovery and lively delivery of the truth of God

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may warm and refresh them a little while they are hearing, and perhaps an hour or two after; and it may be, it may linger out their grace in a languishing, uncomfortable, unprofitable life. But if they did hear one hour and meditate seven, if they did as constantly digest their sermons as they hear them, and not take in one sermon before the former is well concocted, they would find another kind of benefit by sermons than the ordinary sort of the forwardest Christians do. I know many carnal persons do make this an argument against frequent preaching and hearing, who do it merely from a loathing of the Word, and know far less how to meditate than they know how understandingly to hear; only they pretend meditation against often hearing because that being a duty of the mind, you cannot so easily discern their omission of it. These are sick of the anorexia and apepsy, they have neither appetite nor digestion; the other of the boulimos, they have appetite, but no digestion.

III

But because "meditation" is a general word, and it is not all meditation that I here intend, I shall therefore lay thee down the difference whereby this meditation that I am urging thee to is discerned from all other sorts of meditation. And the difference is taken from the act, and from the object of it.

First, from the act, which I call the set and solemn acting of all the powers of the soul. I call it the "acting of them," for it is action that we are directing you in now, and not relations or dispositions; yet these also are necessarily presupposed. It must be a soul that is qualified for the work by the supernatural renewing grace of the Spirit, which must be able to perform

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this heavenly exercise. It is the work of the living and not of the dead. It is a work of all others most spiritual and sublime, and therefore not to be well performed by a heart that is merely carnal and terrene. Also they must necessarily have some relation to heaven, before they can familiarly there converse. I suppose them to be the sons of God, when I persuade them to love Him, and to be of the family of God, yea, the spouse of His Son, when I persuade them to press into His presence and to dwell with Him. I suppose them to be such as have title to rest, when I persuade them to rejoice in the meditations of rest. These, therefore, being all presupposed, are not the duties here intended and required, but it is the bringing of their sanctified dispositions into act, and the delightful reviewing of their high relations. Habits and powers are but to enable us to action; to say "I am able to do this, or I am disposed to it," doth neither please God nor advantage ourselves, except withal we really do it.

God doth not regenerate thy soul that it may be able to know Him, and not know Him; or that it may be able to believe, and yet not believe; or that it may be able to love Him, and yet not love Him; but he therefore makes thee able to know, to believe and love, that thou mayest indeed both know, believe, and love Him. What good doth that power which is not reduced into act? Therefore I am not now exhorting thee to be an able Christian, but to be an active Christian according to the degree of that ability which thou hast. As thy store of money or food or raiment, which thou lettest lie by thee and never usest, doth thee no good, but please thy fancy, or raise thee to an esteem in the eyes of others; so all thy gifts and powers and habits, which lie still in thy soul and

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are never acted, do profit or comfort thee little or nothing, but in satisfying thy fancy, and raising thee to the repute of an able man, so far as they are discernible to the standers-by.

IV

I call this meditation "the acting of the powers of the soul," meaning the soul as rational, to difference it from the cogitations of the soul as sensitive. The sensitive soul hath a kind of meditation by the common sense, the phantasy and estimation; the fleshly man mindeth the things of the flesh. If it were the work of the ear or the eye or the tongue or the hands, which I am setting you on, I doubt not but you would more readily take it up, but it is the work of the soul; for bodily exercise doth here profit but little. The soul hath its labour and its ease, its business and its idleness, its intention and remission, as well as the body; and diligent students are usually as sensible of the labour and weariness of their spirits and brain, as they are of that of the members of the body. This action of the soul is it I persuade thee to.

V

I call it the acting of "all the powers of the soul" to difference it from the common meditation of students, which is usually the mere employment of the brain. It is not a bare thinking that I mean, nor the mere use of invention or memory, but a business of a higher and more excellent nature. When truth is apprehended only as truth, this is but an unsavoury and loose apprehension, but when it is apprehended as good as well

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as true, this is a fast and delightful apprehending. As a man is not so prone to live according to the truth he knows, except it do deeply affect him, so neither doth his soul enjoy its sweetness, except speculation do pass to affection. The understanding is not the whole soul, and therefore cannot do the whole work. As God hath made several parts in man to perform their several offices for his nourishing and life, so hath he ordained the faculties of the soul to perform their several offices for his spiritual life; the stomach must chylify and prepare for the liver, the liver and spleen must sanguify and prepare for the heart and brain, and these must beget the vital and animal spirits, &c. So the understanding must take in truths, and prepare them for the will, and it must receive them, and commend them to the affections. The best digestion is in the bottom of the stomach; the affections are, as it were, the bottom of the soul, and therefore the best digestion is there.

While truth is but a speculation swimming in the brain, the soul hath not half received it, nor taken fast hold of it. Christ and heaven have various excellencies, and therefore God hath formed the soul with a power of divers ways of apprehending, that so we might be capable of enjoying those divers excellencies in Christ. Even as the creatures having their several uses, God hath given us several senses that so we might enjoy the delights of them all. What the better had we been for the pleasant odoriferous flowers and perfumes, if we had not possessed the sense of smelling; or what good would language or music have done us, if God had not given us the sense of hearing; or what delight should we have found in meats or drinks or sweetest things, if we had been deprived of the sense of tasting? Why so, what good could all the glory

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of heaven have done us ; or what pleasure should we have had even in the goodness and perfection of God Himself, if we had been without the affections of love and joy, whereby we are capable of being delighted in that goodness ; so also, what benefit of strength or sweetness canst thou possibly receive by thy meditations on eternity, while thou dost not exercise those affections which are the senses of the soul, by which it must receive this sweetness and strength ?

This is it that hath deceived Christians in this business, they have thought that meditation is nothing but the bare thinking on truths and the rolling of them in the understanding and memory, when every school-boy can do this, or persons that hate the things which they think on.

Therefore this is the great task in hand, and this is the work that I would set thee on ; to get these truths from thy head to thy heart, and that all the sermons which thou hast heard of heaven, and all the notions that thou hast conceived of this rest, may be turned into the blood and spirits of affection, and thou mayest feel them revive thee, and warm thee at the heart, and mayest so think of heaven as heaven should be thought on.

There are two accesses of contemplation, saith Bernard, one in intellection, the other in affection ; one in light, the other in heat ; one in acquisition, the other in devotion. If thou shouldst study of nothing but heaven while thou livest, and shouldst have thy thoughts at command to turn them hither on every occasion, and yet shouldst proceed no further than this ; this were not the meditation that I intend, nor would it much advantage or better thy soul. As it is thy whole soul that must possess God hereafter, so must the whole in a lower measure possess Him here. I have showed you, in

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the beginning of this treatise, how the soul must enjoy the Lord in glory, to wit, by knowing, by loving, and joying in Him. Why, the very same way must thou begin thy enjoyment here.

So much as thy understanding and affections are sincerely acted upon God, so much dost thou enjoy Him, and this is the happy work of this meditation. So that you see here is somewhat more to be done than barely to remember and think of heaven. As running and ringing and moving and such like labours, do not only stir a hand or a foot, but do strain and exercise the whole body, so doth meditation the whole soul.

As the affections of sinners are set on the world, and turned to idols, and fallen from God, as well as the understanding; so must the affections of men be reduced to God and taken up with Him, as well as the understanding; and as the whole was filled with sin before, so the whole must be filled with God now. As St. Paul saith of knowledge, and gifts, and faith to remove mountains, that if thou have all these without love, thou art but as "sounding brass, or as a tinkling cymbal." So I may say of the exercise of these; If in this work of meditation thou do exercise knowledge and gifts and faith of miracles, and not exercise love and joy, thou dost nothing; thou playest the child and not the man; the sinner's part and not the saint's; for so will sinners do also. If thy meditation tends to fill thy note-book with notions and good sayings concerning God, and not thy heart with longings after Him, and delight in Him, for aught I know, thy book is as much a Christian as thou. Mark but David's description of the blessed man; "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and therein doth he meditate day and night."

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VI

I call this meditation "set and solemn" to difference it from that which is occasional and cursory. As there is prayer which is solemn, when we set ourselves wholly to the duty, and prayer which is sudden and short, commonly called ejaculations, when a man in the midst of other business, doth send up some brief request to God; so also there is meditation solemn, when we apply ourselves only to that work, and there is meditation which is short and cursory, when in the midst of our business we have some good thoughts of God in our minds. And as solemn prayer is either, first, "set," when a Christian, observing it as a standing duty, doth resolutely practise it in a constant course; or secondly, occasional, when some unusual occasion doth put us upon it at a season extraordinary; so also meditation admits of the like distinction. Now, though I would persuade you to that meditation which is mixed with your common labours in your callings, and to that which special occasions do direct you to; yet these are not the main thing which I here intend; but that you would make it a constant standing duty, as you do by hearing, and praying, and reading the Scripture; and that you would solemnly set yourselves about it, and make it for that time your whole work, and intermix other matters no more with it than you would do with prayer, or other duties. Thus you see, as it is differenced by its act, what kind of meditation it is that we speak of; viz., it is the set and solemn acting of all the powers of the soul.

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VII

The second part of the difference is drawn from its object, which is “rest” or the most blessed estate of man in his everlasting enjoyment of God in heaven. Meditation hath a large field to walk in, and hath as many objects to work upon as there are matters, and lines, and words in the Scripture, as there are known creatures in the whole creation, and as there are particular discernible passages of providence in the government of the persons and actions through the world; but the meditation that I now direct you in is only of the end of all these, and of these as they refer to that end. It is not a walk from mountains to valleys, from sea to land, from kingdom to kingdom, from planet to planet, but it is a walk from mountains and valleys to the holy Mount Zion; from sea and land to the land of the living; from the kingdoms of this world, to the kingdom of saints; from earth to heaven; from time to eternity. It is a walking upon sun and moon and stars; it is a walk in the garden and paradise of God. It may seem far off, but spirits are quick, whether in the body or out of the body, their motion is swift: they are not so heavy or dull, as these earthly lumps; nor so slow of motion as these clods of flesh. I would not have you cast off your other meditations, but surely as heaven hath the pre-eminence in perfection, so should it have the pre-eminence also in our meditation. That which will make us most happy when we possess it will make us most joyful when we meditate upon it, especially when that meditation is a degree of possession, if it be such affecting meditation as I here describe.

You need not here be troubled with the fears of the world, lest studying so much on these high matters

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should craze your brains, and make you mad, unless you will go mad with delight and joy, and that of the purest and most solid kind. If I set you to meditate as much on sin and wrath, and to study nothing but judgment and damnation, then you might justly fear such an issue. But it is heaven and not hell that I would persuade you to walk in. It is joy and not sorrow that I persuade you to exercise. I would urge you to look upon no deformed object, but only upon the ravishing glory of saints, and the unspeakable excellencies of the God of glory, and the beams that stream from the face of His Son. Are these such saddening and maddening thoughts? Will it distract a man to think of his only happiness? Will it distract the miserable to think of mercy, or the captive or prisoner to foresee deliverance, or the poor to think of riches and honour approaching?

Neither do I persuade your thoughts to matters of great difficulty, or to study thorny and knotty controversies of heaven, or to search out things beyond your reach. If you should thus set your wit and invention upon the tenters you might be quickly distracted or distempered indeed. But it is your affections more than your wits and inventions that must be used in this heavenly employment we speak of. They are truths which are commonly known and professed, which your souls must draw forth and feed upon. The resurrection of the body and the life everlasting are articles of your creed, and not nicer controversies. Methinks it should be liker to make a man mad to think of living in a world of woe, to think of abiding in poverty and sickness, among the rage of wicked men, than to think of living with Christ in bliss. Methinks, if we be not mad already, it should sooner distract us to hear the tempests and roaring waves, to see the billows, and rocks, and sands, and gulfs, than to think of arriving

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safe at rest. But wisdom is justified of all her children. Knowledge hath no enemy but the ignorant. This heavenly course was never spoke against by any but those that never either knew it, or used it. I more fear the neglect of men that do approve it than the opposition or arguments of any against it. Truth loseth more by loose friends than by sharpest enemies.

CHAPTER XIV

OF CONSIDERATION, THE INSTRUMENT OF THIS WORK ; AND WHAT FORCE IT HATH TO MOVE THE SOUL

I

HAVING shewed thee how thou must set upon this work, I come now to direct thee in the work itself, and to shew thee the way which thou must take to perform it. All this has been but to set the instrument (thy heart) in tune ; and now we are come to the *music* itself. All this hath been but to get thee an appetite ; it follows now that thou approach unto the feast ; that thou sit down and take what is offered, and delight thy soul as with marrow and fatness. Whoever you are that are children of the kingdom, I have this message to you from the Lord, "Behold the dinner is prepared ; the oxen and fatlings are killed ; come, for all things are now ready." Heaven is before you, Christ is before you, the exceeding eternal weight of glory is before you ; come, therefore, and feed upon it. Do not make light of this invitation, nor put off your own mercies with excuses ; whatever thou art, rich or poor, though in alms-houses or hospitals, though in highways or hedges, my commission is, if possible, to compel you to come in. "And blessed is he that eateth bread in the kingdom of God." The manna lieth about your tents, walk forth into the wilderness, gather it up, take it home, and feed upon it. So that the remaining work is only to direct you how to use your

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hands and mouth to feed your stomach : I mean how to use your understandings for the warmings of your affections, and to fire your hearts by the help of your heads. And herein it will be necessary that I observe this method :—First. To shew you what instrument it is that you must work by. Secondly. Why, and how this way of working is like to succeed and attain its end. Thirdly. What powers of the soul should here be acted, and what are the particular affections to be excited, and what objective considerations are necessary thereto, and in what order you should proceed. Fourthly. By what acts you must advance to the height of the work. Fifthly. What advantages you must take, and what helps you must use for the facilitating your success. Sixthly. In what particulars you must look narrowly to your hearts through the whole. And I will be the briefer in all lest you should lose my meaning in a crowd of words, or your thoughts be carried from the work itself, by an over-long and tedious explication of it.

II

The great instrument that this work is done by is ratiocination, reasoning the case with yourselves, discourse of mind, cogitation, or thinking ; or, if you will, call it consideration. I here suppose you to know the things to be considered, and therefore shall wholly pass over that meditation of students which tends only to speculation or knowing. They are known truths that I persuade you to consider ; for the grossly ignorant that know not the doctrine of everlasting life are, for the present, incapable of this duty.

Man's soul, as it receives and retains the *ideas* or shapes of things, so hath it a power to choose out any of

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these deposited *ideas*, and draw them forth, and act upon them again and again, even as a sheep can fetch up his meat for rumination; otherwise nothing would affect us but while the sense is receiving it, and so we should be somewhat below the brutes. This is the power that here you must use. To this choice of *ideas* or subjects for your cogitations there must necessarily concur the act of the will, which indeed must go along in the whole work; for this must be a voluntary, not a forced cogitation. Some men do consider, whether they will or no, and are not able to turn away their own thoughts; so will God make the wicked consider of their sins when He shall set them all in order before them. And so shall the damned consider of heaven and of the excellency of Christ, whom they once despised, and of the eternal joys which they have foolishly lost. But this forced consideration is not that I mean, but that which thou dost willingly and purposely choose; but though the will be here requisite, yet still consideration is the instrument of the work.

III

Next, let us see what force consideration hath for the moving the affections, and for the powerful imprinting of things in the heart.

Why, first, consideration doth, as it were, open the door between the head and the heart; the understanding, having received truths, lays them up in the memory; now consideration is the conveyer of them from thence to the affections. There are few men of so weak understanding or memory, but they know and can remember that which would strangely work upon them, and make great alterations in their spirits, if they were not locked up in their brain, and if they could but convey them

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down to their heart; now this is the great work of consideration. Oh, what rare men would they be, who have strong heads and much learning and knowledge, if the obstructions between the head and the heart were but opened, and their affections did but correspond to their understanding! Why, if they would but bestow as much time and pains in studying the goodness and the evil of things, as they bestow in studying the truths and falsehood of enunciations, it were the readiest way to obtain this. He is usually the best scholar, who hath the quick, the clear, and the tenacious apprehension; but he is usually the best Christian, who hath the deepest, piercing, and affecting apprehension. He is the best scholar who hath the readiest passage from the ear to the brain; but he is the best Christian who hath the readiest passage from the brain to the heart. Now consideration is that on our parts that must open the passage, though the Spirit open as the principal cause; inconsiderate men are stupid and senseless.

IV

Matters of great weight which do nearly concern us are aptest to work most effectually upon the heart; now meditation draweth forth these working objects, and presents them to the affections in their worth and weight. The most delectable object doth not please him that sees it not, nor doth the joyfullest news affect him that never hears it; now consideration presents before us those objects that were as absent, and brings them to the eye and the ear of the soul. Are not Christ and glory, think you, affecting objects; would not they work wonders upon the soul if they were but clearly discovered; and strangely transport us, if our apprehensions

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were any whit answerable to their worth? Why, by consideration it is that they are presented to us; this is the prospective-glass of the Christian, by which he can see from earth to heaven.

V

As consideration draweth forth the weightiest objects so it presenteth them in the most affecting way, and presseth them home with enforcing arguments. Man is a rational creature, and apt to be moved in a reasoning way, especially when reasons are evident and strong; now consideration is a reasoning the case with a man's own heart, and what a multitude of reasons both clear and weighty, are always at hand for to work upon the heart. When a believer would reason his heart to this heavenly work, how many arguments do offer themselves; from God, from the Redeemer, from every one of the divine attributes, from our former estate, from our present estate, from promises, from seals, from earnest, from the evil we now suffer, from the good we partake of, from hell, from heaven; every thing doth offer itself to promote our joy. Now meditation is the hand to draw forth all these. As when you are weighing a thing in the balance, you lay on a little more, and a little more, till it weigh down; so if your affections do hang in a dull indifferency, why, due meditation will add reason after reason till the scales do turn; or, as when you are buying any thing of necessity for your use, you bid a little more, and a little more, till at last you come to the seller's price; so when meditation is persuading you to joy, it will first bring one reason, and then another, till it have silenced all your distrust and sorrows, and your cause to rejoice lies plain before you. If another man's reasons will work so powerfully with us, though we are uncertain

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whether his heart do concur with his speeches, and whether his intention be to inform us, or deceive us; how much more should our own reasons work with us, when we are acquainted with the right intentions of our own hearts? Nay, how much more rather should God's reasons work with us, which we are sure are neither fallacious in His intent, nor in themselves, seeing He did never yet deceive, nor was ever deceived! Why now meditation is but the reading over and repeating God's reasons to our hearts, and so disputing with ourselves in His arguments and terms; and is not this then likely to be a prevailing way? What reasons doth the prodigal plead with himself why he should return to his father's house? And as many and strong have we to plead with our affections, to persuade them to our Father's everlasting habitations. And by consideration it is that they must all be set a-work.

VI

Meditation putteth reason in its authority and pre-eminence. It helpeth to deliver it from its captivity to the senses, and setteth it again upon the throne of the soul. When reason is silent, it is usually subject; for when it is asleep, the senses domineer. Now consideration awakeneth our reason from its sleep, till it rouse up itself, as Samson, and break the bonds of sensuality wherewith it is fettered; and then as a giant refreshed with wine, it bears down the delusions of the flesh before it. What strength can the lion put forth when he is asleep? What is the king more than another man, when he is once deposed from his throne and authority? When men have no better judge than the flesh, or when the joys of heaven go no further than their fantasy, no wonder if they work but as common things. Sweet things to the eye, and beautiful things to the ear, will

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work no more than bitter and deformed. Everything worketh in its own place, and every sense hath its proper object; now it is spiritual reason excited by meditation, and not the fantasy or fleshly sense, which must savour and judge of these superior joys. Consideration exalteth the objects of faith, and disgraceth comparatively the objects of sense. The most inconsiderate men are the most sensual men. It is too easy and ordinary to sin against knowledge, but against sober, strong, continued consideration men do more seldom offend.

VII

Meditation also putteth reason into his strength. Reason is at the strongest when it is most in action; now meditation produceth reason into act. Before, it was as a standing water, which can move nothing else when itself moveth not, but now it is as the speedy stream which violently bears down all before it. Before, it was as the still and silent air, but now it is as the powerful motion of the wind, and overthrows the opposition of the flesh and the devil. Before, it was as the stones which lay still in the brook, but now when meditation doth set it a-work, it is as the stone out of David's sling, which smites the Goliath of our unbelief in the forehead. As wicked men continue wicked, not because they have not reason in the principle, but because they bring it not into act and use, so godly men are uncomfortable and sad, not because they have no causes to rejoice, nor because they have not reason to discern those causes, but because they let their reason and faith lie asleep, and do not labour to set them a-going, nor stir them up to action by this work of meditation. You know that our very dreams will deeply affect; what fears, what sorrows, what joy will they stir up! How much more then would serious meditation affect us!

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VIII

Meditation can continue this discursive employment. That may be accomplished by a weaker motion continued, which will not by a stronger at the first attempt. A plaster that is never so effectual to cure must yet have time to do its work, and not be taken off as soon as it is on; now meditation doth hold the plaster to the sore. It holdeth reason and faith to their work, and bloweth the fire till it thoroughly burn. To run a few steps will not get a man heat, but walking an hour together may; so though a sudden occasional thought of heaven will not raise our affections to any spiritual heat, yet meditation can continue our thoughts, and lengthen our walk till our hearts grow warm.

And thus you see what force meditation or consideration hath for the effecting of this great elevation of the soul, whereto I have told you it must be the instrument.

CHAPTER XV

BY WHAT ACTINGS OF THE SOUL TO PROCEED IN THIS WORK OF HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION

I

THE fourth part of this directory is to show you how, and by what acts you should advance on to the height of this work.

The first and main instrument of this work is that cogitation or consideration, which I before have opened, and which is to go along with us through the whole. But because mere cogitation, if it be not pressed home, will not so pierce and affect the heart, therefore we must here proceed to a second step, which is called soliloquy, which is nothing but a pleading the case with our own souls. As in preaching to others, the bare propounding and opening of truths and duties doth seldom find that success as the lively application; so it is also in meditating and propounding truths to ourselves. The moving pathetical pleadings with a sinner will make him deeply affected with a common truth which before, though he knew it, yet it never stirred him. What heart-meltings do we see under powerful application, when the naked explication did little move them. If anywhere there be a tender-hearted, affectionate people, it is likely under

¹ [The third part, omitted from this edition, directed what powers of the soul are to be acted; what affections excited; by what objective considerations, and in what order.]

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such a moving, close applying ministry. Why, thus must thou do in thy meditation to quicken thy own heart; enter into a serious debate with it; plead with it in the most moving and affecting language; urge it with the most weighty and powerful arguments. This soliloquy,¹ or self-conference hath been the practice of the holy men of God in all times. How doth David plead with his soul against its dejections, and argue it into an holy confidence and comfort: "Why art thou cast down O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Trust in God, for I shall yet give Him thanks, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." So in Psalm ciii.: "Bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord O my soul, and forget not all His benefits," &c. So doth he also end the psalm, and so doth he begin and end Psalm civ. So Psalm cxlvi. 1. So Psalm cxvi. 7, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." The like you may see in the meditations of holy men of later times, Austin, Bernard, &c. So that this is no new path which I persuade you to tread, but that which the saints have ever used in their meditation.

II

This soliloquy hath its several parts, and its due method wherein it should be managed. The parts of it are according to the several affections of the soul, and according to the several necessities thereof, according to the various arguments to be used, and according to the various ways of arguing. So that you see if I should attempt the full handling hereof, it would take up more

¹ Gen. xlix. 6; Judges v. 21; Ps. xvi. 2; Jer. iv. 19.

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time and room than I intend or can allow it. Only thus much in brief. As every good master and father of a family is a good preacher to his own family; so every good Christian is a good preacher to his own soul. Soliloquy is a preaching to one's self. Therefore the very same method which a minister should use in his preaching to others, should a Christian use in speaking to himself. Dost thou understand the best method for a public preacher? Dost thou know the right parts and order of a sermon; and which is the most effectual way of application? Why then I need to lay it open no further; thou understandest the method and parts of this soliloquy. Mark the most affecting heart-melting minister; observe his course both for matter and manner; set him as a pattern before thee for thy imitation; and the same way that he takes with the hearts of his people, do thou also take with thy own heart. Men are naturally addicted to imitation, especially of those whom they most affect and approve of. How near do some ministers come in their preaching to the imitation of others whom they usually hear, and much reverence and value; so mayest thou in this duty of preaching to thy heart. Art thou not ready sometime when thou hearest a minister, to remember divers things which thou thinkest might be moving and pertinent, and to wish that he would have mentioned and pressed them on the hearers? Why, remember those when thou art exhorting thyself, and press them on thy own heart as close as thou canst.

As therefore this is accounted the most familiar method in preaching, so it is for thee in meditating; first, explain to thyself the subject on which thou dost meditate, both the terms and the subject matter; study the difficulties, till the doctrine is clear. Secondly, then confirm thy faith in the belief of it by the most clear convincing Scripture-reasons. Thirdly, then apply it according to

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its nature, and thy necessity. As in the case we are upon, that there is a rest remaining for the people of God.

Consider of the useful consecretaries or conclusions, that thence arise, for the clearing and confirming of thy judgment, which is commonly called a use of information. Here thou mayest press them also by other confirming arguments, and adjoin the confutation of the contrary errors.

Proceed then to consider of the duties which do appear to be such from the doctrine in hand, which is commonly called a use of instruction, as also the reprehension of the contrary vices.

Then proceed to question and try thyself, how thou hast valued this glory of the saints; how thou hast loved it; and how thou hast laid out thyself to obtain it. This is called, a use of examination. Here thou mayest also make use of discovering signs, drawn from the nature, properties, effects, adjuncts, &c.

So far as this trial hath discovered thy neglect, and other sins against this rest, proceed to the reprehension and censuring of thyself. Chide thy heart for its omissions and commissions, and do it sharply till it feel the smart. As Peter preached reproof to his hearers till they were pricked to the heart and cried out, and as a father or master will chide the child till it begin to cry and be sensible of the fault; so do thou in chiding thy own heart. This is called a use of reproof. Here also it will be very necessary that thou bring forth all the aggravating circumstances of the sin, that thy heart may feel it in its weight and bitterness; and if thy heart do evade or deny the sin, convince it by producing the several discoveries.

So far as thou discoverest that thou hast been faithful in the duty, turn it to encouragement to thyself, and to thanks to God; where thou mayest consider of the several aggravations of the mercy of the Spirit's enabling thee thereto.

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So, as it respects thy duty for the future, consider how thou mayest improve this comfortable doctrine, which must be by strong and effectual persuasion with thy heart. First, by way of dehoration from the fore-mentioned sins. Secondly, by way of exhortation to the several duties. And these are either internal, or external. First, therefore, admonish thy heart of its own inward neglects and contempts, and then of the neglects and trespasses in thy practice against this blessed state of rest. Set home these several admonitions to the quick. Take thy heart as to the brink of the bottomless pit, force it to look in, threaten thyself with the threatenings of the Word; tell it of the torments that it draweth upon itself; tell it what joys it is madly rejecting; force it to promise thee to do so no more, and that not with a cold and heartless promise, but earnestly with most solemn asseverations and engagements. The next is, to drive on thy soul to those positive duties, which are required of thee in relation to this rest; as to the inward duties of thy heart, and there to be diligent in making sure of this rest; and to rejoice in the expectation of it. This is called a use of consolation. It is to be furthered by laying open the excellency of the state; and the certainty of it in itself; and our own interest in it; by clearing and proving all these, and confuting all saddening objections that may be brought against them. And so also for the provoking of love, of hope, and all other the affections in the way before more largely opened.

And, secondly, press on thy heart also to all outward duties that are to be performed in thy way to rest, whether in worship or in civil conversation, whether public or private, ordinary or extraordinary. This is commonly called a use of exhortation. Here bring in all quickening considerations, either those that may drive thee, or those that may draw; which work by fear, or

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which work by desire; these are commonly called motives. But above all be sure that thou follow them home. Ask thy heart what it can say against them; is there weight in them, or is there not? And then, what it can say against the duty; is it necessary; is it comfortable, or is it not? When thou hast silenced thy heart and brought it to a stand, then drive it further, and urge it to a promise; as suppose it were to the duty of meditation, which we are speaking of. Force thyself beyond these lazy purposes; resolve on the duty before thou stir; enter into a solemn covenant to be faithful; let not thy heart go, till it have without all halting and reservations flatly promised thee that it will fall to the work. Write down this promise, show it to thy heart the next time it loiters. Then study also the helps and means, the hindrances, and the directions that concern thy duty. And this is, in brief, the exercise of this soliloquy, or the preaching of heaven to thy own heart.

III

But perhaps thou wilt say: Every man cannot understand this method; this is for ministers and learned men; every man is not able to play the preacher. I answer thee: There is not that ability required to this as is to the work of public preaching; here thy thoughts may serve the turn, but there must be also the decent ornaments of language; here is needful but an honest understanding heart, but there must be a good pronunciation and a voluble tongue; here if thou miss of the method thou mayest make up that in one piece of application which thou hast neglected in another, but there thy failings are injurious to many, and a scandal and disgrace to the work of God. Thou knowest what will fit thy own heart, and what arguments take best with thy own affections, but thou art not so well acquainted with the

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dispositions of others. I answer further, every man is bound to be skilful in the Scriptures as well as ministers; kings and magistrates and the people also. Do you think, if you did as is there commanded,¹ write it upon thy heart, lay them up in thy soul, bind them upon thy hand, and between thine eyes, meditate on them day and night; I say, if you did thus, would you not quickly understand as much as this? Doth not God command thee to teach them diligently to thy children; and to talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up? And if thou must be skilled to teach thy children, much more to teach thyself; and if thou canst talk of them to others, why not also to thine own heart? Certainly our unskilfulness and disability, both in a methodical and lively teaching of our families and of ourselves, is for the most part merely through our own negligence; and a sin for which we have no excuse. You that learn the skill of your trades and sciences might learn this also, if you were but willing and painful.

And so I have done with this particular of soliloquy.

IV

Another step to arise by, in our contemplation, is, from this speaking to ourselves, to speak to God. Prayer is not such a stranger to this duty, but that ejaculatory requests may be intermixed or added, and that as a very part of the duty itself. How oft doth David intermix these in his psalms, sometime pleading with his soul, and sometime with God; and that in the same psalm, and in the next verses? The apostle bids us speak to ourselves in psalms and hymns; and no doubt we may also speak to God in them. This keeps the soul in mind

¹ Deut. vi. 6-8.

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of the Divine presence, it tends also exceedingly to quicken and raise it; so that as God is the highest object of our thoughts, so our viewing of Him, and our speaking to Him, and pleading with Him, doth more elevate the soul, and actuate the affections, than any other part of meditation can do. Men that are careless of their carriage and speeches among children and idiots will be sober and serious with princes or grave men; so, though while we do but plead the case with ourselves, we are careless and unaffected, yet when we turn our speech to God, it may strike us with awfulness; and the holiness and majesty of Him whom we speak to, may cause both the matter and words to pierce the deeper. "Isaac went forth to pray" (saith the former translation) "to meditate" (saith the latter); the Hebrew verb, saith Paræus *in loco*, signifieth both "*adorandum et meditandum*." The men of God, both former and later, who have left their meditations on record for our view, have thus intermixed soliloquy and prayer; sometime speaking to their own hearts, and sometime turning their speech to God. And though this may seem an indifferent thing, yet I conceive it very suitable and necessary, and that it is the highest step that we can advance to in the work.

But why then is it not as good to take up with prayer alone, and so save all this tedious work that you prescribe us?

They are several duties, and therefore must be performed both. Secondly, we have need of one as well as the other, and therefore shall wrong ourselves in the neglecting of either. Thirdly, the mixture, as in music, doth more affect; the one helps on, and puts life into the other. Fourthly, it is not the right order to begin at the top; therefore meditation and speaking to ourselves should go before prayer, or speaking to God. Want of this makes prayer with most to have little more than the

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name of prayer, and men to speak as lightly and as stupidly to the dreadful God, as if it were to one of their companions, and with far less reverence and affection than they would speak to an angel, if he should appear to them, yea, or to a judge or prince, if they were speaking for their lives; and consequently their success and answers are often like their prayers. Oh, speaking to the God of heaven in prayer is a weightier duty than most are aware of.

V

The ancients had a custom by apostrophes and *proso-popœias* to speak, as it were, to angels and saints departed, which, as it was used by them, I take to be lawful; but what they spoke in rhetorical figures were interpreted by the succeeding ages to be spoken in strict propriety; and doctrinal conclusions for praying to saints and angels were raised from their speeches; therefore I will omit that course, which is so little necessary, and so subject to scandalize the less judicious readers.

And so much for the fourth part of the direction, by what steps or acts we must advance to the height of this work. I should clear all this by some examples; but that I intend shall follow in the end.

CHAPTER XVI

SOME ADVANTAGES AND HELPS, FOR RAISING AND AFFECTING THE SOUL BY THIS MEDI- TATION

I

THE fifth part of this directory is to show you what advantages you should take, and what helps you should use, to make your meditations of heaven more quickening, and to make you taste the sweetness that is therein. For that is the main work that I drive at through all: that you may not stick in a bare thinking, but may have the lively sense of all upon your hearts. And this you will find to be the most difficult part of the work; and that it is easier barely to think of heaven a whole day, than to be lively and affectionate in those thoughts one quarter of an hour. Therefore let us yet a little further consider what may be done to make your thoughts of heaven to be piercing, affecting, raising thoughts.

Here, therefore, you must understand that the mere pure work of faith hath many disadvantages with us in comparison of the work of sense. Faith is imperfect, for we are renewed but in part; but sense hath its strength according to the strength of the flesh; faith goes against a world of resistance, but sense doth not. Faith is supernatural, and therefore prone to declining, and to languish both in the habit and exercise, further than it is still renewed and excited; but sense is natural, and therefore continueth while nature continueth. The

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object of faith is far off, we must go as far as heaven for our joys; but the object of sense is close at hand. It is no easy matter to rejoice at that which we never saw, nor ever knew the man that did see it; and this upon a mere promise which is written in the Bible; and that when we have nothing else to rejoice in, but all our sensible comforts do fail us. But to rejoice in that which we see and feel, in that which we have hold of, and possession already, this is not difficult. Well then, what should be done in this case? Why sure it will be a point of our spiritual prudence, and a singular help to the furthering of the work of faith, to call in our sense to its assistance. If we can make us friends of these usual enemies, and make them instruments of raising us to God, which are the usual means of drawing us from God, I think we shall perform a very excellent work. Sure it is both possible and lawful, yea, and necessary too, to do something in this kind; for God would not have given us either our senses themselves or their usual objects, if they might not have been serviceable to His own praise, and helps to raise us up to the apprehension of higher things.

And it is very considerable, how the Holy Ghost doth condescend in the phrase of Scripture, in bringing things down to the reach of sense; how He sets forth the excellencies of spiritual things in words that are borrowed from the objects of sense; how He describeth the glory of the New Jerusalem in expressions that might take even with flesh itself, as that the streets and buildings are pure gold, that the gates are pearl, that a throne doth stand in the midst of it, &c. That we shall eat and drink with Christ at His table in His kingdom; that He will drink with us the fruit of the vine new; that we shall shine as the sun in the firmament of our Father: these with most other descriptions of our glory

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are expressed as if it were to the very flesh and sense; which though they are all improper and figurative, yet doubtless if such expressions had not been best, and to us necessary, the Holy Ghost would not have so frequently used them. He that will speak to man's understanding must speak in man's language, and speak that which he is capable to conceive. And doubtless as the Spirit doth speak, so we must hear; if our necessity cause Him to condescend in His expressions, it must needs cause us to be low in our conceivings. Those conceivings and expressions which we have of spirits, and things merely spiritual, they are commonly but second notions without the first; but mere names that are put into our mouths, without any true conceivings of the things which they signify. Or our conceivings, which we express by those notions or terms, are merely negative; what things are not, rather than what they are; as when we mention "spirits" we mean they are not corporeal substances, but what they are, we cannot tell no more than we know what is Aristotle's "*Materia Prima*." It is one reason of Christ's assuming and continuing our nature with the Godhead, that we might know Him the better, when He is so much nearer to us; and might have more positive conceivings of Him, and so our minds might have familiarity with Him, who before was quite beyond their reach.

But what is my scope in all this? Is it that we might think heaven to be made of gold and pearl, or that we should picture Christ, as the papists do, in such a shape; or that we should think saints and angels do indeed eat and drink? No, not that we should take the Spirit's figurative expressions to be meant according to strict propriety; or have fleshly conceivings of spiritual things, so as to believe them to be such indeed; but thus to think, that to conceive or speak of them in strict pro-

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priety is utterly beyond our reach and capacity; and therefore, we must conceive of them as we are able; and that the Spirit would not have represented them in these notions to us, but that we have no better notions to apprehend them by; and therefore that we make use of these phrases of the Spirit to quicken our apprehensions and affections, but not to pervert them; and use these low notions as a glass, in which we must see the things themselves, though the representation be exceeding imperfect, till we come to an immediate and perfect sight; yet still concluding, that these phrases, though useful, are borrowed and improper. The like may be said of those expressions of God in Scripture, wherein He represents Himself in the imperfections of creatures, as anger, repenting, willing what shall not come to pass, &c. Though these be improper, drawn from the manner of men, yet there is somewhat in God which we can see no better yet than in this glass, and which we can no better conceive of than in such notions, or else the Holy Ghost would have given us better. I would the judicious reader would, on the by, well weigh also how much this conduceth to reconcile us and the Arminians in those ancient and like to be continuing controversies.

II

Go to, then; when thou settest thyself to meditate on the joys above, think on them boldly as Scripture hath expressed them; bring down thy conceivings to the reach of sense. Excellency without familiarity doth more amaze than delight us; both love and joy are promoted by familiar acquaintance. When we go about to think of God and glory in proper conceivings, without these spectacles we are lost, and have nothing to fix our thoughts upon. We set God and heaven so far from

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us that our thoughts are strange, and we look at them as things beyond our reach, and beyond our line, and are ready to say, that which is above is nothing to us. To conceive no more of God and glory, but that we cannot conceive them; and to apprehend no more, but that they are past our apprehension, will produce no more love but this, to acknowledge that they are so far above us that we cannot love them; and no more joy but this, that they are above our rejoicing. And therefore put Christ no further from you than He hath put Himself, lest the Divine Nature be again inaccessible. Think of Christ as in our own nature glorified; think of our fellow-saints as men there perfected; think of the city and state as the spirit hath expressed it, only with the caution and limitations before mentioned.

Suppose thou wert now beholding this city of God; and that thou hadst been companion with John in his survey of its glory; and hadst seen the thrones, the majesty, the heavenly hosts, the shining splendour which he saw. Draw as strong suppositions as may be from thy sense for the helping of thy affections. It is lawful to suppose we did see for the present, that which God hath in prophecies revealed, and which we must really see in more unspeakable brightness before long. Suppose therefore with thyself thou hadst been that apostle's fellow-traveller into the celestial kingdom, and that thou hadst seen all the saints in their white robes, with palms in their hands; suppose thou hadst heard those songs of Moses and of the Lamb; or didst even now hear them praising and glorifying the living God; if thou hadst seen these things indeed, in what a rapture wouldst thou have been! And the more seriously thou puttest this supposition to thyself, the more will the meditation elevate thy heart. I would not have thee, as the Papists, draw them in pictures, nor use mysterious significant

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ceremonies to represent them. This, as it is a course forbidden by God, so it would but seduce and draw down thy heart; but get the liveliest picture of them in thy mind that possibly thou canst; meditate of them, as if thou were all the while beholding them, and as if thou were even hearing the hallelujahs, while thou art thinking of them; till thou canst say, "Methinks I see a glimpse of the glory; methinks I hear the shouts of joy and praise; methinks I even stand by Abraham and David, Peter and Paul, and more of these triumphing souls! Methinks I even see the Son of God appearing in the clouds, and the world standing at His bar to receive their doom; methinks I even hear Him say, "Come ye blessed of My Father!" and even see them go rejoicing into the joy of their Lord! My very dreams of these things have deeply affected me; and should not these just suppositions affect me much more? What if I had seen with Paul those unutterable things, should I not have been exalted (and that perhaps above measure) as well as he? What if I had stood in the room of Stephen, and seen heaven opened and Christ sitting at the right hand of God? Surely that one sight was worth the suffering his storm of stones. Oh, that I might but see what he did see, though I also suffered what he did suffer! What if I had seen such a sight as Micaiah saw; "The Lord sitting upon His throne, and all the hosts of heaven standing on His right hand and on His left." Why, these men of God did see such things, and I shall shortly see far more than ever they saw, "till they were loosed from this flesh, as I must be." And thus you see how the familiar conceiving of the state of blessedness, as the Spirit hath in a condescending language expressed it, and our strong raising of suppositions from our bodily senses, will further our affections in this heavenly work.

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III

There is yet another way by which we may make our senses here serviceable to us, and that is, by comparing of the objects of sense with the objects of faith, and so forcing sense to afford us that *medium*, from whence we may conclude the transcendent worth of glory, by arguing from sensitive delights as from the less to the greater. And here for your further assistance, I shall furnish you with some of these comparative arguments.

And first, you must strongly argue with your hearts from the corrupt delights of sensual men. Think then with yourselves when you would be sensible of the joys above; Is it such a delight to a sinner to do wickedly, and will it not be delightful indeed then to live with God? Hath a very drunkard such delight in his cups and companions that the very fears of damnation will not make him forsake them? Hath the brutish whoremaster such delight in his whore that he will part with his credit, and estate, and salvation, rather than he will part with her? Sure then there are high delights with God! If the way to hell can afford such pleasure, what are the pleasures of the saints in heaven? If the covetous man hath so much pleasure in his wealth, and the ambitious man in power and titles of honour, what then have the saints in the everlasting treasures; and what pleasure do the heavenly honours afford, where we shall be set above principalities and powers, and be made the glorious spouse of Christ? What pleasure do the voluptuous find in their sensual courses; how closely will they follow their hunting and hawking and other recreations from morning to night? How delightfully will they sit at their cards and dice, hours and days and nights together! Oh, the delight that must needs then be in beholding the face of

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the living God, and in singing forth praises to Him and the Lamb, which must be our recreation when we come to our rest!

IV

Compare also the delights above with the lawful delights of moderated senses. Think with thyself; How sweet is food to my taste when I am hungry, especially, as Isaac said, that which my soul loveth, that which my temperature and appetite do incline to! What delight hath the taste in some pleasant fruit, in some well relished meats, and in divers junkets? Oh, what delight then must my soul needs have in feeding upon Christ the living bread, and in eating with Him at His table in His kingdom! Was a mess of pottage so sweet to Esau in his hunger, that he would buy them at so dear a rate as his birth-right? How highly then should I value this never-perishing food! How pleasant is drink in the extremity of thirst! The delight of it to a man in a fever or other drought can scarcely be expressed; it will make the strength of Samson revive. Oh, then how delightful will it be to my soul to drink of that fountain of living water, which whoso drinks shall thirst no more! So pleasant is wine, and so refreshing to the spirits, that it is said to make glad the heart of man; how pleasant then will that wine of the great marriage be, even that wine which our water was turned into, that best wine which will be kept till then! How delightful are pleasing odours to our smell! How delightful is perfect music to the ear! How delightful are beauteous sights to the eye, such as curious pictures, sumptuous, adorned, well-contrived buildings, handsome necessary rooms, walks, prospects, gardens stored with variety of beauteous and odoriferous flowers; or pleasant meadows which are natural gardens!

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Oh, then think every time thou seest or rememberest these, what a fragrant smell hath the precious ointment which is poured on the head of our glorified Saviour, and which must be poured on the heads of all His saints, which will fill all the room of heaven with its odour and perfume! How delightful is the music of the heavenly host! How pleasing will be those real beauties above, and how glorious the building not made with hands, and the house that God Himself doth dwell in, and the walks and prospects in the city of God, and the beauties and delights in the celestial paradise! Think seriously what these must needs be. The like may be said of the delight of the sense of feeling, which the philosopher saith, is the greatest of all the rest.

V

Compare also the delights above with the delights that are found in natural knowledge. This is far beyond the delights of sense; and the delights of heaven are further beyond it. Think then, can an Archimedes be so taken up with his mathematical invention that the threats of death cannot take him off, but he will die in the midst of these his natural contemplations; should I not much more be taken up with the delights of glory, and die with these contemplations fresh upon my soul; especially when my death will perfect my delights; but those of Archimedes die with him. What a pleasure is it to dive into the secrets of nature; to find out the mystery of arts and sciences, to have a clear understanding in logic, physics, metaphysics, music, astronomy, geometry, &c.! If we make but any new discovery in one of these, or see a little more than we saw before, what singular pleasure do we find therein! Why, think then what high delights there are in the knowledge of God and Christ His Son.

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If the face of human learning be so beautiful that sensual pleasures are to it but base and brutish, how beautiful then is the face of God! When we light on some choice and learned book, how are we taken with it; we could read and study it day and night; we can leave meat and drink and sleep to read it; what delights then are there at God's right hand, where we shall know in a moment all that is to be known!

VI

Compare also the delights above with the delights of morality, and of the natural affections. What delight had many sober heathens in the rules and practice of moral duties, so that they took him only for an honest man who did well through the love of virtue, and not only for fear of punishment; yea, so highly did they value this moral virtue that they thought the chief happiness of man consisted in it. Why, think then what excellence there will be in that rare perfection which we shall be raised to in heaven, and in that uncreated perfection of God which we shall behold! What sweetness is there in the exercise of natural love, whether to children, to parents, to yoke fellows, or to friends! The delight which a pair of special faithful friends do find in loving and enjoying one another is a most pleasing, sweet delight; it seemed to the philosophers to be above the delights of natural, of matrimonial friendship, and I think it seemed so to David himself; so he concludes his lamentation for him, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been unto me, thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." Yea, the soul of Jonathan did cleave to David. Even Christ Himself, as it seemeth, had some of this kind of love; for He had one disciple

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whom He especially loved, and who was wont to lean on His breast; why think then, if the delights of close and cordial friendship be so great, what delight shall we have in the friendship of the Most High, and in our mutual amity with Jesus Christ, and in the dearest love and comfort with the saints! Surely this will be a closer and stricter friendship than ever was betwixt any friends on earth; and these will be more lovely and desirable friends than any that ever the sun beheld. And both our affections to our Father and our Saviour, but especially His affection to us will be such as here we never knew. As spirits are so far more powerful than flesh that one angel can destroy an host, so also are their affections more strong and powerful. We shall then love a thousand times more strongly and sweetly than now we can; and as all the attributes and works of God are incomprehensible, so is the attribute and work of love. He will love us many thousand times more than we, even at the perfectest, are able to love Him. What joy then will there be in this mutual love?

VII

Compare also the excellencies of heaven with those glorious works of the creation which our eyes do now behold. What a deal of wisdom and power and goodness appeareth in and through them to a wise observer! What a deal of the majesty of the great Creator doth shine in the face of this fabric of the world! Surely His works are great and admirable, sought out of them that have pleasure therein; this makes the study of natural philosophy so pleasant, because the works of God are so excellent.¹ What rare workmanship is in

¹ Ps. xcii. 4, 5; Ps. cxi. 2; Ps. cxlv. 6-12; Ps. cxxxvi. 4, &c.; Job xxxvi. 24-26.

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the body of a man, yea, in the body of every beast, which makes the anatomical studies so delightful. What excellency in every plant we see, in the beauty of flowers, in the nature, diversity and use of herbs; in fruits, in roots, in minerals, and what not!

But especially if we look to the greater works; if we consider the whole body of this earth, and its creatures and inhabitants; the ocean of waters, with its motions and dimensions, the variation of the seasons, and of the face of the earth; the intercourse of spring and fall, of summer and winter; what wonderful excellency do these contain! Why, think then in thy meditations, if these things which are but servants to sinful man are yet so full of mysterious worth; what then is that place where God Himself doth dwell, and is prepared for the just who are perfected with Christ! When thou walkest forth in the evening look upon the stars, how they glisten, and in what numbers they bespangle the firmament; if in the daytime, look up to the glorious sun; view the wide expanded encompassing heavens, and say to thyself; What glory is in the least of yonder stars; what a vast, what a bright resplendent body hath yonder moon, and every planet? Oh, what an inconceivable glory hath the sun! Why, all this is nothing to the glory of heaven; yonder sun must there be laid aside as useless; for it would not be seen for the brightness of God. I shall live above all yonder glory, yonder is but darkness to the lustre of my Father's house; I shall be as glorious as that sun myself; yonder is but as the wall of the palace-yard; as the poet saith,

“If in heaven's outward courts such beauty be,
What is the glory which the saints do see?”

So think of the rest of the creatures. This whole earth is but my Father's footstool; this thunder is nothing

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to His dreadful voice; these winds are nothing to the breath of His mouth; so much wisdom and power as appeareth in all these, so much, and far much more greatness and goodness and loving delights shall I enjoy in the actual fruition of God. Surely, if the rain which rains, and the sun which shines, on the just and unjust be so wonderful; the sun then which must shine on none but saints and angels, must needs be wonderful and ravishing in glory.

VIII

Compare the things which thou shalt enjoy above with the excellency of those admirable works of providence which God doth exercise in the Church, and in the world. What glorious things hath the Lord wrought, and yet we shall see more glorious than these! Would it not be an astonishing sight, to see the sea stand as a wall on the right hand and on the left, and the dry land appear in the midst, and the people of Israel pass safely through, and Pharaoh and his people swallowed up? What if we should see but such a sight now! If we had seen the ten plagues of Egypt, or had seen the rock to gush forth streams, or had seen manna or quails rained down from heaven, or had seen the earth open, and swallow up the wicked, or had seen their armies slain with hailstones, with an angel, or by one another; would not all these have been wondrous, glorious sights? But we shall see far greater things than these.

And as our sights shall be more wonderful, so also they shall be more sweet: there shall be no blood nor wrath intermingled; we shall not then cry out as David, "Who can stand before this holy Lord God?" Would it not have been an astonishing sight to have seen the sun stand still in the firmament; or to have seen Ahaz's

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dial go ten degrees backward? Why, we shall see when there shall be no sun to shine at all; we shall behold forever a sun of more incomparable brightness. Were it not a brave life, if we might still live among wonders and miracles, and all for us, and not against us? If we could have drought or rain at our prayers, as Elias; or if we could call down fire from heaven to destroy our enemies; or raise the dead to life, as Elisha; or cure the diseased and speak strange languages, as the apostles; alas, these are nothing to the wonders which we shall see and possess with God, and all those wonders of goodness and love! We shall possess that pearl and power itself, through whose virtue all these works were done; we shall ourselves be the subjects of more wonderful mercies than any of these. Jonas was raised but from a three days' burial, from the belly of the whale in the deep ocean; but we shall be raised from many years' rottenness and dust, and that dust exalted to a sun-like glory, and that glory perpetuated to all eternity. What sayest thou, Christian, is not this the greatest of miracles or wonders? Surely, if we observe but common providences, the motions of the sun, the tides of the sea, the standing of the earth, the warming it, the watering it with rain as a garden, the keeping in order a wicked confused world, with multitudes the like; they are all very admirable. But then to think of the Zion of God, of the vision of the Divine Majesty, of the comely order of the heavenly host; what an admirable sight must that needs be! Oh, what rare and mighty works have we seen in Britain in four or five years; what changes; what subduing of enemies; what clear discoveries of an Almighty arm; what magnifying of weakness; what casting down of strength; what wonders wrought by most improbable means; what bringing to hell, and bringing back; what turning of tears and fears into

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safety and joy; such hearing of earnest prayers, as if God could have denied us nothing that we asked. All these were wonderful heart-raising works. But, oh, what are these to our full deliverance, to our final conquest, to our eternal triumph, and to that great day of great things.

IX

Compare also the mercies which thou shalt have above with those particular providences which thou hast enjoyed thyself, and those observable mercies which thou hast recorded through thy life. If thou be a Christian indeed, I know thou hast, if not in thy book yet certainly in thy heart, a great many precious favours upon record; the very remembrance and rehearsal of them is sweet; how much more sweet was the actual enjoyment! But all these are nothing to the mercies which are above. Look over the excellent mercies of thy youth and education, the mercies of thy riper years or age, the mercies of thy prosperity, and of thy adversity, the mercies of thy several places and relations; are they not excellent and innumerable? Canst not thou think on the several places thou hast lived in, and remember that they have each had their several mercies, the mercies of such a place, and such a place; and all of them very rich and engaging mercies? Oh, how sweet was it to thee, when God resolved thy last doubts, when He overcame and silenced thy fears and unbelief, when He prevented the inconveniences of thy life which thy own counsel would have cast thee into, when He eased thy pains, when He healed thy sickness, and raised thee up as from the very grave and death! When thou prayedst, and wept as Hezekiah and saidst, "My days are cut off, I shall go to the gates of the grave; I am deprived of the residue of my years;

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I said I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living, I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. Mine age is departed and removed from me as a shepherd's tent; I have cut off, like a weaver, my life; He will cut me off with pining sickness; from day to day wilt Thou make an end of me," &c. Yet did He in love to thy soul deliver it from the pit of corruption, and cast thy sins behind His back, and set thee among the living to praise Him as thou dost this day; that the fathers to the children might make known His truth; the Lord was ready to save thee, that thou mightest sing the songs of praise to Him in His house all the days of thy life.¹

I say, were not all these most precious mercies? Alas, these are but small things for thee in the eyes of God. He intendeth thee far greater things than these, even such as these are scarce a taste of. It was a choice mercy that God hath so notably answered thy prayers; and that thou hast been so oft and so evidently a prevailer with Him. But oh, think then, are all these so sweet and precious that my life would have been a perpetual misery without them? Hath His providence lifted me so high on earth, and His merciful kindness made me great? How sweet then will the glory of His presence be; and how high will His eternal love exalt me; and how great shall I be made in communion with His greatness? If my pilgrimage and my warfare have such mercies, what shall I find in my home and in my triumph! If God will communicate so much to me while I remain a sinner, what will He bestow when I am a perfect saint? If I have had so much in this strange country at such a distance from Him; what shall I have in heaven in His immediate presence, where I shall ever stand about His throne?

¹ Isaiah xxxviii. 10-20.

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X

Compare the comforts which thou shalt have above with those which thou hast here received in the ordinances. Hath not the written Word been to thee as an open fountain flowing with comforts day and night? When thou hast been in trouble, there thou hast met with refreshing; when thy faith hath staggered, it hath there been confirmed. What suitable Scriptures hath the Spirit set before thee? What seasonable promises have come into thy mind, so that thou mayest say with David; If Thy Word had not been my delight, I had perished in my trouble. Think then, if the Word be so full of consolations, what overflowing springs shall we find in God? If His letters are so comfortable, what are the words that flow from His blessed lips, and the beams that stream from His glorious face? If Luther would not take all the world for one leaf of the Bible, what would he take for the joys which it revealeth? If the promise be so sweet, what is the performance? If the testament of our Lord, and our charter for the kingdom, be so comfortable, what will be our possession of the kingdom itself?

Think further, what delights have I found also in this Word preached; when I have sat under a heavenly heart-searching teacher, how hath my heart been warmed within me; how hath he melted me, and turned my bowels. Methinks I have felt myself almost in heaven; methinks I could have been content to have sat and heard from morning to night, I could even have lived and died there. How oft have I gone to the congregation troubled in spirit, and returned home with quietness and delight! How oft have I gone doubting, concluding damnation against my own soul, and God hath sent me

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home with my doubts resolved, and satisfied me, and persuaded me of His love in Christ. How oft have I gone with darkness and doubtings in my judgment, and God hath opened to me such precious truths, and opened also my understanding to see them, that His light hath been exceeding comfortable to my soul. What cordials have I met with in my saddest afflictions; what preparatives to fortify me for the next encounter! Well then, if Moses's face do shine so gloriously, what glory is in the face of God! If the very feet of the messengers of these tidings of peace be beautiful, how beautiful is the face of the Prince of Peace! If the word in the mouth of a fellow-servant be so pleasant, what is the living Word Himself! If this treasure be so precious in earthen vessels, what is that treasure laid up in heaven! Think with thyself, if I had heard but such a divine prophet as Isaiah, or such a persuading moving prophet as Jeremiah, or such a worker of miracles as Elijah or Elisha, how delightful a hearing would this have been! If I had heard but Peter or John or Paul, I should rejoice in it as long as I lived; but what would I give that I had heard one sermon from the mouth of Christ Himself! Sure I should have felt the comfort of it in my very soul. Why, but alas, all this is nothing to what we shall have above. Oh, blessed are the eyes that see what there is seen, and the ears that hear the things that there are heard! There shall I hear Elias, Isaiah, Daniel, Peter, John, not preaching to an obstinate people in imprisonment, in persecutions and reproach, but triumphing in the praises of Him that hath advanced them. Austin was wont to wish these three wishes: first, that he might have seen Christ in the flesh; secondly, that he might have heard Paul preach; thirdly, that he might have seen Rome in its glory. Alas, these are small matters all to that which Austin now beholds. There we see not Christ in the

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form of a servant, but Christ in His kingdom, in majesty and glory; not Paul preach in weakness and contempt, but Paul with millions more rejoicing and triumphing; not persecuting Rome in a fading glory, but Jerusalem which is above in perfect and lasting glory.

So also think what a joy it is to have access and acceptance in prayer, that when anything aileth me I may go to God and open my case, and unbosom my soul to Him as to my most faithful friend; especially knowing His sufficiency and willingness to relieve me! Oh, but it will be a more surpassing unspeakable joy, when I shall receive all blessings without asking them; and when all my necessities and miseries are removed; and when God Himself will be the portion and inheritance of my soul.

What consolation also have we oft received in the Supper of the Lord? what a privilege is it to be admitted to sit at His table, to have His covenant sealed to me by the outward ordinance, and His special love sealed by His spirit to my heart! Why, but all the life and comfort of these is their declaring and assuring me of the comforts hereafter; their use is but darkly to signify and seal those higher mercies. When I shall indeed drink with Him the fruit of the vine renewed, it will then be a pleasant feast indeed. Oh, the difference between the last supper of Christ on earth, and the marriage supper of the Lamb at the great day! Here He is in an upper-room, accompanied with twelve poor selected men, feeding on no curious dainties but a paschal lamb with sour herbs, and a Judas at His table ready to betray Him; but then His room will be the glorious heavens; His attendants all the host of angels and saints; no Judas, nor unfurnished guest comes there; but the humble believers must sit down by Him, and the feast will be their mutual loving and rejoicing.

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Yet further think with thyself thus ; The communion of the saints on earth is a most delectable mercy ; what a pleasure is it to live with understanding and heavenly Christians ! Even David saith, they were all his delight ; oh, then what a delightful society shall I have above ! The communion of saints is there somewhat worth, where their understandings are fully cleared, and their affections so highly advanced. If I had seen but Job in his sores upon the dunghill, it would have been an excellent sight to see such a mirror of patience ; what will it be then to see him in glory, praising that power which did uphold and deliver him ! If I had heard but Paul and Silas singing in the stocks, it would have been a delightful hearing ; what will it be then to hear them sing praises in heaven ! If I had heard David sing praises on his lute and harp, it would have been a pleasing melody ; and that which drove the evil spirit from Saul would sure have driven away the dulness and sadness of my spirit, and have been to me as the music was to Elisha, that the Spirit of Christ in joy would have come upon me ; why, I shall shortly hear that sweet singer in the heavenly choir advancing the King of saints ; and will not that be a far more melodious hearing ? If I had spoke with Paul when he was new come down from the third heavens, and he might have revealed to me the things which he had seen, oh, what would I give for an hour's such conference ; how far would I go to hear such a narration ; why, I must shortly see those very things myself, yea, and far more than Paul was then capable of seeing, and yet shall I see no more than I shall possess. If I had but spoke one hour with Lazarus when he was risen from the dead, and heard him describe the things which he had seen in another world (if God would permit and enable him thereto) ; what a joyful discourse would that have been. How many thousand books may I read before I could know so much

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as he could have told me in that hour? If God would have suffered him to tell what he had seen, the Jews would have more thronged to hear him than they did to see him; oh, but this would have been nothing to the sight itself, and to the fruition of all that which Lazarus saw.

Once again, think with thyself, what a soul-raising employment is the praising of God, especially in consort with His affectionate saints! What if I had been in the place of those shepherds, and seen the angels, and heard the multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." What a glorious sight and hearing would this have been; but I shall see and hear more glorious things than this. If I had stood by Christ when He was thanking His Father, I should have thought mine ears even blessed with His voice; how much more when I shall hear Him pronounce me blessed. If there were such great joy at the bringing back of the ark,¹ and such great joy at the re-edifying the material temple,² what joy will there be in the New Jerusalem? Why, if I could but see the church here in unity and prosperity, and the undoubted order and discipline of Christ established, and His ordinances purely and powerfully administered, what an unspeakable joy to my soul it would be. If I could see the congregations provided with able teachers, and the people receiving and obeying the Gospel, and longing for reformation and for the government of Christ, oh, what a blessed place were England! If I could see our ignorance turned into knowledge, and error turned into soundness of understanding, and shallow professors into solid believers, and brethren living in amity and in the life of the Spirit, oh what a fortunate island were this! Alas, alas, what is all this to the reformation in heaven, and to the blessed condition which we must live in there.

¹ 2 Sam. vi. 15.

² Neh. xii. 27.

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There is another kind of change and glory than this! What great joy had the people and David himself to see them so willingly offer to the service of the Lord, and what an excellent psalm of praise doth David thereupon compose! When Solomon was anointed king in Jerusalem, the people rejoiced with so great joy that the earth rent at the sound of them; what a joyful shout will there be then at the appearing of the King of the Church. If when the foundations of the earth were fastened, and the corner-stone thereof was laid, the morning stars did sing together, and all the sons of God did shout for joy, why then when our glorious world is both founded and finished, and the corner-stone appeareth to be the top-stone also, and the holy city is adorned as the bride of the Lamb, O sirs, what a joyful shout will then be heard!

XI

Compare the joy which thou shalt have in heaven with that which the saints of God have found in the way to it, and in the foretastes of it. When thou seest a heavenly man rejoice, think what it is that so affects him. It is the property of fools to rejoice in toys, and to laugh at nothing; but the people of God are wiser than so, they know what it is that makes them glad. When did God ever reveal the least of Himself to any of His saints, but the joy of their hearts was answerable to the revelation! Paul was so lifted up with what he saw that he was in danger of being exalted above measure, and must have a prick in the flesh to keep him down; when Peter had seen but Christ in His transfiguration, which was but a small glimpse of His glory, and had seen Moses and Elias talking with Him, what a rapture and ecstasy is he cast into! "Master," saith he, "it is good for us to be here;

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let us here build three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias ; ” as if he should say, “ Oh, let us not go down again to yonder persecuting rabble ; let us not go down again to yonder drossy dirty world ; let us not return to our mean and suffering state ; is it not better that we stay here now we are here ; is not here better company, and sweeter pleasures ? ” But the text saith, “ He knew not what he said. ” When Moses had been talking with God in the Mount, it made his visage so shining and glorious that the people could not endure to behold it, but he was fain to put a veil upon it ; no wonder then if the face of God must be veiled till we are come to that state where we shall be more capable of beholding Him ; when the veil shall be taken away, and we all, beholding Him with open face, shall be turned into the same image from glory to glory. Alas, what is the back parts which Moses saw from the clefts of the rock, to that open face which we shall behold hereafter ? What is the revelation to John in Patmos, to this revelation which we shall have in heaven ? How short doth Paul’s vision come of the saint’s vision above with God ! How small a part of the glory which we must see was that which so transported Peter in the Mount !

I confess these were all extraordinary foretastes, but little to the full beatifical vision. When David foresaw the resurrection of Christ and of himself, and the pleasures which he should have for ever at God’s right hand, how doth it make him break forth and say, “ Therefore my heart was glad, and my glory rejoiceth, my flesh also shall rest in hope. ” Why, think then, if the foresight can raise such ravishing joy, what will the actual possession do ?

How oft have we read and heard of the dying saints who, when they had scarce strength and life enough to express them, have been as full of joy as their hearts

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could hold; and when their bodies have been under the extremities of their sickness, yea ready to feel the pangs of death, have yet had so much of heaven in their spirits that their joy hath far surpassed their sorrows. And if a spark of this fire be so glorious, and that in the midst of the sea of adversity, what then is that sun of glory itself? Oh, the joy that the martyrs of Christ have felt in the midst of the scorching flames! Sure they had life and sense as we, and were flesh and blood as well as we; therefore it must needs be some excellent thing that must so rejoice their souls while their bodies were burning. When Bilney can burn his finger in the candle, and Cranmer can burn off his unworthy right hand; when Bainham can call the Papists to see a miracle, and tell them that he feels no more pain than in a bed of down and that the fire was to him as a bed of roses; when Farrier can say, if I stir, believe not my doctrine; think then, reader, with thyself in thy meditations, sure it must be some wonderful foretasted glory that can do all this, that can make the flames of fire easy, and that can make the king of fears so welcome. Oh, what then must this glory itself needs be, when the very thoughts of it can bring Paul into such a strait that he desired to depart and to be with Christ, as best of all; when it can make men never think themselves well till they are dead; oh what a blessed rest is this! Shall Sanders so delightfully embrace the stake, and cry out, "welcome, cross," and shall not I more delightfully embrace my blessedness, and cry, "welcome, crown"? Shall blessed Bradford kiss the faggot, and shall not I then kiss the Son Himself? Shall the poor martyr rejoice that she might have her foot in the same hole of the stocks that Mr. Philpot's foot had been in before her, and shall not I rejoice that my soul shall live in the same place of glory where Christ and His apostles are gone before me? Shall fire and

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faggot, shall prisons and banishment, shall scorns and cruel torments be more welcome to others, than Christ and glory shall be to me? God forbid. What thanks did Lucius the martyr give them, that they would send him to Christ from his ill masters on earth! How desirously did Basil wish, when his persecutors threatened his death the next day, that they might not change their resolution lest he should miss of his expectation! What thanks then shall I give my Lord for removing me from this loathsome prison to His glory, and how loath should I be to be deprived thereof! When Luther thought he should die of an apoplexy, it comforted him and made him more willing, because the good Duke of Saxony and, before him, the apostle John had died of that disease; how much more should I be willing to pass the way that Christ hath passed, and come to the glory where Christ is gone? If Luther could thereupon say, "*Feri, Domine, feri clementer; ipse paratus sum, quia verbo tuo à peccatis absolutus*;" Strike Lord, strike gently, I am ready, because by Thy Word I am absolved from my sins;" how much more cheerfully should I cry; Come Lord, and advance me to this glory, and repose my weary soul in rest!

XII

Compare also the glory of the heavenly kingdom with the glory of the imperfect Church on earth, and with the glory of Christ in His state of humiliation, and you may easily conclude, if Christ under His Father's wrath, and Christ standing in the room of sinners, were so wonderful in excellencies, what then is Christ at the Father's right hand? And if the Church, under her sins and enemies, have so much beauty, something it will have at the marriage of the Lamb. How wonderful was the Son of

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God in the form of a servant! When He is born, the heavens must proclaim him by miracles; a new star must appear in the firmament, and fetch men from remote parts of the world to worship Him in a manger; the angels and heavenly host must declare His nativity, and solemnise it with praising and glorifying God. When He is but a child, He must dispute with the doctors and confute them. When He sets upon His office, His whole life is a wonder. Water turned into wine; thousands fed with five loaves and two fishes; multitudes following Him to see His miracles; the lepers cleansed, the sick healed, the lame restored, the blind receive their sight, the dead raised; if we had seen all this, should we not have thought it wonderful? The most desperate diseases cured with a touch, with a word speaking; the blind eyes with a little clay and spittle; the devils departing by legions at His command; the winds and the seas obeying His word; are not all these wonderful? Think, then, how wonderful is His celestial glory! If there be such cutting down of boughs, and spreading of garments, and crying Hosanna, to one that comes into Jerusalem riding on an ass; what will there be when He comes with His angels in His glory? If they that hear Him preach the Gospel of the kingdom have their hearts turned within them, that they return and say, "Never man spake like this Man:" then sure they that behold His majesty in His kingdom, will say, "There was never glory like this glory." If when His enemies come to apprehend Him the word of His mouth doth cast them all to the ground; if when He is dying the earth must tremble, the veil of the temple rend, the sun in the firmament must hide its face and deny its light to the sinful world, and the dead bodies of the saints arise, and the standers-by be forced to acknowledge, Verily this was the Son of God; oh, then what a day will it be, when He will once more shake,

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not the earth only, but the heavens also, and remove the things that are shaken; when this sun shall be taken out of the firmament, and be everlastingly darkened with the brightness of His glory; when the dead must all arise and stand before Him; and all shall acknowledge Him to be the Son of God, and every tongue confess Him to be Lord and King! If when He riseth again, the grave and death have lost their power, and the angels of heaven must roll away the stone, and astonish the watchmen till they are as dead men, and send the tidings to His dejected disciples; if the bolted doors cannot keep Him forth; if the sea be as firm ground for Him to walk on; if He can ascend to heaven in the sight of His disciples, and send the angels to forbid them gazing after Him; oh, what power and dominion and glory, then, is He now possessed of, and must we for ever possess with Him!

Yet think further. Are His very servants enabled to do such miracles when He is gone from them; can a few poor fishermen and tent-makers and the like mechanics cure the lame and blind and sick, open their prisons, destroy the disobedient, raise the dead, and astonish their adversaries? Oh, then what a world will that be where every one can do greater works than these, and shall be more highly honoured than by the doing of wonders! It were much to have the devils subject to us, but more to have our names written in the Book of Life. If the very preaching of the Gospel be accompanied with such power that it will pierce the heart, and discover its secrets, bring down the proud, and make the stony sinner tremble; if it can make men burn their books, sell their lands, bring in the price, and lay it down at the preacher's feet; if it can make the spirits of princes stoop, and the kings of the earth resign their crowns, and do their homage to Jesus Christ; if it can subdue kingdoms, and convert

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thousands, and turn the world thus upside down ; if the very mention of the judgment and life to come can make the judge on the bench to tremble, when the prisoner at the bar doth preach this doctrine ; oh, what then is the glory of the kingdom itself ! What an absolute dominion have Christ and His saints ! And if they have this power and honour in the day of their abasement, and in the time appointed for their suffering and disgrace, what then will they have in their full advancement ?

XIII

Compare thy mercies thou shalt have above with the mercies which Christ hath here bestowed on thy soul ; and the glorious change which thou shalt have at last with the gracious change which the Spirit hath wrought on thy heart. Compare the comforts of thy glorification with the comforts of thy sanctification. There is not the smallest grace in thee which is genuine and sincere, but is of greater worth than the riches of the Indies ; not a hearty desire and groan after Christ, but is more to be valued than the kingdoms of the world. A renewed nature is the very image of God ; Scripture calleth it by the name of Christ dwelling in us and the Spirit of God abiding in us. It is as a beam from the face of God Himself ; it is the seed of God remaining in us ; it is the only inherent beauty of the rational soul. It ennobleth man above all nobility. It fitteth him to understand his Maker's pleasure, to do His will, and to receive His glory. Why think then with thyself, if this grain of mustard seed be so precious, what is the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God ? If a spark of life which will but strive against corruptions, and flame out a few desires and groans, be so much worth ; how glorious

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then is the fountain and end of this life ! If we be said to be like God, and to bear His image, and to be holy as He is holy, when, alas ! we are pressed down with a body of sin ; sure we shall then be much liker God when we are perfectly holy and without blemish, and have no such thing as sin within us. Is the desire after heaven so precious a thing ; what then is the thing itself which is desired ? Is the love so excellent ; what then is the beloved ? Is our joy in foreseeing and believing so sweet ; what will be the joy in the full possessing ? Oh, the delight that a Christian hath in the lively exercise of some of these affections ! What good doth it to his very heart when he can feelingly say, he loves his Lord ; what sweetness is there in the very act of loving ; yea, even those troubling passions of sorrow and fear are yet delightful, when they are rightly exercised ; how glad is a poor Christian when he feeleth his heart begin to melt, and when the thoughts of sinful unkindness will dissolve it ! Even this sorrow doth yield him matter of joy. Oh, what will it then be when we shall do nothing but know God, and love, and rejoice, and praise, and all this in the highest perfection ?

What a comfort is it to my doubting soul when I have a little assurance of the sincerity of my graces, when upon examination I can but trace the Spirit in His sanctifying works ! How much more will it comfort me to find that this Spirit hath safely conducted me, and left me in the arms of Jesus Christ ! What a change was it that the Spirit made upon my soul when He first turned me from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God ! To be taken from that horrid state of nature, wherein myself and my actions were loathsome to God, and the sentence of death was passed upon me, and the Almighty took me for His utter enemy ; and to be presently numbered among His saints, and called His

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friend, His servant, His son ; and the sentence revoked which was gone forth ; oh, what a change was this ! To be taken from that state wherein I was born, and had lived delightfully so many years, and was rivetted in it by custom and engagements, when thousands of sins did lie upon my score ; and if I had so died, I had been damned for ever ; and to be justified from all these enormous crimes, and freed from all these fearful plagues, and put into the title of an heir of heaven, oh, what an astonishing change was this ! Why then consider, how much greater will that glorious change then be ; beyond expressing, beyond conceiving ! How oft, when I have thought of this change in my regeneration, have I cried out, “ O blessed day ; and blessed be the Lord that I ever saw it ; ” why how then shall I cry out in heaven, “ O blessed eternity ! and blessed be the Lord that brought me to it ! ” Was the mercy of my conversion so exceeding great that the angels of God did rejoice to see it ? Sure then the mercy of my salvation will be so great that the same angels will congratulate my felicity. This grace is but a spark that is raked up in the ashes : it is covered with flesh from the sight of the world, and covered with corruption sometime from mine own sight ; but my everlasting glory will not so be clouded, nor my light be under a bushel but upon a hill, even upon Sion, the mount of God.

XIV

Lastly, compare the joys which thou shalt have above with those foretastes of it which the Spirit hath given thee here. Judge of the lion by the paw, and of the ocean of joy by that drop which thou hast tasted. Thou hast here thy strongest refreshing comforts, but as that man in hell would have had the water to cool him ; a little

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upon the tip of the finger for thy tongue to taste; yet by this little thou mayest conjecture at the quality of the whole. Hath not God sometimes revealed Himself extraordinarily to thy soul, and let a drop of glory fall upon it? Hast thou not been ready to say, "Oh that it might be thus with my soul continually, and that I might always feel what I feel sometimes!" Didst thou never cry out, with the martyr, after thy long and doleful expectations, "He is come, He is come." Didst thou never in a lively sermon of heaven, nor in thy retired contemplations on that blessed state, perceive thy drooping spirits revive, and thy dejected heart to lift up the head, and the light of heaven to break forth to thy soul, as a morning star, or as the dawning of the day? Didst thou never perceive thy heart in these duties to be as the child that Elisha revived, to wax warm within thee, and to recover life? Why think with thyself, then, what is this earnest to the full inheritance? Alas, all this light that so amazeth and rejoiceth me, is but a candle lighted from heaven, to lead me thither through this world of darkness! If the light of a star in the night be such, or the little glimmering at the break of the day; what then is the light of the sun at noon-tide! If some godly men that we read of have been overwhelmed with joy, till they have cried out, "Hold, Lord, stay Thy hand; I can bear no more!" like weak eyes that cannot endure too great a light; oh, what will then be my joys in heaven, when as the object of my joy shall be the most glorious God, so my soul shall be made capable of seeing and enjoying Him; and though the light be ten thousand times greater than the sun's, yet my eyes shall be able for ever to behold it!

Or if thou be one that hast not felt yet these sweet foretastes (for every believer hath not felt them) then make use of the former delights which thou hast felt, that thou mayest the better discern what hereafter thou shalt feel.

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And thus I have done with the fifth part of this directory, and showed you on what grounds to advance your meditations, and how to get them to quicken your affections, by comparing the unseen delights of heaven with those smaller which you have seen and felt in the flesh.

CHAPTER XVII

HOW TO MANAGE AND WATCH OVER THE HEART THROUGH THE WHOLE WORK

I

THE sixth and last part of this directory is to guide you in the managing of your hearts through this work, and to show you wherein you have need to be exceeding watchful. I have showed before what must be done with your hearts in your preparations to the work, and in your setting upon it. I shall now show it you in respect of the time of performance. Our chief work will here be to discover to you the danger, and that will direct you to the fittest remedy. Let me therefore here acquaint you, beforehand, that whenever you set upon this heavenly employment you shall find your own hearts your greatest hinderer, and they will prove false to you in one or all of these four degrees. First, they will hold off, that you will hardly get them to the work; or else, secondly, they will betray you by their idleness in the work, pretending to do it, when they do it not; or thirdly, they will interrupt the work, by their frequent excursions and turning aside to every object; or fourthly, they will spoil the work by cutting it short, and be gone before you have done any good on it. Therefore I here forewarn you,^e as you value the invaluable comfort of the work, that you faithfully resist these four dangerous evils, or else all that I have said hitherto is in vain.

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Thou shalt find thy heart as backward to this, I think, as to any work in the world. Oh what excuses it will make, what evasions it will find out; and what delays and demurs, when it is never so much convinced! Either it will question whether it be a duty or not; or if it be so to others, yet whether it be so to thee. It will rake up anything like reason to plead against it; it will tell thee that this is a work for ministers that have nothing else to study on; or for cloisterers or persons that have more leisure than thou hast. If thou be a minister, it will tell thee this is the duty of the people: it is enough for thee to meditate for the instructing of them: and let them meditate on what they have heard, as if it were thy duty only to cook their meat, and serve it up, and perhaps a little to taste the sweetness, by licking thy fingers while thou art dressing it for others: but it is they only that must eat it, digest it, and live upon it. Indeed, the smell may a little refresh thee, but it must be digesting it that must maintain thy strength, and life.

If all this will not serve, thy heart will tell thee of other business thou hast, this company stays for thee, or that business must be done. It may be it will set thee upon some other duty, and so make one duty shut out another; for it had rather go to any duty than to this. Perhaps it will tell thee that other duties are greater, and therefore this must give place to them, because thou hast not time for both; public business is of more concernment; to study, to preach for the saving of souls must be preferred before these private contemplations; as if thou hadst not time to see to the saving thy own soul, for looking after others; or thy charity to others were so great, that it draws thee to neglect thy comfort and salvation; or, as if there were any better way to fit us to be useful to others than to make

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this experience of our doctrine ourselves. Certainly heaven, where is the Father of lights, is the best fire to light our candle at, and the best book for a preacher to study; and if they would be persuaded to study that more, the Church would be provided of more heavenly lights; and when their studies are divine, and their spirits divine, their preaching will then be also divine, and they may be fitly called “divines” indeed. Or if thy heart hath nothing to say against the work, then it will trifle away the time in delays, and promise this day and the next, but still keep off from the doing of the business. Or, lastly, if thou wilt not be so baffled with excuses or delays, thy heart will give thee a flat denial, and oppose its own unwillingness to thy reason; thou shalt find it come to the work as a bear to the stake, and draw back with all the strength it hath. I speak all this of the heart so far as it is carnal (which in too great a measure is in the best), for I know so far as the heart is spiritual it will judge this work the sweetest in the world.

Well then, what is to be done in the fore-mentioned case? Wilt thou do it, if I tell thee? Why, what wouldst thou do with a servant that were thus backward to his work, or to thy beast that should draw back when thou wouldst have him go forward? Wouldst thou not first persuade, and then chide, and then spur him, and force him on; and take no denial nor let him alone, till thou hadst got him closely to fall to his work? Wouldst thou not say, Why, what should I do with a servant that will not work; or with an ox or horse that will not travel or labour? Shall I keep them to look on? Wilt thou then faithfully deal thus with thy heart? If thou be not a lazy self-deluding hypocrite, say, “I will, by the help of God I will;” set upon thy heart roundly, persuade it to the work, take no denial; chide it for

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its backwardness; use violence with it; bring it to the service, willing, or not willing. Art thou master of thy flesh, or art thou a servant to it; hast thou no command of thy own thoughts? Cannot thy will choose the subject of thy meditations, especially when thy judgment thus directeth thy will? I am sure God once gave thee mastery over thy flesh, and some power to govern thy own thoughts. Hast thou lost thy authority? Art thou become a slave to thy depraved nature? Take up the authority again which God hath given thee, command thy heart; if it rebel, use violence with it; if thou be too weak, call in the Spirit of Christ to thine assistance; He is never backward to so good a work, nor will deny His help in so just a cause. God will be ready to help thee, if thou be not unwilling to help thyself. Say to Him, "Why Lord, thou gavest my reason the command of my thoughts and affections; the authority I have received over them is from Thee, and now behold they refuse to obey Thine authority. Thou commandest me to set them to the work of heavenly meditation, but they rebel and stubbornly refuse the duty; wilt Thou not assist me to execute that authority which Thou hast given me? Oh, send me down Thy Spirit and power that I may enforce Thy commands, and effectually compel them to obey Thy will."

And thus doing, thou shalt see thy heart will submit; its resistance will be brought under; and its backwardness will be turned to a yielding compliance.

II

When thou hast got thy heart to the work, beware lest it delude thee by a loitering formality; lest it say, "I go," and go not; lest it trifle out the time while it should be effectually meditating. Certainly, the heart is

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as likely to betray thee in this as in any one particular about the duty. When thou hast perhaps but an hour's time for thy meditation, the time will be spent before thy heart will be serious. This doing of duty as if we did it not, doth undo as many as the flat omission of it. To rub out the hour in a bare lazy thinking of heaven is but to lose that hour, and delude thyself. Well, what is to be done in this case? Why, do here also as you do by a loitering servant. Keep thine eye always upon thy heart; look not so much to the time it spendeth in the duty as to the quantity and quality of the work that is done. You can tell by his work, whether your servant hath been painful. Ask, what affections have yet been acted; how much am I yet got nearer heaven? Verily many a man's heart must be followed as close in this duty of meditation as a horse in a mill, or an ox at the plow, that will go no longer than you are calling or scourging; if you cease driving but a moment, the heart will stand still; and perhaps the best hearts have much of this temper.

I would not have thee of the judgment of those who think that while they are so backward it is better let it alone; and that if mere love will not bring them to the duty, but there must be all this violence used to compel it, that then the service is worse than the omission. These men understand not that this argument would certainly cashier all spiritual obedience, because the hearts of the best, being but partly sanctified, will still be resisting so far as they are carnal; nor do they understand well the corruptness of their own natures; nor that their sinful indisposedness will not baffle or suspend the commands of God; nor one sin excuse another; especially they little know the way of God to excite their affections, and that the love which should compel them must itself be first compelled, in the same sense as it is said to

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compel. Love, I know, is a most precious grace, and should have the chief interest in all our duties; but there be means appointed by God to procure this love; and shall I not use those means till I can use them from love? That were to neglect the means till I have the end. Must I not seek to procure love till I have it already? There are means also for the increasing of love where it is begun; and means for the exciting of it where it lieth dull; and must I not use these means till it is increased and excited? Why, this reasoning, considering duty that we are in hand with is the most singular means both to stir up thy love and to increase it; and therefore stay not from the duty, till thou feel thy love constrain thee (that were to stay from the fire till thou feel thyself warm), but fall upon the work till thou art constrained to love; and then love will constrain thee to further duty.

My jealousy, lest thou shouldst miscarry by these sottish opinions, hath made me more tedious in the opening of their error. Let nothing therefore hinder thee, while thou art upon the work, from plying thy heart with constant watchfulness and constraint, seeing thou hast such experience of its dulness and backwardness; let the spur be never out of its side; and whenever it slacks pace, be sure to give it a remembrance.

III

As thy heart will be loitering, so will it be diverting. It will be turning aside, like a careless servant, to talk with everyone that passes by. When there should be nothing in thy mind but the work in hand, it will be thinking of thy calling, or thinking of thy afflictions, or of every bird or tree or place thou seest, or of any imper-

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tinency, rather than of heaven. Thy heart in this also will be like the husbandman's ox or horse ; if he drive not, he will not go ; and if he guide not, he will not keep the furrow ; and it is as good stand still as go out of the way. Experience will tell thee thou wilt have much ado with thy heart in this point, to keep it one hour to the work without many extravagances and idle cogitations. The cure here is the same with that before ; to use watchfulness, and violence with your own imaginations, and as soon as they step out, to chide them in. Say to thy heart ; "What ! did I come hither to think of my business in the world ; to think of places and persons, of news or vanity, yea, or of anything but heaven, be it never so good. What ! canst thou not watch one hour ? Wouldst thou leave this world, and dwell in heaven with Christ for ever, and canst thou not leave it one hour out of thy thoughts, nor dwell with Christ in one hour's close meditation ?" Ask thy heart as Absalom did Hushai : "Is this thy love to thy friend ?" "Dost thou love Christ and the place of thy eternal, blessed abode, no more than so ?" When Pharaoh's butler dreamed that he pressed the ripe grapes into Pharaoh's cup, and delivered the cup into the king's hand, it was a happy dream, and signified his speedy access to the king's presence ; but the dream of the baker, that the birds did eat out of the basket on his head the baked meats prepared for Pharaoh, had an ill omen, and signified his hanging, and their eating of his flesh. So when the ripened grapes of heavenly meditation are pressed by thee into the cup of affection, and this put into the hands of Christ by delightful praises (if thou take me for skilful) this is the interpretation, that thou shalt shortly be taken from this prison where thou liest, and be set before Christ in the court of heaven, and there serve up to Him that cup of praise, but much fuller, and much sweeter, for ever and for ever. But if the ravenous fowls of wandering thoughts

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do devour the meditations intended for heaven, I will not say flatly, it signifies thy death ; but this I will say, that so far as these intrude, they will be the death of that service ; and if thou ordinarily admit them, that they devour the life and the joy of thy thoughts ; and if thou continue in such a way of duty to the end, it signifies the death of thy soul as well as of thy service. Drive away these birds of prey then from thy sacrifice, and strictly keep thy heart to the work thou art upon.

IV

Lastly, be sure also to look to thy heart in this, that it cut not off the work before the time, and run not away, through weariness, before it have leave. Thou shalt find it will be exceeding prone to this, like the ox that would unyoke, or the horse that would be unburdened, and perhaps cast off his burden, and run away. Thou mayest easily perceive this in other duties. If in secret thou set thyself to pray, is not thy heart urging thee still to cut it short ; dost thou not frequently find a motion to have done ; art thou not ready to be up as soon almost as thou art down on thy knees ? Why, so it will be also in thy contemplations of heaven. As fast as thou gettest up thy heart, it will be down again ; it will be weary of the work ; it will be minding thee of other business to be done, and stop thy heavenly walk before thou art well warm. Well, what is to be done in this case also ? Why the same authority and resolution, which brought it to the work, and observed it in the work, must also hold it to it till the work be done. Charge it in the name of God to stay. Do not so great a work by the halves ; say to it, Why foolish heart, if thou beg a while, and go away before thou hast thy alms, dost thou not lose thy labour ? If thou stop before thou art at the end of thy journey,

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is not every step of thy travel lost? Thou camest hither to fetch a walk to heaven, in hope to have a sight of the glory which thou must inherit; and wilt thou stop when thou art almost at the top of the hill, and turn again before thou hast taken thy survey? Thou camest hither in hope to speak with God, and wilt thou go before thou hast seen Him? Thou camest to bathe thyself in the streams of consolation, and to that end didst unclothe thyself of thy earthly thoughts; and wilt thou put a foot in, and so be gone? Thou camest to spy out the land of promise; oh, go not back without the bunch of grapes which thou mayest show to thy brethren, when thou comest home, for their confirmation and encouragement; till thou canst tell them by experience, "That it is a land flowing with wine and oil, with milk and honey." Let them see that thou hast tasted of the wine, by the gladness of thy heart; and that thou hast been anointed with the oil, by the cheerfulness of thy countenance; let them see that thou hast tasted of the milk of the land, by thy feeding and by thy mild and gentle disposition; and of the honey, by the sweetness of thy words and conversation. The views of heaven would heal thee of thy sinfulness and of thy sadness; but thou must hold on the plaster that it may have time to work. This heavenly fire would melt thy frozen heart, and refine it from the dross, and take away the earthly part, and leave the rest more spiritual and pure; but then thou must not be presently gone before it have time either to burn or warm.

Stick therefore to the work till something be done; till thy graces be acted, thy affections raised, and thy soul refreshed with the delights above. Or if thou canst not obtain these ends at once, ply it the closer the next time, and let it not go till thou feel the blessing. "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when He comes shall find so doing."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ABSTRACT OR SUM OF ALL, FOR THE USE OF THE WEAK

THUS I have, by the gracious assistance of the Spirit, directed you in this work of heavenly contemplation, and lined you out the best way that I know for your successful performance, and led you into the path where you may walk with God. But because I would bring it down to the capacity of the meanest, and help their memories who are apt to let slip the former particulars, and cannot well lay together the several branches of this method that they may reduce them to practice, I shall here contract the whole into a brief sum, and lay it all before you in a narrower compass. But still, reader, I wish thee to remember that it is the practice of a duty that I am directing thee in, and therefore if thou wilt not practise it, do not read it.

The sum is this. As thou makest conscience of praying daily, so do thou of the acting of thy graces in meditation, and more especially in meditating on the joys of heaven. To this end, set apart one hour or half-hour every day, wherein thou mayest lay aside all worldly thoughts, and with all possible seriousness and reverence, as if thou wert going to speak with God Himself, or to have a sight of Christ, or of that blessed place. So do thou withdraw thyself into some secret place, and set thyself wholly to the following work. If thou canst, take Isaac's time and place, who went forth into the field in the evening to

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meditate; but if thou be a servant or poor man that cannot have that leisure, take the fittest time and place that thou canst, though it be when thou art private about thy labours.

When thou settest to the work, look up toward heaven, let thine eye lead thee as near as it can. Remember that there is thine everlasting rest. Study its excellence, study its reality till thy unbelief be silenced and thy faith prevail. If thy judgment be not yet drawn to admiration, use those sensible helps and advantages which were even now laid down. Compare thy heavenly joys with the choicest on earth, and so rise up from sense to faith. If yet this mere consideration prevail not (which yet hath much force, as is before expressed), then fall a-pleading the case with thy heart; preach upon this text of heaven to thyself; convince, inform, confute, instruct, reprove, examine, admonish, encourage, and comfort thy own soul from this celestial doctrine; draw forth those several considerations of thy rest, on which thy several affections may work, especially that affection or grace which thou intendest to act. If it be love which thou wouldst act, show it the loveliness of heaven, and how suitable it is to thy condition. If it be desire, consider of thy absence from this lovely object. If it be hope, consider the possibility and probability of obtaining it. If it be courage, consider the singular assistance and encouragements which thou mayest receive from God; the weakness of the enemy, and the necessity of prevailing. If it be joy, consider of its excellent ravishing glory, of thy interest in it, and of its certainty, and the nearness of the time when thou must possess it.

Urge these considerations home to thy heart; whet them with all possible seriousness upon each affection. If thy heart draw back, force it to the work; if it loiter, spur it on; if it step aside, command it in again; if it

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would slip away, and leave the work, use thine authority. Keep it close to the business, till thou have obtained thine end. Stir not away, if it may be, till thy love do flame, till thy joy be raised, or till thy desire or other graces be lively acted. Call in assistance also from God, mix ejaculations with thy cogitations and soliloquies; till having seriously pleaded the case with thy heart, and reverently pleaded the case with God, thou hast pleaded thyself from a clod to a flame, from a forgetful sinner to a mindful lover, from a lover of the world to a thirster after God, from a fearful coward to a resolved Christian, from an unfruitful sadness to a joyful life. In a word, what will not be done one day, do it the next, till thou have pleaded thy heart from earth to heaven; from conversing below, to a walking with God; and till thou canst lay thy heart to rest, as in the bosom of Christ, in this meditation of thy full and everlasting rest.

And this is the sum of these precedent directions.

CHAPTER XIX

AN EXAMPLE OF THIS HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION, FOR THE HELP OF THE UNSKILFUL

“There remaineth a rest to the people of God.”

REST! How sweet a word is this to mine ears. Methinks the sound doth turn to substance and, having entered at the ear, doth possess my brain; and thence descendeth down to my very heart. Methinks I feel it stir and work, and that through all my parts and powers, but with a various work upon my various parts. To my wearied senses and languid spirits it seems a quieting powerful opiate; to my dulled powers it is spirit and life; to my dark eyes it is both eye-salve and a prospective; to my taste it is sweetness; to mine ears it is melody; to my hands and feet it is strength and nimbleness. Methinks I feel it digest as it proceeds, and increase my native heat and moisture, and lying as a reviving cordial at my heart, from thence doth send forth lively spirits, which beat through all the pulses of my soul.

Rest! Not as the stone that rests on the earth, nor as these clods of flesh shall rest in the grave. So our beasts must rest as well as we. Nor is it the satisfying of our fleshly lusts, nor such a rest as the carnal world desireth. No, no, we have another kind of rest than these. Rest we shall from all our labours, which were but the way and means to rest, but yet that is the smallest part. O blessed rest, where we shall never rest day or night, crying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of

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Sabbaths; when we shall rest from sin, but not from worship; from suffering and sorrow, but not from solace! O blessed day, when I shall rest with God, when I shall rest in the arms and bosom of my Lord, when I shall rest in knowing, loving, rejoicing, and praising, when my perfect soul and body together shall in these perfect actings perfectly enjoy the most perfect God, when God also, who is love itself, shall perfectly love me, yea, and rest in His love to me, as I shall rest in my love to Him; and rejoice over me with joy and singing, as I shall rejoice in Him!

How near is that most blessed joyful day. It comes apace; even He that comes will come, and will not tarry. Though my Lord do seem to delay His coming, yet a little while and He will be here. What is a few hundred years when they are over? How surely will His sign appear, and how suddenly will He seize upon the careless world, even as the lightning that shines from east to west in a moment. He who is gone hence will even so return; methinks I even hear the voice of His foregoers. Methinks I see Him coming in the clouds, with the attendance of His angels in majesty and in glory. O poor secure sinners, what will you now do, where will you hide yourselves, or what shall cover you. Mountains are gone, the earth and heavens that were are passed away, the devouring fire hath consumed all except yourselves, who must be the fuel for ever. Oh, that you could consume as soon as the earth, and melt away as did the heavens! Ah, these wishes are now but vain, the Lamb Himself would have been your friend, He would have loved you, and ruled you, and now have saved you; but you would not then, and now too late. Never cry, "Lord, Lord." Too late, too late, man. Why dost thou look about, can any save thee; whither dost thou run, can any hide thee? O

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wretch, thou hast brought thyself to this. Now, blessed saints that have believed and obeyed, this is the end of faith and patience; this is it for which you prayed and waited. Do you now repent your sufferings and sorrows, your self-denying and holy walking? Are your tears of repentance now bitter or sweet? Oh, see how the Judge doth smile upon you! There is love in His looks; the titles of Redeemer, Husband, Head are written in His amiable shining face. Hark, doth He not call you? He bids you stand here on His right hand; fear, not, for there He sets His sheep. O joyful sentence pronounced by that blessed mouth: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world!"

See how your Saviour takes you by the hand; go along you must, the door is open, the kingdom is His, and therefore yours; there is your place before His throne. The Father receiveth you as the spouse of His Son, He bids you welcome to the crown of glory. Never so unworthy, crowned you must be. This was the project of free redeeming grace, and this was the purpose of eternal love. O blessed grace! O blessed love! Oh, the frame that my soul will then be in! Oh, how love and joy will stir! But I cannot express it; I cannot conceive it.

This is that joy which was procured by sorrow. This is that crown which was procured by the cross. My Lord did weep, that now my tears might be wiped away; He did bleed, that I might now rejoice; He was forsaken, that I might not now be forsaken; He did then die, that I might now live. This weeping, wounded Lord shall I behold; this bleeding Saviour shall I see, and live in Him that died for me. O free mercy, that can exalt so vile a wretch, free to me, though dear to Christ! Free grace that hath chosen me, when thousands were forsaken, when my companions in sin must burn in hell, and I must here

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rejoice in rest, here must I live with all these saints ! O comfortable meeting of my old acquaintance, with whom I prayed and wept and suffered ; with whom I spoke of this day and place ! I see the grave could not contain you, the sea and earth must give up their dead. The same love hath redeemed and saved you also ; this is not like our cottages of clay, nor like our prisons or earthly dwellings. This voice of joy is not like our old complainings, our groans, our sighs, our impatient moans ; nor this melodious praise like our scorns and revilings, nor like the oaths and curses which we heard on earth. This body is not like the body we had, nor this soul like the soul we had, nor this life like the life that then we lived ; we have changed our place, we have changed our state, our clothes, our thoughts, our looks, our language ; we have changed our company for the greater part, and the rest of our company is changed itself. Before, a saint was weak and despised, so full of pride and peevishness and other sins, that we could scarce oftentimes discern their graces ; but now how glorious a thing is a saint ! Where is now their body of sin, which wearied themselves and those about them ?

Where are now our different judgments, our reproachful titles, our divided spirits, our exasperated passions, our strange looks, our uncharitable censures ? Now we are all of one judgment, of one name, of one heart, of one house, and of one glory. O sweet reconciliation ! O happy union, which makes us first to be one with Christ, and then to be one among ourselves ! Now our differences shall be dashed in our teeth no more, nor the Gospel reproached through our folly or scandal. O my soul, thou shalt never more lament the sufferings of the saints, never more condole the Church's ruins, never bewail thy suffering friends, nor lie wailing over their deathbeds or their graves. Thou shalt never suffer

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thy old temptations from Satan, the world, or thy own flesh. Thy body will no more be such a burden to thee, thy pains and sicknesses are all now cured, thou shalt be troubled with weakness and weariness no more, thy head is not now an aching head, nor thy heart now an aching heart, thy hunger and thirst and cold and sleep, thy labour and study are all gone.

Oh, what a mighty change is this, from the dunghill to the throne; from persecuting sinners to praising saints; from a body as vile as the carrion in the ditch to a body as bright as the sun in the firmament; from complainings under the displeasure of God to the perfect enjoyment of Him in love; from all my doubts and fears of my condition, to this possession which hath put me out of doubt; from all my fearful thoughts of death, to this most blessed joyful life! Oh, what a blessed change is this! Farewell sin and suffering for ever; farewell my hard and rocky heart; farewell my proud and unbelieving heart; farewell atheistical, idolatrous, worldly heart; farewell my sensual carnal heart; and now welcome most holy, heavenly nature; which as it must be employed in beholding the face of God, so is it full of God alone, and delighted in nothing else but Him.

Oh, who can question the love which he doth so sweetly taste, or doubt of that which with such joy he feeleth? Farewell repentance, confession, and supplication; farewell the most of hope and faith; and welcome love, and joy, and praise. I shall now have my harvest without ploughing or sowing; my wine without the labour of the vintage; my joy without a preacher or a promise, even all from the face of God Himself. That is the sight that is worth the seeing; that is the book that is worth the reading. Whatever mixture is in the streams, there is nothing but pure joy in the fountain. Here shall I be encircled with eternity, and come forth no more; here

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shall I live, and ever live, and praise my Lord, and ever, ever, ever praise Him. My face will not wrinkle, nor my hair be grey; but this mortal shall have put on immortality, and this corruptible, incorruption; and death shall be swallowed up in victory: "O death, where is now thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!" The date of my lease will no more expire, nor shall I trouble myself with thoughts of death; nor lose my joys through fear of losing them. When millions of ages are past, my glory is but beginning; and when millions more are past, it is no nearer ending. Every day is all noontide, and every month is May or harvest, and every year is there a jubilee, and every age is full manhood. And all this is one eternity. O blessed eternity! the glory of my glory, the perfection of my perfection!

Ah, drowsy, earthy, blockish heart! How coldly dost thou think of this reviving day. Dost thou sleep when thou thinkest of eternal rest? Art thou hanging earthward, when heaven is before thee? Hadst thou rather sit thee down in dirt and dung, than walk in the court of the palace of God? Dost thou now remember thy worldly business? Art thou looking back to the Sodom of thy lusts? Art thou thinking of thy delights and merry company? Wretched heart! Is it better to be there than above with God? Is the company better, are the pleasures greater? Come away, make no excuse, make no delay; God commands, and I command thee, come away; gird up thy loins; ascend the mount and look about thee with seriousness and with faith. Look thou not back upon the way of the wilderness, except it be when thine eyes are dazzled with the glory, or when thou wouldst compare the kingdom with that howling desert, that thou mayest more sensibly perceive the mighty difference. Fix thine eye upon the sun itself, and look not down to earth as long as thou art able to

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behold it; except it be to discern more easily the brightness of the one by the darkness of the other. Yonder, far above yonder, is thy Father's glory, yonder must thou dwell when thou leavest this earth, yonder must thou remove, O my soul, when thou departest from this body; and when the power of thy Lord hath raised it again, and joined thee to it, yonder must thou live with God for ever. There is the glorious New Jerusalem, the gates of pearl, the foundations of pearl, the streets and pavements of transparent gold. Seest thou that sun which lighteth all this world? Why, it must be taken down as useless there, or the glory of heaven will darken it, and put it out; even thyself shall be as bright as yonder shining sun. God will be the sun, and Christ the light, and in His light shalt thou have light.

What thinkest thou, O my soul, of this most blessed state? What! Dost thou stagger at the promise of God through unbelief, though thou say nothing, or profess belief. Yet thou speakest so coldly and so customarily that I much suspect thee; I know thy infidelity is thy natural vice. Didst thou believe indeed, thou wouldst be more affected with it. Why, hast thou not it under the hand and seal and oath of God? Can God lie, or He that is the truth itself, be false? Foolish wretch! What need hath God to flatter thee, or deceive thee? Why should He promise thee more than He will perform? Art thou not His creature, a little crumb of dust, a scrawling worm, ten thousand times more below Him than this fly or worm is below thee? Wouldst thou flatter a flea, or a worm? What need hast thou of them? If they do not please thee, thou wilt crush them dead, and never accuse thyself of cruelty. Why yet they are thy fellow-creatures, made of as good metal as thyself, and thou hast no authority over them, but what thou hast received. How much less need hath God of thee, or

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why should He care, if thou perish in thy folly? Cannot He govern thee without either flattery or falsehood? Cannot He easily make thee obey His will, and as easily make thee suffer for thy disobedience?

Wretched unbelieving heart! Tell a fool, or tell a tyrant, or tell some false and flattering man, of drawing their subjects by false promises, and procuring obedience by deceitful means; but do thou not dare to charge the Wise, Almighty, Faithful God with this. Above all men it beseems not thee to doubt, either of this Scripture being His infallible Word, or of the performance of this Word to thyself. Hath not argument convinced thee? May not thine own experience utterly silence thee? How oft hath this Scripture been verified for thy good; how many of the promises have been performed to thee? Hath it not quickened thee, and converted thee? Hast thou not felt in it something more than human? Would God perform another's promise, or would He so powerfully concur with a feigned word? If thou hadst seen the miracles that Christ and His apostles wrought, thou wouldst never sure have questioned the truth of their doctrine. Why, they delivered it down by such undoubted testimony that it may be called Divine as well as human. Nay, hast thou not seen its prophecies fulfilled; hast thou not lived in an age wherein such wonders have been wrought that thou hast now no cloak for thy unbelief; hast thou not seen the course of nature changed, and works beyond the power of nature wrought; and all this in the fulfilling of the Scripture. Hast thou so soon forgotten since nature failed me, and strength failed me, and blood, and spirits, and flesh, and friends, and all means did utterly fail? And how art and reason had sentenced me for dead, and yet how God revoked the sentence, and at the request of praying, believing saints, did turn thee to the promise which He verified to thee! And

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canst thou yet question the truth of this Scripture? Hast thou seen so much to confirm thy faith, in the great actions of seven years past, and canst thou yet doubt? Thou hast seen signs and wonders, and art thou yet so unbelieving? O wretched heart, hath God made thee a promise of rest, and wilt thou come short of it, and shut out thyself through unbelief? Thine eyes may fail thee, thy ears deceive thee, and all thy senses prove delusions, sooner than a promise of God can delude thee. Thou mayest be surer of that which is written in the Word than if thou see it with thine eyes, or feel it with thy hands. Art thou sure thou livest, or sure that this is earth which thou standest on? Art thou sure thine eyes do see the sun? As sure is all the glory to the saints, as sure shall I be higher than yonder stars, and live for ever in the holy city, and joyfully sound forth the praise of my Redeemer, if I be not shut out by this evil heart of unbelief causing me to depart from the living God.

And is this rest so sweet, and so sure? Oh, then, what means the careless world. Do they know what it is they so neglect; did they ever hear of it; or are they yet asleep; or are they dead? Do they know for certain that the crown is before them, while they thus sit still, or follow trifles? Undoubtedly they are quite beside themselves, to mind so much their provision in the way, and strive and care and labour for trifles, when they are hastening so fast to another world, and their eternal happiness lies at stake. Were there left one spark of wit or reason, they would never sell their rest for toil, or sell their glory for worldly vanities, nor venture heaven for the pleasure of a sin. Ah, poor men; that you would once consider what you hazard, and then you would scorn these tempting baits! Oh, blessed for ever be that love that hath rescued me from this mad bewitching darkness!

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Draw nearer yet then, O my soul; bring forth thy strongest burning love; here is matter for it to work upon; here is something truly worth thy loving. Oh, see what beauty presents itself; is it not exceeding lovely? Is not all the beauty in the world contracted here? Is not all other beauty deformity to it? Dost thou need to be persuaded now to love? Here is a feast for thine eyes; a feast for all the powers of thy soul; dost thou need to be entreated to feed upon it? Canst thou love a little shining earth; canst thou love a walking piece of clay; and canst thou not love that God, that Christ, that glory which is so truly and immeasurably lovely? Thou canst love thy friend because he loves thee; and is the love of thy friend like the love of Christ? Their weeping or bleeding for thee doth not ease thee, nor stay the course of thy tears or blood; but the tears and blood that fell from thy Lord have all a sovereign healing virtue, and are waters of life and balsam to thy faintings and thy sores. O my soul, if love deserve and should procure love, what incomprehensible love is here before thee! Pour out all the store of thy affections here; and all is too little. Oh, that it were more; oh, that it were many thousand times more! Let Him be first served, that served thee first; let Him have the first-born, and strength of thy love, who parted with strength and life in love to thee; if thou hast any to spare when He hath His part, let it be imparted then to standers-by. See what a sea of love is here before thee; cast thyself in, and swim with the arms of thy love in this ocean of His love; fear not lest thou shouldst be drowned or consumed in it. Though it seem as the scalding furnace of lead, yet thou wilt find it but mollifying oil: though it seem a furnace of fire, and the hottest that was ever kindled upon earth, yet it is the fire of love and not of wrath, a fire most

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effectual to extinguish fire; never intended to consume, but to glorify thee. Venture into it, then, in thy believing meditations, and walk in these flames with the Son of God. When thou art once in, thou wilt be sorry to come forth again. O my soul, what wantest thou here to provoke thy love? Dost thou love for excellency? Why, thou seest nothing below but baseness, except as they relate to thy enjoyments above. Yonder is the Goshen, the region of light; this is a land of palpable darkness. Yonder twinkling stars, that shining moon, the radiant sun, are all but as the lanterns hanged out at thy Father's house, to light thee while thou walkest in the dark streets of the earth; but little dost thou know (ah, little indeed) the glory and blessed mirth that is within! Dost thou love for suitableness? Why, what person more suitable than Christ? His Godhead, His manhood, His fulness, His freeness, His willingness, His constancy do all proclaim Him thy most suitable friend. What state more suitable to thy misery than that of mercy; or to thy sinfulness and baseness than that of honour and perfection? What place more suitable to thee than heaven? Thou hast had a sufficient trial of this world; dost thou find it agree with thy nature or desires? Are these common abominations, these heavy sufferings, these unsatisfying vanities suitable to thee? Or dost thou love for interest and near relation? Why, where hast thou better interest than in heaven; or where hast thou nearer relation than there? Dost thou love for acquaintance and familiarity? Why, though thine eyes have never seen thy Lord, yet He is never the further from thee. If thy son were blind, yet he would love thee his father, though he never saw thee; thou hast heard the voice of Christ to thy very heart, thou hast received His benefits, thou hast lived in His bosom, and art thou not yet acquainted with Him? It is He that

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brought thee seasonably and safely into the world; it is He that nursed thee up in thy tender infancy, and helped thee when thou couldst not help thyself; He taught thee to go, to speak, to read, to understand; He taught thee to know thyself and Him. He opened thee that first window whereby thou sawest into heaven. Hast thou forgotten since thy heart was careless, and He did quicken it; and hard and stubborn, and He did soften it, and made it yield; when it was at peace, and He did trouble it; and whole, till He did break it; and broken, till He did heal it again! Hast thou forgotten the time, nay the many, very many times when He found thee in secret all in tears; when He heard thy dolorous sighs and groans, and left all to come and comfort thee; when He came in upon thee, and took thee up, as it were in His arms, and asked thee: "Poor soul, what doth ail thee; dost thou weep, when I have wept so much? Be of good cheer; thy wounds are saving, and not deadly. It is I that have made them, who mean thee no hurt: though I let out thy blood, I will not let out thy life."

Oh, methinks I remember yet His voice, and feel those embracing arms that took me up; how gently did He handle me; how carefully did He dress my wounds and bind them up! Methinks I hear Him still saying to me: "Poor sinner, though thou hast dealt unkindly with me, and cast me off, yet will not I do so by thee; though thou hast set light by me and all my mercies, yet both I and all are thine. What wouldst thou have, that I can give thee; and what dost thou want that I cannot give thee? If anything I have will please thee, thou shalt have it; if anything in heaven or earth will make thee happy, why it is all thine own. Wouldst thou have pardon? Thou shalt have it; I freely forgive thee all the debt. Wouldst thou have grace and peace? Thou

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shalt have them both. Wouldst thou have myself? Why, behold I am thine, thy friend, thy Lord, thy brother, thy husband, and thy head. Wouldst thou have the Father? Why, I will bring thee to Him; and thou shalt have Him in and by me." These were my Lord's reviving words; these were the melting, healing, raising, quickening passages of love.

After all this, when I was doubtful of His love; methinks I yet remember His overcoming and convincing arguments.—“Why, sinner, have I done so much to testify my love, and yet dost thou doubt? Have I made thy believing it the condition of enjoying it, and yet dost thou doubt? Have I offered thee myself and love so long, and yet dost thou question my willingness to be thine? Why, what could I have done more than I have done? At what dearer rate should I tell thee that I love thee? Read yet the story of my bitter passion, wilt thou not believe that it proceeded from love? Did I ever give thee cause to be so jealous of me, or to think so hardly of me as thou dost? Have I made myself in the Gospel a lion to thine enemies, and a lamb to thee; and dost thou so overlook my lamb-like nature? Have I set mine arms and heart there open to thee, and wilt thou not believe but they are shut? Why, if I had been willing to let thee perish, I could have done it at a cheaper rate; what need I then have done and suffered so much; what need I follow thee with so long patience and entreating? What dost thou tell me of thy wants? Have I not enough for me and thee? And why dost thou foolishly tell me of thy unworthiness and thy sin? I had not died, if man had not sinned; if thou wert not a sinner thou wert not for me; if thou wert worthy thyself what shouldst thou do with my worthiness? Did I ever invite the worthy and the righteous or did I ever save or justify such, or is

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there any such on earth? Hast thou nothing? Art thou lost and miserable? Art thou helpless and forlorn? Dost thou believe that I am a sufficient Saviour, and wouldst thou have me? Why then, take me, lo, I am thine; if thou be willing, I am willing; and neither sin nor devils shall break the match."

'These, oh, these were the blessed words which His Spirit from His Gospel spoke unto me, till He made me cast myself at His feet, yea into His arms, and to cry out: "My Saviour and my Lord, Thou hast broke my heart, Thou hast revived my heart, Thou hast overcome, Thou hast won my heart; take it, it is Thine. If such a heart can please Thee, take it; if it cannot, make it such as Thou wouldst have it."

Thus, O my soul, mayest thou remember the sweet familiarity thou hast had with Christ. Therefore if acquaintance will cause affection, oh, then let out thy heart unto Him; it is He that hath stood by thy bed of sickness, that hath cooled thy heats, and eased thy pains, and refreshed thy weariness, and removed thy fears. He hath been always ready, when thou hast earnestly sought Him; He hath given thee the meeting in public and in private; He hath been found of thee in the congregation, in thy house, in thy chamber, in the field, in the way as thou wert walking, in thy waking nights, in thy deepest dangers. Oh, if bounty and compassion be an attractive of love, how immeasurably then am I bound to love Him! All the mercies that have filled up my life do tell me this; all the places that ever I did abide in, all the societies and persons that I have had to deal with, every condition of life that I have passed through, all my employments, and all my relations, every change that hath befallen me, all tell me that the Fountain is overflowing goodness. Lord, what a sum of love am I indebted to Thee,

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and how doth my debt continually increase, how should I love again for so much love!

But what! shall I dare to think of making Thee requital, or of recompensing all Thy love with mine! Will my mite requite Thee for Thy golden mines, my seldom wishes for Thy constant bounty, or mine which is nothing or not mine, for Thine which is infinite and Thine own? Shall I dare to contend in love with Thee; or set my borrowed, languid spark against the element and sun of love? Can I love as high, as deep, as broad, as long as love itself; as much as He that made me, and that made me love, that gave me all that little which I have; both the heart, the hearth where it is kindled, the bellows, the fire, the fuel, and all were His. As I cannot match Thee in the works of Thy power, nor make, nor preserve, nor guide the world; so why should I think any more of matching Thee in love? No, Lord, I yield, I am unable, I am overcome. O blessed conquest! Go on victoriously, and still prevail, and triumph in Thy love. The captive of love shall proclaim Thy victory, when Thou ledest me in triumph from earth to heaven, from death to life, from the tribunal to the throne; myself and all that see it shall acknowledge that Thou hast prevailed, and all shall say, "Behold, how He loved him." Yet let me love Thee in subjection to Thy love, as Thy redeemed captive, though not Thy peer. Shall I not love at all, because I cannot reach Thy measure? Or at least, let me heartily wish to love Thee. Oh, that I were able! Oh, that I could feelingly say, "I love Thee," even as I feel I love my friend, and myself! Lord, that I could do it, but alas, I cannot; fain I would, but alas, I cannot. Would I not love Thee, if I were but able? Though I cannot say as Thy apostle, "Thou knowest that I love Thee;" yet can I say, "Lord, Thou knowest that I would love Thee."

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But I speak not this to excuse my fault; it is a crime that admits of no excuse; and it is my own, it dwelleth as near me as my very heart; if my heart be my own, this sin is my own, yea and more my own than my heart is. Lord, what shall this sinner do; the fault is my own, and yet I cannot help it; I am angry with my heart that it doth not love Thee, and yet I feel it love Thee never the more; I frown upon it, and yet it cares not; I threaten it, but it doth not feel; I chide it, and yet it doth not mend; I reason with it and would fain persuade it, and yet I do not perceive it stir; I rear it up as a carcass upon its legs, but it neither goes nor stands. I rub and chafe it in the use of Thine ordinances, and yet I feel it not warm within me: O miserable man that I am. Unworthy soul, is not thine eye now upon the only lovely object, and art thou not beholding the ravishing glory of the saints; and yet dost thou not love; and yet dost thou not feel the fire break forth? Why, art thou not a soul, a living spirit; and is not thy love the choicest piece of thy life? Art thou not a rational soul, and shouldst not thou love according to reason's conduct? And doth it not tell thee, that all is dirt and dung to Christ; that earth is a dungeon to the celestial glory? Art thou not a spirit thyself, and shouldst thou not love spiritually, even God who is a spirit, and the Father of spirits? Doth not every creature love their like? Why, my soul, art thou like to flesh, or gold, or stately buildings? Art thou like to meat and drink, or clothes; wilt thou love no higher than thy horse or swine; hast thou nothing better to love than they?

What is the beauty that thou hast so admired? Canst thou not even wink or think it all into darkness or deformity; when the night comes, it is nothing to thee; while thou hast gazed on it, it hath withered away; a

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botch or scab, the wrinkles of consuming sickness, or of age, do make it as loathsome as it was before delightful. Suppose but that thou sawest that beautiful carcass lying on the bier, or rotting in the grave, the scull digged up, and the bones scattered, where is now thy lovely object? Couldst thou sweetly embrace it, when the soul is gone; or take any pleasure in it, when there is nothing left that is like thyself? Ah, why then dost thou love a skinful of dirt, and canst love no more the heavenly glory? What thinkest thou? Shalt thou love when thou comest there; when thou seest; when thou dost enjoy; when the Lord shall take thy carcass from the grave, and make thee shine as the sun in glory, and when thou shalt everlastingly dwell in the blessed presence? Shalt thou then love, or shalt thou not; is not the place a meeting of lovers; is not the life a state of love? Is it not the great marriage-day of the Lamb, when He will embrace and entertain His spouse with love? Is not the employment there the work of love, where the souls with Christ do take their fill? O, then, my soul begin it here; be sick of love now, that thou mayest be well with love there. Keep thyself now in the love of God, and let neither life nor death nor anything separate thee from it; and thou shalt be kept in the fulness of love for ever, and nothing shall embitter or abate thy pleasure; for the Lord hath prepared a city of love, a place for the communicating of love to His chosen, and those that love His name shall dwell there.

Awake then, O my drowsy soul; who but an owl or mole would love this world's uncomfortable darkness, when they are called forth to live in light? To sleep under the light of grace is unreasonable, much more in the approach of the light of glory; the night of thy ignorance and misery is past, the day of glorious light is at hand; this is the daybreak betwixt them both;

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though thou see not yet the sun itself appear, methinks the twilight of a promise should revive thee! Come forth, then, O my dull congealed spirits, and leave these earthly cells to dumpish sadness; and hear thy Lord that bids thee rejoice, and again rejoice! Thou hast lain here long enough in thy prison of flesh, where Satan hath been thy jailer, and the things of this world have been the stocks for the feet of thy affections, where cares have been thy irons, and fears thy scourge, and the bread and water of affliction thy food; where sorrows have been thy lodging; and thy sins and foes have made the bed; and a carnal, hard, unbelieving heart have been the iron gates and bars that have kept thee in, that thou couldst scarce have leave to look through the lattices, and see one glimpse of the immortal light. The Angel of the Covenant now calls thee, and strikes thee, and bids thee arise and follow him. Up, O my soul, and cheerfully obey, and thy bolts and bars shall all fly open. Do thou obey, and all will obey; follow the Lamb which way ever He leads thee. Art thou afraid because thou knowest not whither? Can the place be worse than where thou art? Shouldst thou fear to follow such a guide? Can the sun lead thee to a state of darkness? Or can He mislead thee that is the light of every man that cometh into the world? Will He lead thee to death, who died to save thee from it; or can He do thee any hurt, who for thy sake did suffer so much? Follow Him, and He will show thee the paradise of God, He will give thee a sight of the new Jerusalem, He will give thee a taste of the tree of life.

Sit no longer, then, by the fire of earthly common comforts, whither the cold of carnal fears and sorrows did drive thee. Thy winter is past, and wilt thou house thyself still in earthly thoughts, and confine thyself to drooping and dulness? Even the silly flies will leave their holes

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when the winter is over and the sun draws near them ; the ants will stir, the fishes rise, the birds will sing, the earth look green, and all with joyful note will tell thee the spring is come. Come forth, then, O my drooping soul, and lay aside thy winter mourning robes ; let it be seen in thy believing joys and praise that the day is appearing, and the spring is come ; and as now thou seest thy comforts green, thou shalt shortly see them white and ripe for harvest. And then thou who art now called forth to see and taste shall be called forth to reap and gather and take possession. Shall I suspend and delay my joys till then ? Should not the joys of the spring go before the joys of harvest ? Is title nothing before possession ? Is the heir in no better a state than the slave ? My Lord hath taught me to rejoice in hope of His glory, and to see it through the bars of a prison, and even when I am “persecuted for righteousness’ sake,” when I am “reviled, and all manner of evil sayings are said against me falsely for His sake,” then hath He commanded me to “rejoice and be exceeding glad,” because of this my “great reward in heaven.”

How justly is an unbelieving heart possessed by sorrow, and made a prey to cares and fears, when itself doth create them, and thrust away its offered peace and joy ! I know, it is the pleasure of my bounteous Lord that none of His family should want for comfort, nor live such a poor and miserable life, nor look with such a famished dejected face. I know He would have my joys exceed my sorrows ; and as much as He delighteth in the humble and contrite, yet doth He more delight in the soul as it delighteth in Him. I know He taketh no pleasure in my self-procured sadness ; nor would He call on me to weep or mourn, but that it is the only way to these delights. Would I spread the table before my guest, and bring him forth my best provision and bid

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him sit down and eat, and welcome, if I did not unfeignedly desire he should do so? Hath my Lord spread me a table in this wilderness, and furnished it with the promises of everlasting glory, and set before me angels' food, and broached for me the side of His beloved Son that I might have a better wine than the blood of the grape? Doth He so frequently and importunately invite me to sit down, and draw forth my faith, and feed, and spare not? Nay, hath He furnished me to that end with reason, and faith, and a rejoicing disposition? And yet is it possible that He should be unwilling of my joys! Never think it, O my unbelieving soul; nor dare to charge Him with thy uncomfortable heaviness, who offereth thee the foretaste of the highest delights that heaven doth afford and God bestow. Doth He not bid thee "delight thyself in the Lord," and promise to give thee then "the desires of thy heart"? Hath He not charged thee to "rejoice evermore"! Yea to sing "aloud and shout for joy." Why should I then draw back discouraged? My God is willing, if I were but willing. He is delighted in my delights. He would fain have it my constant frame and daily business to be near to Him in my believing meditations and to live in the sweetest thoughts of His goodness, and to be always delighting my soul in Himself. O blessed work! Employment fit for the sons of God!

But ah, my Lord, Thy feast is nothing to me without an appetite. Thou must give a stomach as well as meat. Thou hast set the dainties of heaven before me, but alas, I am blind and cannot see them; I am sick and cannot relish them; I am so benumbed that I cannot put forth a hand to take them. What is the glory of sun and moon to a clod of earth? Thou knowest I need thy subjective grace as well as thine objective, and that Thy works upon mine own distempered soul is not the smallest part of my

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salvation. I therefore humbly beg this grace, that as Thou hast opened heaven unto me in 'Thy blessed Word, so Thou wouldst open mine eyes to see it, and my heart to affect it; else heaven will be no heaven to me. Awake therefore, O thou Spirit of life, and breathe upon Thy graces in me; blow upon the garden of my heart, that the spices thereof may flow out; "Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits." And take me by the hand, and lift me up from earth Thyself; that I may fetch one walk in the garden of glory, and see by faith what Thou hast laid up for them that love Thee and wait for Thee.

Away, then, you soul-tormenting cares and fears! Away you importune heart-vexing sorrows! At least forbear me a little while; stand by, and trouble not my aspiring soul; stay here below, whilst I go up, and see my rest. The way is strange to me, but not to Christ. There was the eternal dwelling of His glorious deity, and thither hath He also brought His assumed glorified flesh. It was His work to purchase it; it is His work to prepare it, and to prepare me for it, and to bring me to it. The eternal God of truth hath given me His promise, His seal, and His oath to assure me, that "believing in Christ I shall not perish, but have everlasting life"; thither shall my soul be speedily removed, and my body very shortly follow. It is not so far, but He that is everywhere can bring me thither; nor so difficult and unlikely, but Omnipotency can effect it. And though this unbelief may diminish my delights, and much abate my joys in the way: yet shall it not abate the love of my Redeemer, nor make the promise of none effect. And can my tongue say that I shall shortly and surely live with God, and yet my heart not leap within me? Can I say it believingly, and not rejoicingly? Ah, faith, how sensibly now do I perceive thy weakness! Ah, unbelief, if I had never heard or

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known it before, yet how sensibly now do I perceive thy malicious tyranny! But though thou darken my light, and dull my life, and suppress my joys, yet shalt thou not be able to conquer and destroy me. There shall I and my joys survive when thou art dead; and though thou envy all my comforts, yet some, in despite of thee, I shall even here receive; but were it not for thee, what abundance might I have. The light of heaven would shine into my heart, and I might be as familiar there as I am on earth.

Come away, my soul, then; stop thine ears to the ignorant language of infidelity; thou art able to answer all its arguments; or if thou be not, yet tread them under thy feet. Come away, stand not looking on that grave, nor turning those bones, nor reading thy lesson now in the dust; those lines will soon be wiped out. But lift up thy head and look to heaven, and read thy instructions in those fixed stars. Or yet look higher than those eyes can see into that foundation which standeth sure, and see thy name in golden letters written before the foundations of the world in the book of life of the slain Lamb. What if an angel from heaven should tell thee that there is a mansion prepared for thee, that it shall certainly be thine own, and thou shalt possess it for ever; would not such a message make thee glad? And dost thou make light of the infallible Word of promises which were delivered by the Spirit, and by the Son Himself? Suppose thou hadst seen a fiery chariot come for thee, and fetch thee up to heaven like Elias; would not this rejoice thee? Why, my Lord hath acquainted me, and assured me, that the soul of a Lazarus, a beggar, goes not forth of its corrupted flesh, but a convoy of angels are ready to attend it, and bring it to the comforts in Abraham's bosom. Shall a drunkard be so merry among his cups, and a glutton in his delicious fare, and the proud in his bravery and

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dignity, and the lustful wanton in the enjoyment of his mate; and shall not I rejoice who must shortly be in heaven?

How glad is voluptuous youth of their playtimes and holy-days? Why, in heaven I shall have an everlasting holy-day of pleasure. Can meat and drink delight me when I hunger and thirst? Can I find pleasure in walks and gardens and convenient dwellings? Can beauteous sights delight mine eyes, and odours my smell, and melody mine ears? And shall not the forethought of the celestial bliss delight me? My beast is glad of his fresh pasture, and his liberty, and his rest; and shall not I? What delight have I found in my private studies, especially when they have prospered to the increase of my knowledge! Methinks I could bid the world farewell, and immure myself among my books, and look forth no more (were it a lawful course) but, as Heinsius in his library at Leyden, shut the doors upon me, and as in the lap of eternity, among those divine souls, employ myself in sweet content, and pity the rich and great ones that know not this happiness. Sure then it is a high delight indeed, which in the true lap of eternity is enjoyed! If Lipsius thought when he did but read Seneca that he was even upon Olympus top, above mortality and human things; what a case shall I be in when I am beholding Christ! If Julius Scaliger thought twelve verses in Lucan better than the whole German Empire; what shall I think mine inheritance worth? If the mathematics alone are so delectable that their students do profess that they should think it sweet to live and die in those studies; how delectable then will my life be, when I shall fully and clearly know those things which the most learned do now know but doubtfully and darkly! In one hour shall I see all difficulties vanish; and all my doubts in physics, metaphysics, politics, medicine, &c., shall be resolved; so happy

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are the students of that university! Yea, all the depths of divinity will be uncovered to me, and all the difficult knots untied; and the book unsealed, and mine eyes opened. For in knowing God, I shall know all things that are fit or good for the creature to know. There Commenius's attempt is perfected, and all the sciences reduced to one. Seneca thought that he that lived without books was but buried alive; but had he known what it is to enjoy God in glory, he would have said indeed, that to live without Him is to be buried alive in hell.

If Apollonius travelled into Æthiopia and Persia, to consult with the learned there; and if Plato and Pythagoras left their country to see those wise Egyptian priests; and if as, Hierom saith, many travelled thousand miles to see and speak with eloquent Livy; and if the queen of Sheba came from Æthiopia to hear the wisdom of Solomon and see his glory; oh, how gladly should I leave this country, how cheerfully should I pass from earth to heaven to see the glory of that eternal majesty, and to attain myself that height of wisdom, in comparison of which the most learned on earth are but silly, brutish fools and idiots! If Bernard were so ravished with the delights of his monastery, where he lived in poverty, without the common pleasures of the world, because of its green banks, and shady bowers, and herbs, and trees, and various objects to feed the eyes, and fragrant smells, and sweet and various tunes of birds, together with the opportunity of devout contemplations, that he cries out in admiration, "Lord, what abundance of delights dost Thou provide even for the poor;" how then should I be ravished with the description of the court of heaven, where instead of herbs, and trees, and birds, and bowers, I shall enjoy God and my Redeemer, angels, saints, and inexpressible pleasures; and therefore should with more admiration cry out, "Lord, what delights hast Thou

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provided for us miserable and unworthy wretches that wait for Thee"! If the heaven of glass which the Persian emperor framed were so glorious a piece; and the heaven of silver which the Emperor Ferdinand sent to the great Turk, because of their rare artificial representations and motions, what will the heaven of heavens then be, which is not formed by the art of man, nor beautified like these childish toys, but is the matchless palace of the great King, built by Himself for the residence of His glory, and the perpetual entertainment of His beloved saints! Can a poor deluded Mahommedan rejoice in expectation of a feigned sensual paradise? And shall not I rejoice in expectation of a certain glory? If the honour of the ambitious, or the wealth of the covetous person do increase, his heart is lifted up with his estate as a boat that riseth with the rising of the water; if they have but a little more lands or money than their neighbours, how easily may you see it in their countenance and carriage! How high do they look; how big do they speak; how stately and loftily do they demean themselves; and shall not the heavenly loftiness and height of my spirit discover my title to this promised land? Shall I be the adopted son of God, and co-heir with Christ of that blessed inheritance, and daily look when I am put into possession; and shall not this be seen in my joyful countenance? What if God had made me commander of the earth? What if the mountains would remove at my command? What if I could heal all diseases with a word or a touch? What if the infernal spirits were all at my command? Should I not rejoice in such privileges and honours as these; yet is it my Saviour's command, not to rejoice that the devils are subject to us, but in this to rejoice, that our names are written in heaven.

I cannot here enjoy my parents, or my near and beloved friends without some delight. Especially when I did too

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freely let out my affections to my friend, how sweet was that very exercise of my love! Oh, what will it then be to live in the perpetual love of God! For brethren here to live together in unity, how good and pleasant a thing is it! To see a family live in love; husband, wife, parents, children, servants doing all in love to one another; to see a town live together in love, without any envyings, brawlings, heart-burnings or contentions, scorns, law-suits, factions or divisions; but every man loving his neighbour as himself, and thinking they can never do too much for one another; but striving to go beyond each other in love; oh, how happy and delectable a sight is this! O sweetest bands, saith Seneca, which bind so happily, that those that are so bound do love their binders, and desire still to be bound more closely, and even reduced into one. Oh then, what a blessed society will be the family of heaven, and those peaceable inhabitants of the new Jerusalem, where is no division, nor dissimilitude, nor differing judgments, nor disaffection, nor strangeness, nor deceitful friendship; never an angry thought or look; never a cutting, unkind expression, but all are one in Christ, who is one with the Father, and live in the love of Love Himself! Cato could say that the soul of a lover dwelleth in the person whom he loveth; and therefore we say the soul is not more where it liveth and enliveneth, than where it loveth. How near then will my soul be closed to God, and how sweet must that conjunction be, when I shall so heartily, strongly, and incessantly love Him! As the bee lies sucking and satiating herself with the sweetness of the flower; or rather as the child lies sucking the mother's breast, enclosed in her arms, and sitting in her lap; even so shall my loving soul be still feeding on the sweetness of the God of love. Ah, wretched, fleshly, unbelieving heart, that can think of such a day, and work, and life as this,

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with so low and dull and feeble joys; but my enjoying joys will be more lively.

How delectable is it to me to behold and study these inferior works of God, to read those anatomical lectures of Du Bartas upon this great dissected body, what a beautiful fabric is this great house which here we dwell in! The floor so dressed with various herbs and flowers and trees, and watered with springs and rivers and seas; the roof so wide expanded, so admirably adorned; such astonishing workmanship in every part! The studies of an hundred ages more (if the world should last so long) would not discover the mysteries of Divine skill which are to be found in the narrow compass of our bodies. What anatomist is not amazed in his search and observations! What wonders, then, do sun, and moon, and stars, and orbs, and seas, and winds, and fire, and air, and earth, &c., afford us! And hath God prepared such a house for our silly, sinful, corruptible flesh, and for a soul imprisoned; and doth He bestow so many millions of wonderful rarities even upon His enemies! Oh, then what a dwelling must that needs be which He prepareth for pure, refined, spiritual, glorified ones, and which He will bestow only upon His dearly-beloved children, whom He hath chosen out, to make His mercy on them glorified and admired! As far as our perfected glorified bodies will excel this frail and corruptible flesh, so far will the glory of the New Jerusalem exceed all the present glory of the creatures. The change upon our mansion will be proportionable to the change upon ourselves. Arise then, O my soul, by these steps in thy contemplation, and let thy thoughts of that glory (were it possible) as far in sweetness exceed thy thoughts of the excellencies below. Fear not to go out of this body, and this world, when thou must make so happy a change as this; but say, as Zuingerus when he was dying: "I am glad and even leap

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for joy, that at last the time is come wherein that, even that mighty Jehovah whose majesty in my search of nature I have admired, whose goodness I have adored, whom in faith I have desired, whom I have sighed for, will now show Himself to me face to face." And let that be the unfeigned sense of my heart, which Camerarius left in his will should be written on his monument, *Vita mihi mors est, mors mihi vita nova est*—"Life is to me a death, death is to me a new life."

Moreover, how wonderful and excellent are the works of Providence even in this life; to see the great God to engage Himself, and set a-work His attributes for the safety and advancement of a few humble, despicable praying persons! Oh, what a joyful time will it then be, when so much love, and mercy, and wisdom, and power, and truth shall be manifested and glorified in the saints' glorification!

How delightful is it to my soul, to review the working of Providence for myself, and to read over the records and catalogues of those special mercies wherewith my life hath been adorned and sweetened. How oft have my prayers been heard, and my tears regarded, and my groaning, troubled soul relieved, and my Lord hath bid me, be of good cheer. He hath healed me when, in respect of means, I was incurable; He hath helped me when I was helpless; in the midst of my supplications hath He eased and revived me; He hath taken me up from my knees, and from the dust where I have lain in sorrow and despair; even the cries which have been occasioned by distrust hath He regarded. What a support are these experiences to my fearful, unbelieving heart! These clear testimonies of my Father's love do put life into my afflicted drooping spirit.

Oh then, what a blessed day will that be, when I shall have all mercy, perfection of mercy, nothing but

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mercy, and fully enjoy the Lord of mercy Himself; when I shall stand on the shore, and look back upon the raging seas which I have safely passed; when I shall, in safe and full possession of glory, look back upon all my pains and troubles, and fears and tears, and upon all the mercies which I here received; and then shall behold the glory enjoyed there, which was the end of all this; oh, what a blessed view will that be! O glorious prospect which I shall have on the celestial Mount Zion! Is it possible that there should be any defect of joy, or my heart not raised, when I am so raised? If one drop of lively faith were mixed with these considerations, oh, what work they would make in my breast, and what a heaven-ravished heart should I carry within me! Fain would I believe; "Lord, help my unbelief."

Yet further, consider, O my soul, how sweet have the very ordinances been unto thee. What raptures hast thou had in prayer and under heavenly sermons. What gladness in days of thanksgiving, after eminent deliverances to the Church, or to thyself. What delight do I find in the sweet society of the saints; to be among my humble, faithful neighbours and friends, to join with them in the frequent worship of God, to see their growth and stability and soundness of understanding, to see those daily added to the Church which shall be saved. Oh, then what delight shall I have to see the perfected Church in heaven, and to join with these and all the saints in another kind of worship than we can here conceive of. How sweet is it to join in the high praises of God in the solemn assemblies. How glad have I been to go up to the house of God, especially after long restraint by sickness, when I have been, as Hezekiah, released and readmitted to join with the people of God, and to set forth the praises of

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my great Deliverer. How sweet is my work in preaching the Gospel, and inviting sinners to the marriage feast of the Lamb, and opening to them the treasures of free grace, especially when God blesseth my endeavours with plenteous success, and giveth me to see the fruit of my labours. Even this alone hath been a greater joy to my heart than if I had been made the lord of all the riches on earth.

Oh, how can my heart then conceive that joy which I shall have in my admittance into the celestial temple, and into the heavenly host that shall do nothing but praise the Lord for ever; when we shall say to Christ, "Here am I, and the children Thou hast given me"; and when Christ shall present us all to His Father, and all are gathered, and the body completed! If the very Word of God were sweeter to Job than his necessary food; and to Jeremiah was the very joy and rejoicing of his heart; and to David was sweeter than the honey and honey-comb, so that he crieth out, "O how I love Thy law, it is my meditation continually! and if Thy law had not been my delight, I had perished in my troubles," oh, then how blessed a day will that be, when we fully enjoy the Lord of this Word, and shall need these written precepts and promises no more, but shall, instead of these love-letters, enjoy our Beloved; and instead of these promises have the happiness in possession; and read no book but the face of the glorious God. How far would I go to see one of those blessed angels which appeared to Abraham, to Lot, to John, &c. Or to speak with Enoch, or Elias, or any saint who had lived with God, especially if he would resolve all my doubts, and describe to me the celestial habitations. How much more desirable must it needs be to live with these blessed saints and angels, and to see and possess as well as they. It is written of Erastus that he was so desirous to learn, that it would be sweet

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to him even to die, so he might but be resolved of those doubtful questions wherein he could not satisfy himself. How sweet then should it be to me to die, that I may not only be resolved of all my doubts, but also know what I never before did think of, and enjoy what before I never knew. It was a happy dwelling that the twelve apostles had with Christ, to be always in His company, and see His face, and hear Him open to them the mysteries of the kingdom; but it will be another kind of happiness to dwell with Him in glory. It was a rare privilege of Thomas to put his fingers into His wounds to confirm his faith; and of John to be called the disciple whom Jesus loved, on whose breast at supper he was wont to lean. But it will be another kind of privilege which I shall enjoy when I shall see Him in His glory, and not in His wounds; and shall enjoy a fuller sense of His love than John then did; and shall have the most hearty entertainment that heaven affordeth. If they that heard Christ speak on earth were astonished at His wisdom and answers, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded from His mouth; how shall I be affected then to behold Him in His majesty!

Rouse up thyself yet, O my soul, and consider. Can the foresight of this glory make others embrace the stake and kiss the faggot and welcome the cross, and refuse deliverance, and can it not make thee cheerful under lesser sufferings? Can it sweeten the flames to them, and can it not sweeten thy life, or thy sickness, or natural death? If a glimpse could make Moses' face to shine, and Peter on the Mount so transported, and Paul so exalted, and John so wrapped up in the Spirit; why should it not somewhat revive me with delight? Doubtless it would, if my thoughts were more believing. Is it not the same heaven which they and I must live in? Is not their God, their Christ, their crown and mine the same? Nay, how

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many a weak woman, or poor despised Christian have I seen, mean in parts, but rich in faith, who could rejoice and triumph in hope of this inheritance; and shall I look upon it with so dim an eye, so dull a heart, so dejected a countenance? Some small foretastes also I have had myself (though indeed small and seldom through mine unbelief), and how much more delightful have they been than ever was any of these earthly things. The full enjoyment then will sure be sweet. Remember then this bunch of grapes which thou hast tasted of, and by them conjecture the fruitfulness of the land of promise. A grape in a wilderness cannot be like the plentiful vintage.

Consider also, O my soul, what a beauty is there in the imperfect graces of the spirit here; so great that they are called the image of God; and can any created excellency have a more honourable title? Alas, how small a part are these of what we shall enjoy in our perfect state. Oh, how precious a mercy should I esteem it, if God would but take off my bodily infirmities, and restore me to any comfortable measure of health and strength, that I might be able with cheerfulness to go through His work. How precious a mercy then will it be, to have all my corruptions quite removed, and my soul perfected, and my body also raised to so high a state, as I now can neither desire nor conceive. Surely as health of body, so health of soul doth carry an inexpressible sweetness along with it. Were there no reward besides, yet every gracious act is a reward and comfort. Never had I the least stirring of loving God but I felt a heavenly sweetness accompanying it; even the very act of loving was inexpressibly sweet. What a happy life should I here live, could I but love as much as I would, and as oft and as long as I would. Could I be all love, and always loving, O my soul, what wouldst thou give for such a life! Oh, had I such true

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and clear apprehensions of God, and such a true understanding of His Word as I desire; could I but trust Him as fully in all my straits; could I have that life which I would have in every duty; could I make God my constant desire and delight; I would not then envy the world their honours or pleasures, nor change my happiness with a Cæsar or Alexander. O my soul, what a blessed state wilt thou shortly be in, when thou shalt have far more of these than thou canst now desire; and shalt exercise all thy perfected graces upon God in presence and open sight, and not in the dark and at a distance as now!

And as there is so much worth in one gracious soul, so much more in a gracious society, and most of all in the whole body of Christ on earth. If there be any true beauty on earth, where should it be so likely as in the spouse of Christ? It is her that He adorneth with His jewels, and feasteth at His table, and keepeth for her always an open house and heart. He revealeth to her His secrets, and maintaineth constant converse with her. He is her constant guardian, and in every deluge encloseth her in His ark. He saith to her, Thou art all beautiful, my beloved! And is His spouse, while black, so comely; is the afflicted, sinning, weeping, lamenting, persecuted Church so excellent; oh, what then will be the Church, when it is fully gathered and glorified; when it is ascended from the valley of tears to Mount Sion; when it shall sin no more, nor weep, nor groan, nor suffer any more. The stars or the smallest candle are not darkened so much by the brightness of the sun, as the excellencies of the first temple will be by the celestial temple. The glory of the old Jerusalem will be darkness and deformity to the glory of the new. It is said in Ezra iii. 12, that when the foundations of the second temple were laid many of the ancient men, who had seen the first house, did weep, *i.e.*, because the second did come so far short of

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it; what cause then shall we have to shout for joy, when we shall see how glorious the heavenly temple is, and remember the meanness of the Church on earth.

But alas, what a loss am I at in the midst of my contemplation! I thought my heart had all this while followed after, but I see it doth not; and shall I let my understanding go on alone, or my tongue run on without affections? What life is in empty thoughts and words; neither God nor I find pleasure in them. Rather let me run back again, and look and find, and chide this lazy loitering heart, that turneth off from such a pleasant work as this. Where hast thou been, unworthy heart, while I was opening to thee the everlasting treasures? Didst thou sleep, or wast thou minding something else; or dost thou think that all this is but a dream or fable, or as uncertain as the predictions of a presumptuous astrologer? Or hast thou lost thy life and rejoicing power? Art thou not ashamed to complain so much of an uncomfortable life, and to murmur at God for filling thee with sorrows, when He offereth thee in vain the delights of angels, and when thou treadest under foot these transcendent pleasures? Thou wilfully pinest away in grief, and art ready to charge thy Father with unkindness for making thee only a vessel of displeasure, a sink of sadness, a skin full of groans, a snowball of tears, a channel for waters of affliction to run in, the fuel of fears, and the carcass which cares do consume and prey upon, when in the meantime thou mightest live a life of joy. Hadst thou now but followed me close, and believingly applied thyself to that which I have spoken, and drunk in but half the comfort that those words hold forth, it would have made thee revive and leap for joy, and forget thy sorrows, and diseases, and pains of the flesh. But seeing thou judgest thyself unworthy of comfort, it is just that comfort should be taken from thee.

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Lord, what is the matter that this work doth go on so heavily? Did I think my heart had been so backward to rejoice? If it had been to mourn, and fear, and despair, it were no wonder. I have been lifting at this stone, and it will not stir; I have been pouring *aqua vitæ* into the mouth of the dead. I hope, Lord, by that time it comes to heaven, this heart by Thy Spirit will be quickened and mended, or else even those joys will scarce rejoice me.

But besides my darkness, deadness, and unbelief, I perceive there is something else that forbids my full desired joys. This is not the time and place where so much is given; the time is our winter and not our harvest; the place is called the valley of tears. There must be great difference betwixt the way and the end, the work and wages, the small foretastes and full fruition. But, Lord, though thou hast reserved our joys for heaven, yet hast thou not so suspended our desires; they are most suitable and seasonable in this present life; therefore, oh, help me to desire till I may possess, and let me long when I cannot, as I would, rejoice. There is love in desire as well as in delight; and if I be not empty of love, I know I shall not long be empty of delight.

Rouse up thyself once more, then, O my soul, and try and exercise thy spiritual appetite. Though thou art ignorant and unbelieving, yet art thou reasonable, and therefore must needs desire a happiness and rest. Nor canst thou sure be so unreasonable as to dream of attaining it here on earth. Thou knowest to thy sorrow that thou art not yet at thy rest, and thy own feeling doth convince thee of thy present unhappiness. And dost thou know that thou art restless, and yet art willing to continue so? Art thou neither happy in deed, nor in desire? Art thou neither well, nor wouldst be well? When my flesh is pained, and languisheth under con-

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suming sickness, how heartily and frequently do I cry out, Oh, when shall I be eased of this pain; when shall my decaying strength be recovered? There is no dissembling or formality in these desires and groans. How then should I long for my final full recovery! There is no sickness, nor pain, nor weeping, nor complaints. Oh, when shall I arrive at that safe and quiet harbour, where is none of these storms, and waves, and dangers; when I shall never more have a weary, restless, night or day! Then shall not my life be such a medley or mixture of hope and fear, of joy and sorrow, as now it is; nor shall flesh and spirit be combating within me, nor my soul be still as a pitched field, or a stage of contention, where faith and unbelief, affiance and distrust, humility and pride do maintain a continual distracting conflict. Then shall I not live a dying life for fear of dying, nor my life be made uncomfortable with the fears of losing it. Oh, when shall I be past these soul-tormenting fears, and cares, and griefs, and passions? When shall I be out of this frail, this corruptible, ruinous body; this soul-contradicting, ensnaring, deceiving flesh? When shall I be out of this vain, vexatious world, whose pleasures are mere deluding dreams and shadows; whose miseries are real, numerous, and incessant? How long shall I see the Church of Christ lie trodden under the feet of persecutors; or else as a ship in the hands of foolish guides; though the supreme Master doth moderate all for the best? Alas, that I must stand by and see the Church and cause of Christ, like a football in the midst of a crowd of boys, tossed about in contention from one to another; every one running, and sweating with foolish violence, and labouring the downfall of all that are in his way, and all to get it into his own power, that he may have the managing of the work himself, and may drive it before him which way he

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pleaseth; and when all is done, the best usage it may expect from them is but to be spurned about in the dirt, till they have driven it on to the goal of their private interests or deluded fancies! There is none of this disorder in the heavenly Jerusalem; there shall I find a government without imperfection; and obedience without the least unwillingness, or rebellion; even a harmonious consent of perfected spirits in obeying and praising their everlasting King. Oh, how much better is it to be door-keeper there, and the least in that kingdom, than to be the conqueror or commander of this tumultuous world! There will our Lord govern all immediately by Himself, and not put the reins in the hands of such ignorant riders, nor govern by such foolish and sinful deputies as the best of the sons of men now are.

Dost thou so mourn for these inferior disorders, O my soul, and yet wouldst thou not be out of it? How long hast thou desired to be a member of a more perfect reformed Church, and to join with more holy, humble, sincere souls in the purest and most heavenly worship! Why, dost thou not see that on earth thy desires fly from thee? Art thou not as a child that thinketh to travel to the sun, when he seeth it rising or setting, as it were close to the earth; but as he travelleth toward it, it seems to go from him; and when he hath long wearied himself it is as far off as ever; for the thing he seeketh is in another world. Even such hath been thy labour in seeking for so holy, so pure, so peaceable a society as might afford thee a contented settlement here. Those that have gone as far as America for satisfaction have confessed themselves unsatisfied still. When wars and the calamities attending them have been over, I have said, "Return now my soul unto thy rest;" but how restless a condition hath next succeeded! When God had given me the enjoyment of peace and friends and

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liberty of the Gospel, and had settled me even as my own heart desired, I have been ready to say, "Soul, take thy ease and rest;" but how quickly hath Providence called me fool, and taught me to call my state by another name! When did I ever begin to congratulate my flesh on its felicity, but God did quickly turn my tune, and made almost the same breath to end in groaning which did begin in laughter? I have thought oftentimes in the folly of my prosperity, "Now I will have one sweet draught of solace and content," but God hath dropped in the gall while the cup was at my mouth.

We are still weary of the present condition and desire a change; and when we have it, it doth not answer our expectation; but our discontent and restlessness is still unchanged. In time of peace, we thought that war would deliver us from our disquietments; and when we saw the iron red hot we caught it inconsiderately, thinking that it was gold, till it burned us to the very bone, and so stuck to our fingers that we scarce know yet whether we are rid of it or not. In this our misery, we longed for peace; and so long were we strangers to it, that we had forgot its name, and begun to call it Rest or Heaven; but as soon as we are again grown acquainted with it we shall better bethink us, and perceive our mistake. Oh, why am I then no more weary of this weariness; and why do I so forget my resting-place? Up then, O my soul, in thy most raised and fervent desires! Stay not till this flesh can desire with thee; its appetite hath a lower and baser object. Thy appetite is not sensitive, but rational, distinct from it; and therefore look not that sense apprehend thy blessed object, and tell thee what and when to desire. Believing reason, in the glass of Scripture, may discern enough to raise the flame; and though sense apprehend not that which must draw thy desires, yet that which may drive them it doth easily apprehend. It

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can tell thee that thy present life is filled with distress and sorrows, though it cannot tell thee what is in the world to come. Thou needest not Scripture to tell thee, nor faith to discern that thy head acheth, and thy stomach is sick, thy bowels griped, and thy heart grieved; and some of these, or such like, are thy daily case. Thy friends about thee are grieved to see thy griefs, and to hear thy dolorous groans and lamentations, and yet art thou loath to leave this woful life! Is this a state to be preferred before the celestial glory, or is it better to be thus miserable from Christ, than to be happy with Him; or canst thou possibly be so unbelieving as to doubt whether that life be any better than this?

O my soul, doth not the dulness of thy desires after rest accuse thee of most detestable ingratitude and folly? Must thy Lord procure thee a rest at so dear a rate, and dost thou no more value it? Must He purchase thy rest by a life of labour and sorrow, and by the pangs of a bitter, cursed death, and when all is done, hadst thou rather be here without it? Must He go before to prepare so glorious a mansion for such a wretch; and art thou now loath to go and possess it? Must His blood, and care, and pains be lost! O unthankful, unworthy soul! Shall the Lord of glory be willing of thy company, and art thou unwilling of His? Are they fit to dwell with God that had rather stay from Him? Must He crown thee and glorify thee against thy will; or must He yet deal more roughly with thy darling flesh; and leave thee never a corner in thy ruinous cottage for to cover thee, but fire thee out of all, before thou wilt away? Must every sense be an inlet to thy sorrows, and every friend become thy scourge, and Job's messengers be thy daily intelligencers and bring thee the courrantoes of thy multiplied calamities, before that heaven will seem more desirable than this earth? Must every joint be the seat

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of pain, and every member deny thee a room to rest in, and thy groans be indicted from the very heart and bones, before thou wilt be willing to leave this flesh? Must thy heavy burdens be bound upon thy back, and thy so intolerable paroxysms become incessant, and thy intermittent, aguish woes be turned into continual burning fevers; yea, must earth become a very hell to thee, before thou wilt be willing to be with God? O impudent soul, if thou be not ashamed of this. What is loathing if this be love?

Look about thee, O my soul; behold the most lovely creature, or the most desirable state, and tell me where wouldst thou be, if not with God! Poverty is a burden, and riches a snare; sickness is little pleasing to thee, and usually health as little safe; the one is full of sorrow, and the other of sin. The frowning world doth bruise thy heel, and the smiling world doth sting thee to the heart; when it seemeth ugly, it causeth loathing, when beauteous, it is thy bane. When thy condition is bitter thou wouldst fain spit it out, and when delightful, it is but sugared misery and deceit; the sweetest poison doth often bring the surest death. So much as the world is loved and delighted in, so much it hurteth and endangereth the lover; and if it may not be loved, why should it be desired? If thou be applauded, it proves the most contagious breath; and how ready are the sails of pride to receive such winds! So that it frequently addeth to thy sin, but not one cubit to the stature of thy worth. And if thou be vilified, slandered, or unkindly used, methinks this should not entice thy love. Never didst thou sit by the fire of prosperity and applause but thou hadst with it the smoke that drew water from thy eyes. Never hadst thou the rose without the pricks; and the sweetness hath been expired, and the beauty faded, before the fears which thou hadst in

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gathering it were healed. Is it not as good be without the honey as to have it with so many smarting stings? The highest delight thou hast found in anything below hath been in thy successful labours, and thy godly friends; and have these indeed been so sweet as that thou shouldst be so loath to leave them! If they seem better to thee than a life with God, it is time for God to take them from thee.

Thy studies have been sweet, and have they not been also bitter? My mind hath been pleased but my body pained, and the weariness of the flesh hath quickly abated the pleasures of the spirit. When by painful studies I have not discovered the truth, it hath been but a tedious way to a grievous end; discontent and trouble purchased by toilsome wearying labours. And if I have found out the truth, by Divine assistance, I have found but an exposed naked orphan, that hath cost me much to take in and clothe and keep; which, though of noble birth, yea, a Divine offspring, and amiable in mine eyes, and worthy, I confess, of better entertainment, yet from men that know not its descent, hath drawn upon me their envy and furious opposition; and hath brought the blinded Sodomites (with whom I lived at some peace before) to crowd about me, and assault my doors, that I might prostitute my heavenly guests to their pleasure, and again expose them whom I had so gladly and lately entertained; yea, the very tribes of Israel have been gathered against me, thinking that the altar which I built for the interests of truth and unity and peace, had been erected to the introduction of error and idolatry; and so the increase of knowledge hath been the increase of sorrow.

My heart, indeed, is ravished with the beauty of naked truth; and I am ready to cry out, "I have found it," or, as Aquinas, "*Conclusum est contra*," &c., but when I have found it, I know not what to do with it. If I confine it

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to my own breast, and keep it secret to myself, it is as a consuming fire shut up in my heart and bones. I am as the lepers without Samaria, or as those that were forbidden to tell any man of the works of Christ; I am weary of forbearing, I cannot stay. If I reveal it to the world, I can expect but an unwelcome entertainment and an ungrateful return, for they have taken up their standing in religious knowledge already, as if they were at Hercules' pillars, and had no farther to go, nor any more to learn. They dare be no wiser than they are already, nor receive any more of truth than they have already received, lest thereby they should accuse their ancestors and teachers of ignorance and imperfection, and themselves should seem to be mutable and inconstant, and to hold their opinions in religion with reserves.

The most precious truth not apprehended doth seem to be error and fantastic novelty; every man that readeth what I write will not be at the pains of those tedious studies to find out the truth, as I have been, but think it should meet their eyes in the very reading. If the mere writing of truth, with its clearest evidence, were all that were necessary to the apprehension of it by others, then the lowest scholar in the school might be quickly as good as the highest. So that if I did see more than others, to reveal it to the lazy prejudiced world would but make my friends turn enemies, or look upon me with a strange and jealous eye. And yet truth is so dear a friend itself, and He that sent it much more dear, that whatever I suffer, I dare not stifle or conceal it. Oh, what then are these bitter sweet studies and discoveries to the everlasting views of the face of the God of truth? The light that here I have is but a knowing in part, and yet it costeth me so dear that, in a temptation, I am almost ready to prefer the quiet silent night, before such a rough tempestuous day. But there I shall have light and rest together

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and the quietness of the night without its darkness. I can never now have the lightning without the thunder, which maketh it seem more dreadful than delightful. And shouldst thou be loath then, O my soul, to leave this for the eternal perfect light, and to change thy candle for the glorious sun, and to change thy studies and preaching, and praying, for the harmonious praises and fruition of the blessed God?

Nor will thy loss be greater in the change of thy company than of thine employment. Thy friends here have been indeed thy delight, and have they not been also thy vexation and thy grief? They are gracious, and are they not also sinful; they are kind and loving, and are they not also peevish, froward, and soon displeased? They are humble, but withal, alas, how proud! They will scarce endure to hear plainly of their disgraceful faults; they cannot bear undervaluing or disrespect; they itch after the good thoughts and applause of others; they love those best that highest esteem them; the missing of a courtesy, a supposed slighting or disrespect, the contradicting of their words or humours, a difference in opinion, yea, the turning of a straw, will quickly show thee the pride and the uncertainty of thy friend. Their graces are sweet to thee, and their gifts are helpful; but are not their corruptions bitter, and their imperfections hurtful? Though at a distance they seem to thee most holy and innocent, yet when they come nearer thee, and thou hast thoroughly tried them, alas, what silly, frail, and froward pieces are the best of men! Then the knowledge which thou didst admire appeareth clouded with ignorance, and the virtues that so shined as a glow-worm in the night are scarcely to be found when thou seekest them by daylight. When temptations are strong, how quickly do they yield; what wounds have they given to religion by their shameful falls. Those that have been famous for

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their holiness have been as infamous for their notorious heinous wickedness; those that have been thy dearest bosom friends, that have prayed and conferred with thee, and helped thee toward heaven, and by their fervour, forwardness, and heavenly lives have shamed thy coldness, and earthliness, and dulness; whom thou hast singled out, as the choicest, from a world of professors, whom thou madest the daily companions and delights of thy life, are not some of them fallen to drunkenness, and some to whoredom, some to pride, perfidiousness and rebellion, and some to the most damnable heresies and divisions? And hath thy very heart received such wounds from thy friends, and yet art thou so loath to go from them to thy God? Thy friends that are weak are little useful or comfortable to thee; and those that are strong are the abler to hurt thee; and the best, if not heedfully used, will prove the worst. The better and keener thy knife is, the sooner and deeper will it cut thy fingers, if thou take not heed.

Yea, the very number of thy friends is a burden and trouble to thee. Every one supposeth he hath some interest in thee, yea the interest of a friend, which is not little; and how insufficient art thou to satisfy all their expectations, when it is much if thou canst answer the expectations of one. If thou wert divided among so many, as each could have but little of thee, so thyself, and God who should have most, will have none. And almost every one that hath not more of thee than thou canst spare for all, is ready to censure thee as unfriendly, and a neglecter of the duty or respects which thou owest them; and shouldst thou please them, all the gain will not be great, nor art thou sure that they will again please thee.

Awake then, O my drowsy soul, and look above this world of sorrows. Hast thou borne the yoke of afflictions from thy youth, and so long felt the smarting

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rod, and yet canst no better understand its meaning? Is not every stroke to drive thee hence; and is not the voice of the rod like that to Elijah, "What dost thou here?" Up and away. Dost thou forget that sure prediction of thy Lord, "In the world ye shall have trouble, but in Me ye shall have peace"? The first thou hast found true by long experience; and of the latter thou hast had a small foretaste; but the perfect peace is yet before which, till it be enjoyed, cannot be alearly understood.

Ah, my dear Lord, I feel Thy meaning; it is written in my flesh; it is engraven in my bones; my heart Thou aimest at. Thy rod doth drive, Thy silken cord of love doth draw, and all to bring it to Thyself. And is that all, Lord; is that the worst? Can such a heart be worth Thy having? Make it so, Lord, and then it is Thine; take it to Thyself, and then take me. I can but reach it toward Thee, and not unto Thee. I am too low, and it is too dull; this clod hath life to stir, but not to rise; legs it hath, but wings it wanteth. As the feeble child to the tender mother, it looketh up to Thee, and stretcheth out the hands, and fain would have Thee take it up. Though I cannot so freely say: "My heart is with Thee, my soul longeth after Thee," yet can I say, I long for such a longing heart. The twins are yet a-striving in my bowels; the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak; the spirit longs, the flesh is loath. The flesh is unwilling to lie rotting in the earth; the soul desires to be with Thee. My spirit crieth, "Let Thy kingdom come, or else let me come unto Thy kingdom"; but the flesh is afraid lest Thou shouldst hear my prayer, and take me at my word. What frequent contradictions dost Thou find in my requests, because there is such contradiction in myself. My prayers plead against my prayers, and one part begs a denial to the other. No

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wonder if Thou give me such a dying life, when I know not whether to ask for life or death. With the same breath do I beg for a reprieve and removal. And the same groan doth utter my desires and my fears. My soul would go, my flesh would stay. My soul would fain be out, my flesh would have Thee hold the door.

Oh, blessed be Thy grace that makes advantage of my corruptions, even to contradict and kill themselves! For I fear my fears, and sorrow for my sorrows, and groan under my fleshly groans; I loath my loathness, and I long for greater longings; and while my soul is thus tormented with fears and cares, and with the tedious means for attaining my desires, it addeth so much to the burden of my troubles, that my weariness thereby is much increased, which makes me groan to be at rest. Indeed, Lord, my soul itself also is in a strait, and what to choose I know not well, but yet Thou knowest what to give; to depart and be with Thee is best, but yet to be in the flesh seems needful. Thou knowest I am not weary of Thy work, but of sorrow and sin I must needs be weary. I am willing to stay while Thou wilt here employ me, and to despatch the work which Thou hast put into my hands, till these strange thoughts of Thee be somewhat more familiar, and Thou hast raised me into some degree of acquaintance with Thyself; but, I beseech Thee, stay no longer when this is done. Stay not till sin shall get advantage, and my soul grow earthly by dwelling on this earth, and my desires and delights in Thee grow dead.

But while I must be here, let me be still amending and ascending; make me still better, and take me at the best. I dare not be so impatient of living as to importune Thee to cut off my time, and urge Thee to snatch me hence unready, because I know my everlasting state doth so much depend on the improvement of

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this life. Nor yet would I stay when my work is done, and remain here sinning when my brethren are triumphing. I am drowning in tears while they swim in joys, I am weeping while they are singing, I am under Thy feet while they are in Thy bosom. Thy footsteps bruise and break this worm, while those stars do shine in the firmament of glory. Thy frowns do kill me, while they are quickened by Thy smiles. They are ever living, and I am daily dying. Their joys are raised by the knowledge of their endlessness, my griefs are enlarged by still expecting more. While they possess but one continued pleasure, I bear the successive assaults of fresh calamities; one billow falls in the neck of another, and when I am rising up from under one, another comes and strikes me down. Yet I am Thy child as well as they. Christ is my Head as well as theirs. Why is there then so great a distance? How differently dost Thou use us when Thou art Father to us all! They sit at Thy table, while I must stand without the doors. But I acknowledge the equity of Thy ways. Though we are all children, yet I am the prodigal, and therefore meeter in this remote country to feed on husks, while they are always with Thee and possess Thy glory. Though we all are members, yet not the same; they are the tongue and fitter to praise Thee; they are the hands and fitter for Thy service; I am the feet, and therefore meeter to tread on earth and move in dirt, but unfit to stand so near the head as they. They were once themselves in my condition, and I shall shortly be in theirs. They were of the lowest form before they came to the highest; they suffered before they reigned; they came out of great tribulation, who now are standing before Thy throne. And shall not I be content to come to the crown as they did, and to drink of their cup before I sit with them in the kingdom?

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The blessed souls of David, Paul, Austin, Calvin, Perkins, Bayne, Parker, Ames, Bradshaw, Dod, Preston, Stoughton, Sibbes, with all the spirits of the just made perfect, were once on earth, as I am now, as far from the sight of Thy face and glory, as deep in sorrows, as weak and sick and full of pains as I, their souls were longer imprisoned in corruptible flesh. I shall go but the way that they all did go before me; their house of clay did fall to dust, and so must mine. The world they are now in was as strange to them, before they were there, as it is to me. And am I better than all these precious souls? I am contented therefore, O my Lord, to stay Thy time and go Thy way, so Thou wilt exalt me also in Thy season, and take me into Thy barn when Thou seest me ripe. In the meantime, I may desire, though I am not to repine; I may look over the hedge, though I may not break over; I may believe and wish, though not make any sinful haste. I am content to wait, but not to lose Thee; and when Thou seest me too contented with Thine absence, and satisfying and pleasing myself here below, oh, quicken up then my dull desires, and blow up the dying spark of love, and leave me not till I am able unfeignedly to cry out: "As the hart panteth after the brooks, and the dry land thirsteth for the water streams, so thirsteth my soul after Thee, O God; when shall I come and appear before the living God?"; "till my daily conversation be with Thee in heaven, and from thence I may longingly expect my Saviour"; "till my affections are set on things above, where Christ is reigning, and my life is hid"; "till I can walk by faith and not by sight; willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord."

What interest hath this empty world in me? And what is there in it that may seem so lovely as to entice

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my desires and delights from Thee, or make me loath to come away? When I look about me with a deliberate undeceived eye, methinks this world is a howling wilderness, and most of the inhabitants are untamed, hideous monsters. All its beauty I can wink into blackness, and all its mirth I can think into sadness, I can drown all its pleasures in a few penitent tears, and the wind of a sigh will scatter them away. When I look on them without the spectacles of flesh, I call them nothing, as being vanity; or worse than nothing, as vexation. Oh, let not this flesh so seduce my soul as to make it prefer this weary life before the joys that are about Thy throne.

And though death of itself be unwelcome to nature, yet let Thy grace make Thy glory appear to me so desirable that the king of terrors may be the messenger of my joy. Oh, let not my soul be ejected by violence, and dispossessed of its habitation against its will, but draw it forth to Thyself by the secret power of Thy love, as the sunshine in the spring draws forth the creatures from their winter cells; meet it half way, and entice it to Thee, as the loadstone doth the iron, and as the greater flame doth attract the less. Dispel therefore the clouds that hide from me Thy love, or remove the scales that hinder mine eyes from beholding Thee; for only the beams that stream from Thy face, and the foresight or taste of Thy great salvation can make a soul unfeignedly to say, "Now let Thy servant depart in peace."

Reading and hearing will not serve; my meat is not sweet to my ear or to my eye; it must be a taste or feeling that must entice away my soul. Though arguing is the means to bend my will, yet if Thou bring not the matter to my hand, and by the influence of Thy Spirit make it not effectual, I shall never reason my soul to be willing to depart. In the winter, when it is cold and dirty without, I am loath to leave my chamber and fire, but in the

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summer, when all is warm and green, I am loath to be so confined; show me but the summer-fruits and pleasures of Thy paradise, and I shall freely quit my earthly cell.

Some pleasure I have in my books, my friends, and in Thine ordinances; till Thou hast given me a taste of something more sweet, my soul will be loath to part with these. The traveller will hold his cloak the faster when the winds do bluster, and the storms assault him, but when the sun shines hot, he will cast it off as a burthen; so will my soul, when Thou frownest, or art strange, be loather to leave this garment of flesh; but Thy smiles would make me leave it as my prison. But it is not Thy ordinary discoveries that will here suffice. As the work is greater, so must be Thy help. Oh, turn these fears into strong desires, and this loathness to die into longings after Thee! While I must be absent from Thee, let my soul as heartily groan under Thine absence, as my pained body doth under its want of health; and let not those groans be counterfeit or constrained, but let them come from a longing, loving heart, unfeignedly judging it best to depart and be with Christ. And if I have any more time to spend on earth, let me live as without the world in Thee, as I have sometime lived as without Thee in the world.

Oh, suffer me not to spend in strangeness to Thee another day of this my pilgrimage! While I have a thought to think let me not forget Thee, while I have a tongue to move let me mention Thee with delight, while I have a breath to breathe let it be after Thee and for Thee, while I have a knee to bend let it bow daily at Thy footstool; and when by sickness Thou confinest me to my couch do Thou make my bed, and number my pains, and put all my tears into Thy bottle. And as when my spirit groaned for my sins the flesh would not second it, but desired that which my spirit did abhor; so now, when

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my flesh doth groan under its pains, let not my spirit second it, but suffer the flesh to groan alone, and let me desire that day which my flesh abhorreth ; that my friends may not with so much sorrow wait for the departure of my soul, as my soul with joy shall wait for its own departure ; and then let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be as his, even a removal to that glory that shall never end.

Send forth Thy convoy of angels for my departing soul, and let them bring it among the perfected spirits of the just, and let me follow my dear friends that have died in Christ before me. And when my friends are weeping over my grave, let my spirit be reposed with Thee in rest ; and when my corpse shall lie there rotting in the dark, let my soul be in the inheritance of the saints in light. And O Thou that numberest the very hairs of my head, do Thou number all the days that my body lies in the dust ; and Thou that writest all my members in Thy book, do Thou keep an account of all my scattered bones ; and hasten, O my Saviour, the time of Thy return ; send forth Thine angels, and let that dreadful, joyful trumpet sound. Delay not, lest the living give up their hopes ; delay not, lest earth should grow like hell, and lest Thy Church by division be crumbled all to dust, and dissolved by being resolved into individual units. Delay not, lest Thine enemies get advantage of Thy flock ; and lest pride and hypocrisy, and sensuality, and unbelief should prevail against Thy little remnant, and share among them Thy whole inheritance ; and when Thou comest Thou find not faith on the earth. Delay not, lest the grave should boast of victory ; and, having learned rebellion of its guest, should plead prescription, and refuse to deliver Thee up Thy due.

Oh, hasten that great resurrection day, when Thy command shall go forth, and none shall disobey ; when

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the sea and earth shall yield up their hostages, and all that slept in the graves shall awake, and the dead in Christ shall first arise: when the seed that Thou sowest corruptible, shall come forth incorruptible; and graves that received but rottenness, and retained but dust, shall return Thee glorious stars and suns. Therefore dare I lay down my carcass in the dust entrusting it, not to a grave but to Thee, and therefore my flesh shall rest in hope, till Thou raise it to the possession of the everlasting rest. Return, O Lord, how long? Oh, let Thy kingdom come! Thy desolate bride saith "Come;" for Thy Spirit within her saith "Come," who teacheth her thus to pray with groanings after Thee, which cannot be expressed; the whole creation saith "Come," waiting to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; Thyself hath said, "Surely I come." "Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus."

CHAPTER XX

THE CONCLUSION

THUS, reader, I have given thee my best advice, for the attaining and maintaining a heavenly conversation. The manner is imperfect, and too much mine own, but for the main matter, I dare say, I received it from God. From Him I deliver it thee, and His charge I lay upon thee, that thou entertain and practise it. If thou canst not do it methodically, and fully, yet do it as thou canst; only, be sure thou do it seriously and frequently. If thou wilt believe a man that hath made some small trial of it, thou shalt find it will make thee another man, and elevate thy soul, and clear thine understanding, and polish thy conversation, and leave a pleasant savour upon thy heart, so that thy own experience will make thee confess, that one hour thus spent will more effectually revive thee than many in bare external duties; and a day in these contemplations will afford thee truer content than all the glory and riches of the earth.

Be acquainted with this work, and thou wilt be, in some remote sort, acquainted with God; thy joys will be spiritual and prevalent and lasting according to the nature of their blessed object; thou wilt have comfort in life, and comfort in death. When thou hast neither wealth nor health, nor the pleasures of this world, yet wilt thou have comfort; comfort without the presence or help of any friend, without a minister, without a book, when all means are denied thee, or taken from

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thee, yet mayest thou have vigorous, real comfort. Thy graces will be mighty and active, and victorious; and the daily joy which is thus fetched from heaven will be thy strength. Thou wilt be as one that standeth on the top of an exceeding high mountain; he looks down on the world as if it were quite below him; how small do the fields, and woods, and countries seem to him; cities and towns seem but little spots. Thus despicably wilt thou look on all things here below. The greatest princes will seem below thee but as grasshoppers, and the busy, contentious, covetous world, but as a heap of ants. Men's threatenings will be no terror to thee; nor the honours of this world any strong enticement; temptations will be more harmless, as having lost their strength; and afflictions less grievous, as having lost their sting; and every mercy will be better known and relished.

Reader, it is under God in thine own choice now whether thou wilt live this blessed life or not; and whether all this pains which I have taken for thee shall prosper or be lost. If it be lost through thy laziness (which God forbid) be it known to thee, thou wilt prove the greatest loser thyself. If thou value not this heavenly, angelical life, how canst thou say that thou valuest heaven? And if thou value it not, no wonder if thou be shut out. The power of godliness lieth in the actings of the soul; take heed that thou stick not in the vain deluding form. O man, what hast thou to mind but God and heaven? Art thou not almost out of this world already? Dost thou not look every day when one disease or other will let out thy soul? Doth not the bier stand ready to carry thee to the grave, and the worms wait to feed upon thy face and heart? What if thy pulse must beat a few strokes more? And what if thou have a few more breaths to fetch before thou breathe out thy last? And what if thou have a few more nights to sleep before thou sleep

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in the dust? Alas, what will this be when it is gone? And is it not almost gone already? Very shortly thou wilt see thy glass run out, and say thyself, "My life is done, my time is gone, it is past recalling, there is nothing now but heaven or hell before me!" Oh, where then should thy heart be now but in heaven?

Didst thou but know what a dreadful thing it is to have a strange and doubtful thought of heaven when a man lies dying, it would sure rouse thee up. And what other thoughts, but strange, can that man have, that never thought seriously of heaven, till then? Every man's first thoughts are strange about all things; familiarity and acquaintance comes not in a moment, but is the consequent of custom and frequent converse. And strangeness naturally raiseth dread, as familiarity doth delight. What else makes a fish or a wild beast fly from a man, when domestic creatures take pleasure in His company? So wilt thou fly from God (if thou knewest how) who should be thy only happiness, if thou do not get this strangeness removed in thy lifetime.

And is it not pity, that a child should be so strange to his own father, as to fear nothing more than to go into his presence, and to think himself best when he is furthest from him, and to fly from his face, as a wild creature will do from the face of a man? Alas, how little do many godly ones differ from the world, either in their comforts or willingness to die! And all because they live so strange to the place and fountain of their comforts. Besides a little verbal, or other outside duties, or talking of controversies and doctrines of religion, or forbearing the practice of many sins, how little do the most of the religious differ from other men, when God hath prepared so vast a difference hereafter! If a word of heaven fall in now and then in their conference, alas, how slightly is it, and customary, and heartless! And if their prayers

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or preaching have heavenly expressions, they usually are fetched from their mere invention, or memory, or books, and not from the experience or feeling of their hearts.

Oh, what a life might men live, if they were but willing and diligent! God would have our joys to be far more than our sorrows; yea He would have us to have no sorrow, but what tendeth to joy; and no more than our sins have made necessary for our good. How much do those Christians wrong God and themselves that either make their thoughts of God the inlet of their sorrows, or let these offered joys lie by, as neglected or forgotten! Some there be that say, "It is not worth so much time and trouble to think of the greatness of the joys above; so we can make sure they are ours, we know they are great." But as these men obey not the command of God, which requireth them to have their conversation in heaven, and to set their affections on things above; so do they wilfully make their own lives miserable, by refusing the delights that God hath set before them.

And yet if this were all, it were a smaller matter; if it were but the loss of their comforts, I would not say so much; but see what abundance of other mischiefs do follow the absence of these heavenly delights:

1. It will damp, if not destroy, our very love to God. So deeply as we apprehend His bounty, and exceeding love to us, and His purpose to make us eternally happy, so much will it raise our love. Love to God and delight in Him are still conjunct. They that conceive of God as one that desireth their blood and damnation cannot heartily love Him.

2. It will make us have seldom and displeasing thoughts of God, for our thoughts will follow our love and delight. Did we more delight in God than in anything below, our thoughts would as freely run after Him, as now they run from Him.

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3. And it will make men to have as seldom and unpleasing speech of God, for who will care for talking of that which he hath no delight in? What makes men still talking of worldliness or wickedness, but that these are more pleasant to them than God?

4. It will make men have no delight in the service of God, when they have no delight in God, nor any sweet thoughts of heaven, which is the end of their services. No wonder if such Christians complain that they are still backward to duty; that they have no delight in prayer, in sacraments, or in Scripture itself. If thou couldst once delight in God, thou wouldst easily delight in duty, especially that which bringeth thee into the nearest converse with Him; but till then no wonder if thou be weary of all, further than some external excellence may give thee a carnal delight. Doth not this cause many Christians to go on so heavily in secret duties, like the ox in the furrow, that will go no longer than he is driven, and is glad when he is unyoked.

5. Yea, it much endangereth the perverting of men's judgments concerning the ways of God and means of grace, when they have no delight in God and heaven. Though it be said, "*Perit omne judicium, cum res transit in affectum*," that judgment perisheth when things pass into affection," yet that is but when affection leadeth the judgment, and not when it followeth. Affection holdeth its object faster than bare judgment doth. The soul will not much care for that truth which is not accompanied with suitable goodness, and it will more easily be drawn to believe that to be false, which it doth not delightfully apprehend to be good; which, doubtless, is no small cause of the ungodly's prejudice against the ways of God; and of many formal men's dislike of extempore prayers, and of a strict observation of the Lord's day. Had they a true delight in God and heavenly things, it

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would rectify their judgments better than all the arguments in the world. Lose this delight once, and you will begin to quarrel with the ordinances and ways of God, and to be more offended at the preacher's imperfections than profited by the doctrine.

6. And it is the want of these heavenly delights in God that makes men so entertain the delights of the flesh. This is the cause of most men's voluptuousness and flesh-pleasing. The soul will not rest without some kind of delights. If it had nothing to delight in, either in hand, or in hope, it would be in a kind of hell on earth, vexing itself with continual sorrow and despair. If a dog have lost his master, he will follow somebody else. Men must have their sweet cups, or delicious fare, or gay apparel, or cards, or dice, or fleshly lusts, to make up their want of delight in God. How well these will serve instead of God, our fleshly youths will be better able to tell me when we meet at judgment. If men were acquainted with this heavenly life, there would need no laws against Sabbath-breaking and riotousness; nor would men need to go for mirth to an alehouse or a tavern; they would have a far sweeter pastime and recreation nearer hand.

7. Also, this want of heavenly delights will leave men under the power of every affliction; they will have nothing to comfort them and ease them in their sufferings but the empty, uneffectual pleasures of the flesh; and when that is gone, where then is their delight?

8. Also, it will make men fearful, and unwilling to die; for who would go to a God, or a place that he hath no delight in? Or, who would leave his pleasure here, except it were to go to better? Oh, if the people of God would learn once this heavenly life, and take up their delight in God, whilst they live, they would not tremble and be disconsolate at the tidings of death.

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9. Yea, this want of heavenly delight doth lay men open to the power of every temptation ; a little thing will tice a man from that which he hath no pleasure in.

10. Yea, it is a dangerous preparative to total apostasy. A man will hardly long hold on in a way that he hath no delight in ; nor use the means, if he have no delight in the end ; but as a beast, if you drive him a way that he would not go, will be turning out at every gap. If you be religious in your actions, and be come over to God in your outward conversation, and not in your delight, you will shortly be gone, if your trial be strong. How many young people have we known, who by good education, or the persuasion of friends, or for fear of hell, have been awhile kept up among prayers and sermons and good company, as a bird in a cage ; when, if they durst, they had rather have been in an alehouse, or at their sports ; and at last, they have broke loose, when their restraint was taken off, and have forsaken the way that they never took pleasure in ! You see, then, that it is not a matter of indifferency whether you entertain these heavenly delights or not ; nor is the loss of your present comfort all the inconvenience that follows the neglect.

And now, Christian friends, I have here lined you out a heavenly, precious work ; would you but do it, it would make you men indeed. To delight in God is the work of angels, and the contrary is the work of devils. If God would persuade you now to make conscience of this duty, and help you in it by the blessed influence of His Spirit, you would not change your lives with the greatest prince on the earth. But I am afraid, if I may judge of your hearts by the backwardness of my own, that it will prove a hard thing to persuade you to the work, and that much of this my labour will be lost. Pardon my jealousy ; it is raised upon too many and sad experiments,

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What say you? Do you resolve on this heavenly course or no? Will you let go all your sinful, fleshly pleasures, and daily seek after these higher delights?

I pray thee, reader, here shut the book, and consider of it; and resolve on the duty before thou go further. Let thy family perceive, let thy neighbours perceive, let thy conscience perceive, yea, let God perceive it, that thou art a man that hath thy daily conversation in heaven. God hath now offered to be thy daily delight; thy neglect is thy refusal. What, refuse delight, and such a delight! If I had propounded you only a course of melancholy, and fear, and sorrow, you might better have demurred on it. Take heed what thou dost; refuse this, and refuse all; thou must have heavenly delights, or none that are lasting. God is willing that thou shouldst daily walk with Him, and fetch in consolations from the everlasting fountain; if thou be unwilling, even bear thy loss; and one of these days when thou liest dying, then seek for comfort where thou canst get it, and make what shift for contentment thou canst; then see whether thy fleshly delights will stick to thee, or give thee the slip; and then conscience, in despite of thee, shall make thee remember that thou wast once persuaded to a way for more excellent pleasures, that would have followed thee through death, and have lasted thee to everlasting.

What man will go in rags that may be clothed with the best, or feed on pulse, that may feed of the best, or accompany with the vilest, that may be a companion to the best and admitted into the presence and favour of the greatest? And shall we delight so much in our clothing of flesh, and feed so much on the vain pleasures of earth, and accompany so much with sin and sinners, when heaven is set open, as it were, to our daily view, and God doth offer us daily admittance into His presence?

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Oh, how is the unseen God neglected, and the unseen glory forgotten, and made light of, and all because they are unseen; and for want of that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things that are not seen.

But for you, sincere believers, whose hearts God hath weaned from all things here below, I hope you will value this heavenly life, and fetch one walk daily in the new Jerusalem. I know God is your love, and your desire; and I know you would fain be more acquainted with your Saviour, and I know it is your grief that your hearts are not more near Him; and that they do no more freely and passionately love Him and delight in Him. As ever you would have all this mended, and enjoy your desires, oh, try this life of meditation on your everlasting rest! Here is the Mount Ararat where the fluctuated ark of your souls must rest. Oh, let the world see, by your heavenly lives, that religion lieth in something more than opinions and disputes and a task of outward duties; let men see in you, what a life they must aim at.

If ever a Christian be like himself, and answerable to his principles and profession, it is when he is most serious, and lively in this duty; when as Moses, before he died, went up into Mount Nebo, to take a survey of the land of Canaan; so the Christian doth ascend this mount of contemplation, and take a survey by faith of his rest. He looks upon the glorious delectable mansions, and saith: Glorious things are deservedly spoken of thee, O thou City of God; he heareth, as it were, the melody of the heavenly choir, and beholdeth the excellent employment of those spirits, and saith: Blessed are the people that are in such a case; yea, blessed are they that have the Lord for their God; he next looketh to the glorified inhabitants of that region, and saith: Happy art thou, O the Israel of God, a people saved by the Lord, the shield

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of thy strength, the sword of thine excellence. When he looketh upon the Lord Himself, who is their glory, he is ready with the rest to fall down and worship Him that liveth for ever, and say, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come: Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power." When he looks on the glorified Saviour of the saints he is ready to say, "Amen" to that new song, "Blessing, honour, glory, and power be to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever: for He hath redeemed us out of every nation by His blood, and made us kings and priests to God." When he looketh back on the wilderness of this world, he blesseth the believing, patient, despised saints; he pitieth the ignorant, obstinate, miserable world; and for himself, he saith as Peter, "It is good to be here;" or as David, "It is good for me to draw near to God;" for, all those that are far from Him shall perish.

Thus as Daniel in his captivity did three times a day open his window toward Jerusalem, though far out of sight, when he went to God in his devotions; so may the believing soul, in this captivity to the flesh, look towards Jerusalem which is above; and as Paul was to the Colossians, so may he be with the glorified spirits, absent in the flesh but present in spirit, joying in beholding their heavenly order. And as divine Bucholcer, in his last sermon before his death, did so sweetly descant upon those comfortable words "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life," that he raised and ravished the hearts of his, otherwise sad, hearers; so may the meditating believer do, through the Spirit's assistance, by his own heart. And as the pretty lark doth sing most sweetly, and never cease her pleasant ditty, while she hovereth aloft, as if she were there gazing into the glory of the sun, but is suddenly silenced when she

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falleth to the earth; so is the frame of the soul most delectable and divine while it keepeth in the views of God by contemplation; but alas, we make there too short a stay, but down again we fall, and lay by our music.

But, O Thou, the merciful Father of spirits, the Attractive of love, and Ocean of delights, draw up these drossy hearts unto Thyself, and keep them there till they are spiritualised and refined; and second these Thy servant's weak endeavours; and persuade those that read these lines to the practice of this delightful, heavenly work. And oh, suffer not the soul of thy most unworthy servant to be a stranger to those joys which he unfoldeth to Thy people, or to be seldom in that way which he hath here lined out to others; but oh, keep me, while I tarry on this earth, in daily serious breathings after Thee and in a believing, affectionate walking with Thee. And when Thou comest, oh, let me be found so doing, not hiding my talent, nor serving my flesh, nor yet asleep with my lamp unfurnished, but waiting and longing for my Lord's return, that those who shall read these heavenly directions may not read only the fruit of my studies, and the product of my fancy, but the breathings of my active hope and love; that if my heart were open to their view, they might there read the same most deeply engraven with a beam from the face of the Son of God; and not find vanity or lust or pride within, where the words of life appear without; that so these lines may not witness against me, but proceeding from the heart of the writer, may be effectual through Thy grace upon the heart of the reader, and so be the savour of life to both. Amen.

“Glory be to God in the highest;
On earth peace:
Good will toward men.”

APPENDIX

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OR

A Treatise of the Blessed State of the Saints in their enjoyment of God in glory : Wherein is shewed its Excellency and Certainty; the Misery of those that lose it, the way to Attain it and Assurance of it; and how to live in the continual delightful Foretasts of it, by help of Meditation.

Written by the Author for his own use, in the time of his languishing, when God took him off from all Publike Employment; and afterwards Preached in his weekly Lecture :

BY RICHARD BAXTER, TEACHER OF THE CHURCH OF
KEDERMINSTER IN WORCESTERSHIRE.

THE THIRD EDITION

My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart,
and my portion for ever. *Psa.* lxxiii. 26.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most
miserable. *1 Cor.* xv. 19.

Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the Earth,
For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.
When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also
appear with him in glory. *Coloss.* iii. 2, 3, 4.

Because I live, ye shall live also. *John* xiv. 19.

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in Fleet Street, near the Inner Temple gate, 1652.

APPENDIX

[II. EXTRACT FROM THE "DEDICATION OF THE WHOLE,"
WHICH EXTENDS TO THIRTEEN CLOSELY PRINTED
PAGES.]

*To my dearly beloved Friends, the Inhabitants of the
Borough and Foreign of Kidderminster, both Magis-
trates and People.*

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

Being, in my quarters far from home, cast into extreme languishing, by the sudden loss of about a gallon of blood after many years foregoing weakness, and having no acquaintance about me, nor any books but my Bible, and living in continual expectation of death, I bent my thoughts on my Everlasting Rest. And because my memory, through extreme weakness, was imperfect, I took my pen and began to draw up my own funeral sermon or some helps for my own meditations of heaven to sweeten both the rest of my life and my death. In this condition God was pleased to continue me about five months from home, where, being able for nothing else, I went on with this work, which so lengthened to this which here you see.¹ It is no wonder, therefore, if I be too abrupt in the beginning, seeing I then intended but the length of a sermon or two; much less may you wonder if the whole be very imperfect, seeing it was written, as it were, with one foot in the grave by a man that was betwixt living and dead, that wanted strength of nature to quicken invention or affection, and had no book but his Bible while the chief part was finished, nor had any mind of human ornaments if he had been furnished. But oh, how sweet is this Providence now to my review, which so happily forced me to that work of meditation which I had formerly found so profitable to my soul, and shewed me more mercy in depriving me of other helps than I was aware of; and hath caused my thoughts to

[¹ About twice the length of this edition.]

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feed on this heavenly subject which hath more benefited me than all the studies of my life.

And now, dear friends, such as it is I here offer it to you, and upon the bended knees of my soul I offer up my thanks to the merciful God, who hath fetched up both me and it as from the grave for your service; who reversed the sentence of present death which by the ablest physicians was passed upon me; who interrupted my public labours for a time that He might force me to do you a more lasting service which else I had never been like to have attempted.

Your most affectionate,
though unworthy Teacher,
RICHARD BAXTER.

KIDDERMINSTER,
Jan. 15, 1649.

[III. DEDICATION OF THE FIRST PART.]

*To the Right Worshipful Sir Thomas Rous, Baronet,
with the Lady Jane Rous, His Wife.*

RIGHT WORSHIPFUL,—This first part of this Treatise was written under your roof, and therefore I present it not to you as a gift, but as your own; not for your protection, but for your instruction and direction; for I never perceived you possessed with that evil spirit which maketh men hear their teachers, as their servants, to censure their doctrine or be humoured by them rather than to learn. Nor do I intend this epistle for the publishing of your virtues. You know to whose judgment you stand or fall. It is a small thing to be judged by man's judgment. If you be sentenced as righteous at the bar of Christ, and called by Him the blessed of His Father, it matters not much by what name or title you are here called. All saints are low in their own esteem, and therefore thirst not to be highly esteemed by others. He that knows what pride hath done in the world, and is now doing, and how close that heinous sin doth cleave to all our

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natures, will scarce take him for a friend who will bring fuel to the fire, nor that breath for amicable which will blow the coal.

Yet He that took so kindly by a woman's box of ointment as to affix the history to His Gospel, that wherever it was read that good work might be remembered, hath warranted me by His example to annex the mention of your favours to this treatise, which have many times far exceeded in cost that which Judas thought too good for his Lord. And common ingenuity commandeth me thankfully to acknowledge that when you heard I was suddenly cast into extreme weakness you sent into several counties to seek me in my quarters, and, missing of me, sent again to fetch me to your house, where for many months I found a hospital, a physician, a nurse, and real friends, and (which is more than all) daily and importunate prayers for my recovery; and since I went from you, your kindnesses still following me in abundance. And all this for a man that was a stranger to you, whom you had never seen before, but, among soldiers, to burden you; and for one that had no witty insinuations for the extracting of your favours nor impudency enough to return them in flatteries; yea, who had such obstructions betwixt his heart and his tongue that he could scarce handsomely express the least part of his thankfulness, much less able to make you a requital.

The best return I can make of your love is in commending this heavenly duty to your practice, wherein I much entreat you to be the more diligent and unwearied because, as you may take more time for it than the poor can do, so have you far stronger temptations to divert you; it being extremely difficult for those that have fulness of all things here to place their happiness really in another life and to set their hearts there as the place of their rest; which yet must be done by all that will be saved. Study Luke xii. 16-22 and xvi. 19-25. How little comfort do all things in this world afford to a departing soul! My constant prayer for you to God shall be that all things below may be below in your heart, and that you may thoroughly master and mortify the desires of the flesh; and may daily live

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above in the Spirit, with the Father of Spirits, till you arrive among the perfected spirits of the Just.

Your much obliged servant,

RICHARD BAXTER.

IV. The following "Table," compiled by Baxter, is reproduced from the edition of 1652, and will give readers who desire it full information of the contents of the book as it was published by the Author.

The chapters marked with an asterisk are those included in the present edition.

PART I. [184 pp.]

CHAP.

* I. The Text Explained—

Qu. Doth this Rest remain to a determinate number of Persons elect? Or only to Believers in general?

Qu. Is it theirs only in possibility or in certainty?

* II. The definition of Rest; and of this Rest—

Qu. Whether to make the obtaining of Rest and avoiding misery the end of our duties be not Legal or Mercenary?

* III. Twelve things which are presupposed to this Rest.

* IV. What this Rest containeth—

1. Cessation from all that motion which is the means to attain the end.
2. Perfect freedom from all evil.
3. The highest degree of personal Perfection.
4. Our nearest fruition of God, the chief good.
5. A sweet and constant action of all the powers in this fruition. As 1. Of the senses and tongue and whole body; 2. Of the Soul. And (1) Understanding. As 1. Knowledge; 2. Memory. (2) Affections. As by Love; by Joy. This Love and Joy will be mutual.

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* V. The four great antecedents and preparatives to this Rest—

1. The Coming of Christ.
2. Our Resurrection.
3. Our justification in the great Judgment.
4. Our solemn Coronation and Inthroning.

* VI. This Rest tried by nine rules in Philosophy or Reason, and found by all to be the most excellent state in general.

* VII. The particular excellencies of this Rest—

1. It is the fruit of Christ's blood, and enjoyed with the purchaser.
2. It is freely given us.
3. It is the Saints' peculiar.
4. In associating with Angels and perfect Saints.
5. Yet its joys immediate from God.
6. It will be a seasonable Rest.
7. And a suitable Rest. (1) To our Natures. (2) Desires. (3) Necessities.
8. A perfect Rest. (1) In the Sincerity of it. (2) And Universality.
1. Of good enjoyed. 2. And of the evil we are freed from.

We shall Rest (1) from sin, and that (*a*) of the understanding, (*b*) from sin of Will, Affection, and Conversation.

(2.) From suffering. Particularly—

- a.* From all doubts of God's love.
- b.* From all sense of His displeasure.
- c.* From all Satan's temptations.
- d.* From temptations of the world and flesh.
- e.* From persecutions and abuses of the world.
- f.* From our own Divisions and Dissensions.
- g.* From participating in our brethren's sufferings.
- h.* From all our own personal sufferings.
- i.* From all the labour and trouble of duty.
- k.* From the trouble of God's absence.
9. As it will be thus perfect, so everlasting.

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- VIII. The People of God described ; the several parts of the description opened ; and therein many weighty controversies briefly touched ; and, lastly, the description applied by way of examination.

PART II. [114 pp.]

- A Preface directed—1. To them that doubt of the truth of Scripture ; 2. To the Papists ; 3. To the Orthodox, about the right way of asserting the Divine Authority of Scripture.
- I. The certain truth of this Rest proved by Scripture.
- II. Persuasions to study and preach the divine authority of Scripture.
- III. Certain Distinctions concerning Scripture.
Sixty Positions concerning Scripture.
- IV. The first argument to prove Scripture the Word of God.
That arguing from Miracles testified by man is no Popish resolving our faith into human Testimony.
The excellency of this argument from Miracles.
What the Sin against the Holy Ghost is.
The necessity of using human Testimony.
The use of Church governors and Teachers, and how far they are to be obeyed.
The excellent use of Antiquities for matter of fact.
- V. The second Argument to prove Scripture God's Word.
- VI. The third Argument to prove Scripture God's Word.
- VII. The fourth Argument to prove Scripture God's Word.
Of extraordinary Temptations.
Of Apparitions.
Of Satan's possessing and tormenting men's bodies.
Of Witches, and the devil's compact with them.
The necessity of a Written Word.

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VIII. This Rest remaineth to none but the People of God.

IX. Reasons why our Rest must remain till the Life to come, and not be enjoyed in this Life.

* X. Whether separated souls enjoy Rest before the Resurrection. Proved that they do in a great measure by twenty arguments.

PART III. [368 pp.]

I. The first Use, shewing the inconceivable misery of the wicked in their loss of this Rest.

The greatness of their loss.

1. They lose all the personal perfection of Soul and Body which the Saints have.
2. They lose God Himself.
3. They lose all those spiritual, delightful affections by which the blessed do feed on God.
4. They lose the society of Angels and Saints.

II. The Aggravations of the wicked's loss of heaven.

1. Their understandings will be cleared to know its worth.
2. And also enlarged to have deeper apprehensions of it.
3. Conscience will fully apply it to themselves.
4. Their affections will be more lively and enlarged.
5. Their memories strong to feed their torments.

Ten things concerning their loss of this Rest which it will for ever torment them to remember.

III. Aggravations from the losses which accompany the loss of Rest.

1. They shall lose their present presumptuous conceit of God's favour to them, and of their part in Christ.

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2. They shall lose all their hopes.
3. They lose their present ease and peace.
4. They shall lose all their carnal mirth.
5. And all their sensual contentments and delights.

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IV. The greatness of the damned's torments opened.

By eight aggravations of them.

The certain truth of these torments.

The intolerableness of this loss and torment discovered by ten questions.

V. The Second Use. Reproving the general neglect of this Rest, and exciting to the utmost diligence in seeking it.

1. To the worldly-minded that cannot spare time.
2. To the profane, ungodly, presumptuous multitude.
3. To lazy, formal, self-deceiving Professors; and of these (1) to the opinionative hypocrite, and (2) the worldly hypocrite.
4. To the godly themselves for their great negligence; Magistrates, Ministers, and People.

VI. An exhortation to the greatest seriousness in seeking Rest.

Twenty lively considerations to quicken us up to the greatest diligence that is possible.

Ten more very quickening considerations.

Ten more very quickening, by way of question.

Ten more peculiar to the godly, to quicken them.

VII. The Third Use. Persuading all men to try their title to this Rest; and directing them in this trial.

Self-examination defined and explained.

The nature of Assurance, or certainty of Salvation opened; How much, and what the Spirit doth to

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the producing it; And what Scripture, what Knowledge, what Faith, what Holiness and Evidences, what Conscience or internal sense, and what Reason or Discourse do in this Work.

What the seal of the Spirit is; what the testimony of the Spirit; and what the testimony of conscience.

Against the common distinction of certainty of evidence and of adherence.

That we are justified and beloved of God is not properly to be believed, much less immediately, and by all men.

That Assurance may be here attained, though not perfect Assurance.

Hindrances that keep from Examination. 1. Satan.
2. Wicked men. 3. Hindrances in our own hearts.

Hindrance of Assurance in those that do examine.

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VIII. Further Causes of want of Assurance among the most of the godly themselves.

1. Weakness and small measure of grace.
2. Looking more what they are, than what they should do to be better.
3. Mistaking or confounding Assurance and the Joy of Assurance.
4. Ignorance of God's way of conveying Assurance.
5. Expecting a greater measure than God usually giveth here.
6. Taking up comfort in the beginning on unsound or uncertain grounds, when yet perhaps they have better grounds, and do not see them; and then when the weakness of their grounds appears, they cast away their comforts too, as if all were naught.
7. Imperfection of Reason and natural parts.

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8. The secret maintaining some known sin.
9. Growing lazy in the spiritual part of duty, and not keeping graces in constant action.
10. Prevalency of melancholy in the body.

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IX. An exhortation to examine our title to Rest. Several Motives.

X. A direction how to manage the work of Self-Examination thoroughly that it may succeed. Two marks whereby you may infallibly judge.

XI. A more exact inquiry into the nature of sincerity, and direction concerning the use of marks in self-examination; and discovery how far a man may go and not be saved.

XII. The Fourth Use. The reasons of the Saints' afflictions in this life.

Some considerations to help us to bear them joyfully, drawn from their reference to this Rest.

Some objections of the Afflicted answered.

XIII. An exhortation to those that have got Assurance of this Rest or title to it, to do all that possibly they can to help others to the like.

1. Here is shewed (1) Wherein the duty doth consist. Directions are added for right performance. Besides the great duty of private exhortation, we must help them to enjoy, use, and improve the public ordinances.

2. The Common Hindrances of faithful endeavours to save men's souls.

Some objections against this duty answered.

Motives to persuade all Christians to this duty.

XIV. An Advice to some more especially to help others to this Rest. Pressed largely on Ministers and Parents. And—

1. To men of ability.

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2. Or interest.
3. Physicians.
4. Rich men, and men of command.
5. To Ministers. Five means which they must use.
6. To Parents and Masters of families. Several Considerations to urge them to the performance.
Some of their objections answered.
Directions to Parents for teaching their children.
The sum or fundamentals of Divinity which children and others must first be taught.
Some further directions, only named.

PART IV. [304 pp.]

Introduction.

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- * I. Reproving our expectation of Rest on earth, with divers reasons^s against it.
- * II. Reproving our loathness to Die and go to our Rest.
The heinous aggravations of this sin.
Considerations against it, and to make us willing ;
and objections answered.
- * III. A Directory for a heavenly life. Reproof of our unheavenliness ; and exhortations to set our hearts above.
Twelve moving considerations to heavenly-mindedness.
- IV. Seven great Hindrances of heavenliness to be avoided.
- * V. Ten general Helps to a heavenly life.
- * VI. The great duty of heavenly meditation described, and the description explained.

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VII. Directions :

1. Concerning the fittest Time for this meditation.
2. Concerning the fittest Place.
3. Concerning the preparation of the heart to it.

* VIII. Of Consideration, and what power it hath to move the soul.

IX. What faculties and affections must be acted in this Contemplation.

By what objects and considerations, and in what order. More particularly—

1. The exercise of Judgment.
2. The acting of Faith.
3. The acting of Love.
4. The acting of Desire.
5. The acting of Hope.
6. The acting of Courage, or holy Boldness and Resolution.
7. The acting of Joy.

* X. By what actings of the Soul to proceed to this work of heavenly Contemplation, besides Cogitation. As :

1. Soliloquy. Its parts and method.
2. Speaking to God.

* XI. Some advantages for raising and affecting the Soul in its meditations of heaven. In general by making use of sense or sensitive things. Particularly (1) by raising strong suppositions from sense. (2) By comparing the objects of sense with the objects of faith.

Twelve helps by comparison to be affected with the joys of Heaven.

* XII. Direction how to manage and watch over the heart, while we are in this work of Contemplation.

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- * XIII. An Abstract, or brief sum of all, for the help of the Weak.
- * XIV. An Example of the acting of Judgment, Faith, Love, Joy, and Desire by this duty of Heavenly Meditation.
- * The Conclusion; Commending this duty from its necessity and excellency.

THE END

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