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Shaw







Rev. Samuel Shaw.

THE

WORKS

OF

REV. SAMUEL SHAW, M. A.

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN LONDON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

FIRST AMERICAN FROM THE ENGLISH EDITIONS,

CORRECTED AND IMPROVED.

VOL I.

BOSTON:

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF GEORGE CLARK,
FOR REV. DANIEL OLIVER.

1821.

DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, to wit:

District Clerk's Office.

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the twenty-sixth day of July, A. D. 1820, in the forty-fifth of the independence of the United States of America, DANIEL OLIVER, of the said District, has deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following, *to wit*: "The Works of Rev. Samuel Shaw, M. A. Minister of the Gospel in London. In two volumes. First American, from the English editions, corrected and improved. Vol. 1."

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JNO. W. DAVIS, *Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.*



MEMOIRS
OF THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

SAMUEL SHAW, M. A. was born of religious parents at Repton, in Derbyshire, in the year 1635, and educated in the free school there, at that time the best in those parts of England. He went from thence to the University at Cambridge, in England, at fourteen years of age, where he was chamber-fellow with Dr. Morton. Upon the completion of his studies he went to Tamworth, in Warwickshire, and was usher in the free school, and became master in 1656. When that reverend person, Mr. Blake, died, in 1657, Mr. SHAW pronounced an eloquent oration at his funeral, after Mr. Anthony Burgess had preached a sermon: They both were printed, and, such as have perused them must think a conjunction of three such men as the deceased, and the two speakers, a singular happiness to that neighbourhood. From Tamworth Mr. SHAW removed to Mosley, a small place in the borders of Worcestershire, being invited there by Col. Greavis, of that place, who had so great a respect for him that he showed him much kindness. At his coming thither, he was ordained by the Classical Presbytery at Wirksworth, in Derbyshire; and in 1658, by the assistance of Mr. Gervas Pigot, of Thrumpton, he obtained a presentation from the Protector to the Rectory of Long-Whatton, worth one hundred and fifty pounds per ann.

This was in the gift of the Crown. In June this year, 1658, he had full and peaceable possession of this place, and continued so to have till King Charles's return in 1660. Upon this event, fearing some disturbance might arise, he, in the month of September, that year, obtained, without much difficulty, a fresh presentation under the great seal of England, the former incumbent, Mr. Henry Robinson, being dead, and two more who enjoyed it after him. But though his title was thus corroborated, yet Sir John Prettyman made interest with the Lord Chancellor Hyde, and they found means to remove Mr. SHAW, in 1661, about a year before the act of uniformity passed; and introduced

one Mr. Butler, who had no manner of title to the place. He was a man of such mean qualifications, and so little respected in the parish, that some of them told Sir John, that they heard Mr. Butler had given him a pair of coach-mares to get for him the living; but they would give him two pair to get him out, and put Mr. SHAW in again. Mr. SHAW now quitted the church, because he could not satisfy himself to conform to the new terms. Though he was not properly turned out by the uniformity act, yet he was silenced by it, and never after had any public living. He was afterwards offered his living without any other condition than that of re-ordination. But he used to say that he would not lie to God and man, in declaring his Presbyterian ordination invalid.

Upon Mr. SHAW's leaving Whatton he removed to Cotes, a small Village near to Loughborough, in the same county. During his residence here his family was afflicted with the plague, receiving the infection from some relations, who came from London to avoid it, about harvest time in 1665. He then preached in his own house to his friends and family, and afterwards published that useful and excellent book called, "The welcome to the Plague," from *Amos*, iv. 12. *Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.* He buried two children, two friends, and one servant, of that dreadful distemper, but he and his wife, who both had it, escaped with their lives; not being ill both at once, they looked after, and attended one another, and the rest of the family, which was a great mercy; for none of the people in the neighbourhood durst come to his assistance. He was in a manner shut up for about three months together. Mr. SHAW was forced, not only to attend his sick; but to bury his dead himself in his own garden.*

* How sore an affliction Mr. SHAW must in these circumstances have undergone, cannot be easily conceived, but great, amazingly great it must have been. But hear how the good man speaks in his preface to his piece entitled, "The Welcome to the Plague," which was drawn up and published on the occasion. "Let me call on men and angels, says he, to help me in celebrating the infinite and almighty grace and goodness of the eternal and blessed God, who enabled me to *abide the day of his coming*, *Mal. iii. 2.* to stand when he appeared; and made me willing to suffer him to sit as a refiner of silver in my house; who carried me above all murmurings against, I had almost said, all remembrance of those instruments that conveyed the infection to me; who reconciled my heart to this disease, so that it seemed no more grievous or noisome than any other;

Towards the latter end of the year 1666, he removed to Ashby de la Zouch, in the same county; and was chosen to be sole school-master of the free school, in 1668. The revenue was then but small, and the school-buildings were quite out of repair, and the number of scholars few. But Mr. SHAW, by his diligence, and prudent managing the business, soon got the salary augmented, not only for himself, but for all succeeding school-masters; and by his interest

who subdued me, I had almost said, brought me in love with this passage of the divine will. I can remember, (alas! that I can say little more but that I do remember,) how my soul was overpowered, yea, and almost ravished with the goodness, holiness, and perfection of the will of God; and verily judged it my happiness and perfection, as well as my duty to comply cheerfully with it and be moulded into it; who gave me a most powerful and quick sense of the plague of a carnal heart, self-will, and inordinate creature-love, convincing me that those were infinitely worse than the plague in the flesh; who wonderfully preserved me from the assaults of the devil; never let him loose so much as to try his strength upon my integrity, to drive me to a despondency, or to any uncharitable conclusion concerning my state; who enabled me to converse with his love and mercy in the midst of his chastening; to see his shining and smiling face through this dark cloud; yea, kept up clear and steady persuasions in my soul that I was beloved of him, though afflicted by him; who knew my soul in adversity, visited me when I was sick, and in prison, refreshed, strengthened, and comforted my inner man in a marvelous manner and measure, and made me appear to myself never less shut up, than when shut up. O would to God I might be never worse than when I was shut up of the plague! The not removing that affliction-frame I shall count a greater blessing, and a more proper mercy, than the removing that afflicted state. Who cleared up my interest in his Son, strengthened my evidence of his love, and satisfied and assured my soul of its happy state more than at all times formerly. I had clearer and surer evidences of divine grace in that patient, self-denying, self-submitting frame of spirit, than in all the duties that ever I performed. The valley of tears brought me more sight of my God, and more insight into myself, than ever the valley of vision, all duties and ordinances had done. When the Sun of righteousness arose on my soul, and chased away all the mists and fogs of self-will, and creature-love, then also did all black and dismal fears, all gloomy doubting most sensibly flee before him. Who supplied my family from compassionate friends with all things needful for food, physic, &c. The Lord return it sevenfold into their bosom! Who maintained my health in the midst of sickness, in the midst of so great a death! I do not remember that either sorrow of mind, or sickness of body ever prevailed so much on me, during three months seclusion, as to hinder me of my ordinary study, repast, devotions, or my necessary attendance on my several

among gentlemen, he collected money for the building of a good school-house, and also for a gallery for the convenience of the scholars in the church. Such a benefactor was he to that town, and such the lasting monuments of his praise! Then he had another difficulty, which was, how to procure a license, without subscription to such things as his conscience could not allow of. But this difficulty was soon removed, for by means of lord Conway, he obtained from Archbishop Sheldon a license to teach school any where in his whole province, and this without so much as once seeing or waiting on the archbishop. A license being also necessary from the bishop of the diocess, Mr SHAW got a friend to make his application to Dr. Fuller, who was at that time bishop of Lincoln. This friend put into his Lordship's hands Mr. SHAW's late book occasioned by the plague in his family, in order to satisfy him of the author's real worth. The Bishop was so much pleased with the piety, peaceableness, humility, and learning discovered in the piece, that he gave Mr. SHAW a license on such a subscription as his own sense dictated and inserted; and said that he was glad to have so worthy a man in his diocess on any terms! He added, that he understood there was another book of his in print called Immanuel, which he desired to see.

infected rooms, and administering to the necessities of the sick. These ensuing discourses were then composed, which do at least argue that, through grace, his mind was not altogether discomposed, nor body neither. Who preserved me and gave me not up to death; for I judge that I was personally visited with the plague, though not with the sickness. Who hath given me a sincere and settled resolution, and vehement desire to live entirely on, and to himself; which I account to be the only life of a soul, and only worthy to be called a living. Grant me this prayer, O most blessed and gracious God, for the sake of my only and dear Redeemer!

“Thou, O Lord God, who art witness to all my thoughts, and words, and works, knowest that in truth and soberness I publish these things to the world, not to advance the reputation of my own silly name, or to be admired of my fellow-creatures, but for the glory of thine holy name, to beget a good liking of so gracious a Creator in all thy poor creatures, who are prejudiced against thee, and thine holy service; and to strengthen the hearts of thy servants to a most firm and lasting adherence to thee, even in the greatest extremities; that thou mayest be admired in thy saints, and glorified for giving such power, and grace and comfort unto men.” *Aud O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men, Ps. cvii. 8.*

MR. SHAW being thus settled in his school, his piety, learning and mild temper soon raised its reputation, and increased the number of scholars above any school in those parts; having often one hundred and sixty boys, or more, under his care; so that he always kept one, and for a great while two ushers to assist him. His own house, and others in the town, were continually full of boarders, from London and other distant parts of the kingdom. Several divines of the Church of England, namely, Mr. Sturges, of All-Saints, in Derby, Mr. Walter Horton, afterwards one of the Canons of Litchfield, and many gentlemen, physicians, lawyers, and others, owed their school-learning to his good instructions.

He endeavoured to make the youth who were under his care, in love with piety; to principle them in religion betimes, by his good advice, and to allure them to it by his pious example. MR. SHAW was affable in his temper, and pleasures, and facetious in his conversation. His method of teaching was winning and easy. He had great skill in finding out the tempers and dispositions of his scholars, and adapting himself to them. He was of a peaceable disposition, very humble, and was frequently employed, and very successful in his endeavours to reconcile differences among mankind. His charity was universal. He thought others were better than himself. He relieved the indigent, freely taught poor children, where he discovered in them a disposition to learning, and afterwards procured for them assistance to perfect their studies at the University. He did indeed excellent service in the work of education: mild and gentle in his disposition, by kindness and love he gained the hearts of his scholars. His school is said to have been of great advantage to the trading part of the town. He was of a public and generous spirit, and was always ready to encourage any good and benevolent designs. He was given to hospitality, and happy when he could make his friends so. In principle, he was moderate; but in the practice of moral virtue, he was much engaged. Though he did not, in every thing, agree with the Vicar of the place, yet he kept up a constant correspondence with him. When the liberty of the Dissenters was settled by acts of Parliament, he licensed his school for a place of religious worship, but so contrived his meetings as not to interfere with the public assemblies, nor to diminish the congrega-

tion: for he preached at noon between the sermons at church, and constantly attended there both parts of the day with all his scholars, his family and all his hearers: so that the public assembly was hereby considerably augmented, and the weekly lecture was chiefly attended by him and his scholars. The first time he used his school-room he preached from *Acts*, xix. 9. "*Disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.*" But such was his prudence and conciliatory disposition, that he was on the most friendly terms with the Vicar of the place. He corresponded also with Dr. Barlow, the Bishop of Lincoln, to whom he presented his book of Meditations, which has been generally esteemed, and read with great profit. Upon which his Lordship, who was a great reader, and good judge of books, and as considerable a casuist as most in his age, wrote him the following letter. "My reverend brother, I have received your's, and this comes (with my love and respects) to bring my thanks, for the rational and pious book you so kindly sent me. Though my businesses be many, and my infirmities more, (being past 74,) yet I have read all your book, and some parts of it more than once, with great satisfaction and benefit. For in your meditations of the love of God and the world, (I am neither afraid nor unwilling to confess it, and make you my confessor,) you have instructed me in several things, which I knew not before, or at least, considered not so seriously, and so often as I might and ought. One great occasion, or cause, why we love our gracious God less, and the world more than we should, is want of knowledge, or consideration. God himself, *Isaiah* i. 2, 3. complains of this, and calls heaven and earth to witness the justice of his complaints. "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." It is strange, and yet most true, that the ox and ass, irrational and stupid creatures, should honour their masters who feed and take care of them, and yet men, rational creatures even Israel, God's only church and people, whom he had miraculously preserved and nourished, should neither honour nor consider. This consideration is *our duty*, and the want of it *our sin*, (a sin of omission,) and therefore it is no wonder if it be a moral cause or occasion of some consequent sin of commission; so that the best men, (by reason

of the old man, and the remains of corruption in them,) may, and many times do sin, and come short of fulfilling the law and doing their duty, when they want this consideration, or such a degree and measure of it as is required to the moral goodness of an action. Suppose a man tempted to commit adultery, murder, perjury, or any such sin; if such a man would seriously consider the nature of the sin he is going to commit, that it is a transgression of the law of his God, to whom he owes all he has, both for life and livelihood; that it pollutes his soul; that it dishonours his gracious God and heavenly Father; that it makes him obnoxious to eternal misery, both of body and soul; I say, he who considers this, as all should, would certainly be afraid to commit such impieties. Now of such considerations you have given us many in your book, and those grounded on the clear light of nature, or on evident reason, or revelation: and it is my prayer and hope, that many may read, and (to their great benefit) remember, and practise them. I am well pleased with your discourse against usury; which, as it is commonly, and without fear or remorse, confidently managed, I take to be one of the crying sins of our ungrateful nation. I remember that in 1645, in Oxford, two rich and understanding gentlemen came to the lord-primate of Ireland, Dr. Usher, desiring to know his opinion, whether usury was lawful. He knew, and they confessed, that they had money at use, and they gave their reasons which induced them to believe that their taking use was innocent and lawful. The good primate patiently heard them, and (without farther dispute, or answering their reasons, as they called them, which they had brought for the lawfulness of usury) said, "come, gentlemen, I believe you are willing in this case to take the safest way for your souls. They replied, yes, that was their desire. Well, said the primate, then your safest way will certainly be to take our blessed Saviour's advice (or command rather) and lend freely, expecting nothing, no use again." For if you lend freely you do an act of charity, and so are certainly secured from all fear of sin in that particular: but if you take use, it is an hundred to one but you sin, and become liable to that curse and punishment which fatally follows it. The gentlemen, like him in the Gospel, went away sorrowful, for they were rich and had great possessions, and to increase them continued their usury. So that

I think you may safely say, as you do, that usurers are lovers of the world.

“Give me leave faithfully, and as a friend, to add one thing more. In your second page, there is, I believe, a little mistake. For you seem to say, that James, who wrote the canonical epistle, was brother to John the apostle. Now it is certain, that among the apostles there were two of that name. 1. James the son of Zebedee, and brother of John. 2. James the son of Alpheus, *Mat. x. 2, 3.* who was called James the less. *Mark xv. 40.* whose mother was Mary, who was sister to the virgin Mary; and so our blessed Saviour and James the son of Alpheus were sisters, children, cousin-germans. Now that James the son of Zebedee, and brother of John, did not write that canonical epistle, will be certain, if we consider, 1st. that James, brother of John, was slain by Herod Agrippa, *Acts, xxii. 2.* which was Anno Christi 44 or 45. And 2dly, If it be considered, that the epistle of James was not written till the year of Christ 63. For so Baronius, Sympson, and the best chronologers assure us. They say that the epistle of James was not wrote till almost twenty years after James the brother of John was slain by Herod: and therefore it is certain he neither did nor could write it. I beg your pardon for this tedious, and I fear impertinent scribble. My love and due respects remembered. I shall pray for a blessing on you and your studies: and your prayers are heartily desired by and for your affectionate friend and brother,

THOMAS LINCOLN.

Buckden, March, 16, 1631.

For my reverend friend, Mr. SAMUEL SHAW, at his house in Ashby de lay Zouch.”

If such a correspondence as this had been carried on between the Bishops of the Church of England and Dissenters, it might have produced much better effects than the great distance which has been generally observed on both sides. So engaged was Mr. SHAW in doing good, that for the space of almost thirty years he was earnestly employed to make the world better, though with no great gains to himself. It was his chief aim to live usefully, and he thought that was considerable reward to itself. He was of middle stature, and his countenance not very penetrating; like another Melancthon, who could not fill a chair with a

big look, and portly presence ; but his eye was brilliant and sparkling, and his conversation witty, savoury, affable and pertinent. He was ready at harmless repartees and innocent jests, with a mixture of poetry, history, and other polite learning calculated to promote cheerfulness in conversation, and was careful not to hurt the feelings of his company. But his greatest excellency was in religious discourse, in praying and preaching. One who knew him well writes as follows ; “ I have known him spend part of many days and nights too in religious exercise, when the times were so dangerous that it would hazard an imprisonment for a person not to be drunk, or be in a harlot’s house or tavern, but to be worshipping God with five or six more like minded with himself. I have sometimes been in Mr. SHAW’s company for a whole night together, when we have been obliged to steal to the place in the dark, stop out the light and stop in the voice, by cloathing, and fast closing the windows, till the first day-break down a chimney has given us notice to be gone. I bless God for such seasons. If some say it was needless to do so much, I reply, the care of souls and eternity, which only was minded there, requires more. I say, I bless God for the remembrance of them, and for Mr. SHAW at them, whose melting words in prayer I can never forget. He had a most excellent faculty in speaking to God with reverence, humility, and an holy awe of his presence, filling his mouth with arguments : by his strength he had power with God ; he wept and made supplication : he found him in Bethel, (such were our assemblies,) and there our God spake with us. I have heard him for two or three hours together pour out prayer to God, without tautology or vain repetition, with that vigour and fervour, and those holy words that imported faith and humble boldness, as have dissolved the whole company into tears,” &c. In short a mixture of so much learning and humility, wit and judgment, piety and pleasantness, is rarely found in any, as met in Mr. SHAW. He lived beloved, and died lamented, January 22, 1696, in the fifty ninth year of his age.

His funeral sermon was preached by Mr. William Crosse, his brother-in-law, from Luke xxiii. 28.

What happy prophet shall his mantle find,
Heir to a double portion of his mind ?

WATTS.

THE
VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN A
WILDERNESS ;
OR,
THE BUSINESS OF A CHRISTIAN ;
IN SEVERAL SERMONS,
FIRST PREACHED TO HIS OWN FAMILY,
AND NOW MADE PUBLIC.

All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies, *Ps. xxv. 10.*

Mala pœnalìa non sunt vere mala, quia fluunt a summo bono, nimirum Deo ; ducunt ad summum bonum, nimirum fruitionem Dei ; et erant in summo bono, nimirum Christo.

BIEL.

The evils of punishment are not truly evils ; for they flow from the chiefest Good, even GOD ; they lead to the chiefest Good, the enjoyment of GOD ; and are found in the chiefest Good, even CHRIST JESUS.

PREFACE.

It is now more than seven months since it pleased the holy and wise God to visit my house with the plague, when some dear and Christian friends from London were with me, whereby he gently touched and gave warning to myself and whole family, consisting then of eight souls, but called away only three members of it, *viz.* two tender babes and one servant, besides my beloved sister, and a child of my precious friend, that man of God, Mr. G. C. since also translated, who were of those citizens that visited me. You will easily believe that I can have no pleasure to rake into the ashes of the dead, nor to revive the taste of that wormwood and gall, which was then given me to drink ; and yet I see no reason why I ought not to take pleasure in the pure and holy will of God, which always proceeds by the eternal rules of Almighty love and goodness, though the same be executed upon my dearest creature-comforts, and bear hardly or ever so much upon my sweetest earthly interest ; yea, and I see all reason in the world why I should give to God the glory of his attributes and works before all the world, and endeavour that some instruction may accompany that astonishment, which from me and my house hath gone out and spread itself far and near. I will not undertake to make any physical observations upon this unaccountable disease, nor to vindicate myself from that great guilt that is charged upon me, as if I were a sinner above all that dwell in this country, or from those many false and senseless aspersions that have been cast upon my behaviour during this visitation, much like that we read of, *Matt.* xxviii. 13. ; but do freely commit myself to him that judgeth righteously ; and pray with the Psalmist, *Ps.* lxxix. 6. *Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake : let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel.* Neither do I purposely undertake in this preface to reconcile the providence of the most wise God to his promises, or the seeming difference between the words of his mouth and the language of his hands ; between which I have only suspected some kind of jar, but have experienced an excellent harmony : *in very faithfulness hast thou afflict*

ed me. Whence arise all these uncharitable censures with which the afflicted soul is apt to charge both himself and his God too? Spring not they certainly from these two grand causes, *viz.* a misapprehension of the nature of God, and of the nature of good and evil? Let the studious and pious reader search and judge. If ever therefore you would be established in your minds in a day of affliction; 1. "Labour to be rightly informed concerning the nature of God." Away with those low and gross apprehensions of God, whereby your carnal fancies do ascribe unto God such a kind of indulgence towards his children as you bear towards yours, which indeed no way agrees to his nature. His good-will towards his children, is a solid, wise, and holy disposition, infinitely unlike to our human affections. *Soli Deo competit, amare et sapere.* [God only can at the same time exhibit both love and wisdom.] 2. "Labour to be rightly informed concerning the nature of good and evil." Judge not the goodness or badness of things by their agreeableness or disagreeableness to your fleshly palate, or carnal interest, but by the relation that they have to the supreme good. The greatest prosperity in the world is no further good, than as it tends to make us partakers of God; and the greatest affliction may thus be really good also. But my design is to justify and glorify infinite wisdom, righteousness, goodness, and holiness before all men. Oh blessed be God! who makes a seeming dungeon to be indeed a delightful place; who brings his poor people into a wilderness, purposely that he may there speak comfortably to them! Be of good cheer O my soul! he hath taken away nothing but what he gave; and, instead of it, hath given thee that which shall never be taken away, the first fruits of life, instead of those whom the first-born of death hath devoured. But why do I say devoured? doth not that truly live at this day, which was truly lovely in those darlings? Didst thou, O my fond heart! love beauty, sweetness, ingenuity in earthly bodies, and canst thou not love it still in the Fountain, and enjoy it in a more immediate and compendious way. Thy body indeed cannot taste sweetness in the abstract, nor see beauty except it be subjected in matter; but canst not thou, O my soul, taste the uncreated goodness and sweetness except it be embodied, and have some material thing to commend it to thy palate? Be ashamed that thou, being a spirit as to thy constitution, art no more

spiritual in thy affections and operations. Dost thou with sadness reflect upon those sweet smiles, and that broken rhetoric, with which those babes were wont to entertain thee? 1. Consider duly what of real contentment thou hast lost in losing those.—For, what were those things to thy real happiness? Thou hast lost nothing, but what it was no solid pleasure nor true felicity to enjoy; nothing but what the most sensual and brutish souls do enjoy as much as thou. 2. Be ashamed rather that thou didst enjoy them in such a gross and unspiritual manner. Art thou troubled because any earthly interest is violated? rather be ashamed that thou hadst and didst cherish any such interest.

But pardon me, courteous readers, this digressive soliloquy; and now suffer me patiently, whilst I speak something by way of admiration, something by way of observation, and something by way of exhortation.

1st, Let me call upon men and angels, to help me in celebrating the infinite and almighty grace and goodness of the eternal and blessed God,—who enabled me to *abide the day of his coming*, Mal. iii. 2.—to stand when he appeared; and made me willing to suffer him to sit as a refiner of silver in my house;—who carried me above all murmurings against, I had almost said, all remembrance of those instruments that conveyed the infection to me;—who reconciled my heart to this disease, so that it seemed no more grievous or noisome than any other;—who subdued me to, I had almost said, brought me in love with this expression of the divine will. I can remember (alas! that I can say little more than that I do remember) how my soul was overpowered, yea, and almost ravished with the goodness, holiness, and perfection of the will of God; and verily judged it my happiness and perfection, as well as my duty to comply cheerfully with it and be moulded into it;—who gave me a most powerful and quick sense of the plague of a carnal heart, self-will, and inordinate creature-love, convincing me that those were infinitely worse than the plague in the flesh;—who wonderfully preserved me from the assaults of the devil; never let him try his strength upon my integrity, to drive me to a despondency, or to any uncharitable conclusions concerning my state;—who enabled me to converse with his love and mercy in the midst of his chastening; to see his shining and smiling face through this dark cloud; yea, kept up clear and steady

persuasions in my soul that I was beloved of him, though afflicted by him;—who knew my soul in adversity, visited me when I was sick, and in prison, refreshed, strengthened, and comforted my inner man in a marvellous manner and measure, and made me appear to myself never less shut up, than when shut up. O would to God I might be never worse than when I was shut up with the plague! That he did not remove that frame so suitable for affliction, I shall account a greater blessing, and a more proper mercy, than his removing that afflicted state.—Who cleared up my interest in his Son, strengthened my evidences of his love, and satisfied and assured my soul of its happy state more than at all times before. I had clearer and surer evidences of divine grace in that patient, self-denying, submissive frame of spirit, than in all the duties that I ever performed. The valley of tears brought me more sight of my God, and more insight into myself, than ever the valley of visions, all duties and ordinances had done. When the sun of righteousness arose upon my soul, and chased away all the mists and darkness of self-will, and creature-love, then also did all black and dismal fears, all gloomy doubting most sensibly flee before him.—Who supplied my family from compassionate friends with all things needful for food, physic, &c. The Lord return it sevenfold into their bosoms!—Who maintained my health in the midst of sickness, in the midst of so great a death! I do not remember that either sorrow of mind, or sickness of body ever prevailed so much upon me, during three months seclusion, as to hinder me of my ordinary study, repast, devotions, or my necessary attendance upon my several infected rooms, and administering to the necessities of my sick. The ensuing Discourses were then composed; which do at least prove that, through grace, my mind was not altogether discomposed, nor body neither.—Who preserved me and gave me not up to death! for I judge that I was personally visited with the plague, though not with the sickness.—Who hath given me a sincere and settled resolution, and vehement desire to live entirely upon, and to himself; which I account to be the only life of a soul, and only worthy to be called living. Grant me this prayer, O most blessed and gracious God, for the sake of my only and dear Redeemer!

Thou, O Lord God, who art witness to all my thoughts, and words, and works, knowest that in truth and soberness

I publish these things to the world, not to advance the reputation of my own worthless name, or to be admired of my fellow creatures; but for the glory of thy holy name, to produce a love of so gracious a Creator in all thy poor creatures, who are prejudiced against thee, and thy holy service; and to strengthen the hearts of thy servants to a most firm and lasting adherence to thee, even in the greatest extremities; that thou mayest be admired in thy saints, and glorified for giving such power, and grace, and comfort unto men. And *O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works in and to the children of men*, Ps. cvii. 8.

2dly, Suffer me to make a short observation of some few memorable passages, out of many; possibly they may be for the future, though they should not be for your present advantage. The Lord direct you to make a right application of them, according to the emergencies of life!

1. I do thankfully record the gracious design of the holy, and wise God, in that he had secretly prepared my heart, though at the time I knew not particularly for what. I remember, that forsome few weeks before, I had found a more than ordinary largeness and readiness of soul; particularly that I had been studying the excellent mystery, and extracting the strengthening marrow of that remarkable text, 1 *John* iv. 8, God is love: from whence I had importunately pressed upon myself the reasonableness of complying sweetly, cheerfully, universally with the will of God, little dreaming then of the plague, which was almost an hundred miles off. Oh blessed and merciful God, who of old didst make Abraham, and even now makest his and thy children, to follow thee, though they know not well whither!

In the next place, I count it most worthy of my observation, (not unworthy of your consideration,) that it pleased God to seize upon my family in the beginning of harvest; a harvest which I had too earnestly expected, too carefully provided for, and promised myself too liberally from; of which folly and vanity of mind, this visitation, thus sent, did as clearly convince (methought) as if I had seen a handwriting upon the wall. I am ashamed, yet I will not hesitate to confess before all the world, (God grant it may be for the seasonable and effectual warning of many,) that my vain mind was very pleasantly, not to say eagerly, drawn

out towards secular and worldly, though necessary employments and concernments: and thus I was rebuked.

Upon examination I find, that verily I have been guilty concerning my children. I do not remember that ever any man reprov'd me for immoderately loving them, or could reprove me for any indulgence that could be by human eyes discern'd; but oh! I see and feel it as a sword at my heart, that I loved them not so purely, spiritually, and properly in God as I ought to have done. Philosophy will easily prove it to be a more tolerable vanity to dote upon a child, than upon a kingdom; but christian divinity doth abundantly demonstrate all creature fondness unreasonable and intolerable.

The next thing that I will record shall be, the difficult task that I found to maintain a right humble, and a right cheerful frame at the same time. Oh how oft and how long did I labour under this difficulty! That sense of sin which was call'd in to promote tenderness of heart, being over much indulg'd, was ready at length to destroy that largeness and cheerfulness of soul which it was so much my duty and interest to maintain: and, on the other hand, the sense of divine wisdom, grace, and love in Christ Jesus being call'd in to keep up the soul from sinking, was ready to bear it up so high, that it almost forgot that it was in the waters. Beware, Christians, and watch diligently, that godly sorrow do not settle into an ungodly despondency and inconsolable heaviness, the soul not being able to bear up under its own burden; and that a holy cheerfulness and serenity do not evaporate into an unholy trifling and forgetfulness of your infirmities, the soul not being able to manage its own metal and motions.

I know you would willingly understand something of the frame of my heart at that day, relative to my departure out of this world: you will best read my heart in the ensuing discourse upon 2 *Cor.* v. 6. which I think was deriv'd from that source. I shall therefore say no more about this matter; only acquaint you with one eminent experience relating hereunto. My mind, or fancy, or appetite, (I know not well what to call it,) was sometimes inditing in me some desires to live yet longer. I entered the lists with this temptation, and when I had fairly and calmly debated the ground and reason of such inclination, after many evasions and pretences, it came to this, I would fain persuade myself

I was not yet holy enough : to this I did immediately assent, knowing it to be a certain truth ; but that therefore I should desire to prolong my days upon earth, was a fallacious inference. Methought I pleased myself a while, whilst I could say, I desired to live only to become better : but after a time, I apprehended a fallacy in this pretence ; for the way to be perfected in holiness, is not by living, but indeed by dying. Christians, if indeed your souls be sincerely and powerfully affected towards perfect holiness, then sing not so much with David, *Spare me that I may recover*, &c. as with good old Simeon, who having seen God in the flesh, desired to go out of the flesh, that he might see him more fully and beautifully ;—*Now lettest thou thy servant depart*, &c. I cannot enlarge upon this observation ; I suppose I have hinted enough to shew that those pretences of many men, (*viz.* that they would fain live to be more fit to die,) to be, for the most part, but a kind of mockery and self-deceit.

Lastly, (That I be not over tedious,) I do solemnly and sincerely profess before God, angels, and men, that I was never so much as inclined to think hardly of God, or his good and holy ways, because of this dispensation ; but did then constantly and freely proclaim, to all that came to visit me, that sin, particularly self-will and sensual love, is the worst of plagues, and holiness the only happiness of man ; yea, afflicted holiness infinitely to be preferred before prosperous wickedness.

3dly, Suffer me, as a conclusion of this preface, and as a result from all that I have seen and suffered, to commend unto you, a few excellent and necessary duties. I have much difficulty to forbear being copious here ; but I have already transgressed ; therefore I will wave those common themes of remembering your Creator betimes ; of hearkening to the voice of his word, before his rod speak ; of living in continual preparation for death, of repenting and renewing repentance, &c. and only commend two or three things, which seem to me of most excellent and necessary importance ;

—*petimusque damusque vicissim.*

[—We ask and give by turns.]

1. “Love and enjoy all things in God.” Admire divine goodness in every created excellency, and taste a divine sweetness in every created comfort. O how is the noble

soul of man debased, pinched, confined, by low and sensual loves; whilst many men love the creature in opposition to the Creator, most men in competition with him, and almost all men in a way of separation from him! Oh base and degenerate affections! Let God be all things in your eye, so that you shall neither see, nor know, nor love, nor taste any thing but him in the world. Deliver yourselves (oh immortal souls, to whom I write) from all those low, and straightening, and starving creature-loves, and long and labour to be filled with pure, and holy, and spiritual delights, such as the angels of God have, such as the Son of God had, when he made it his meat and drink to do the will of his Father.—But this you will find more largely prosecuted and urged in the last of the following discourses: therefore,

2. “Live purely at the pleasure of God, and maintain an universal and hearty compliance with his holy and perfect will.” Believe it, you will never enjoy a firm and steady peace, till you have committed all your wills and ways to him, and wrapt up all your interests and ends in him; till your hearts be conformed to the honour of God, and your wills moulded into his will. It is a difference of wills and ends, and a distinction of interests, that begets all these ragings and stormings in the hearts of men against God: *mine* and *thine* do not only divide the world amongst men, but divide men against God, earth against heaven. Take this for a certain and undoubted precept, that “the grand interest of a soul is to comply with, and be one with God.” Communion of hearts, and wills, and interests, and ends, is that glorious fellowship, which a creature hath with its Creator; it is indeed the interest and honour, the duty and dignity, yea, the heaven and happiness of the reasonable creature. But something to this purpose you will find in the first discourse.

3. I beseech you, christians, be not contented to say, you have chosen God for your chief good, but, “pursue after him as such, without grudging, and without ceasing, longing to be as much one with him, in a participation of divine perfections, as our created natures are capable of.” Maintain a holy and secret striving of soul towards this blessed object continually, as a thing moves towards its centre, as a soul ought to endeavour to accomplish its own perfections: stand not waiting for a heaven to come; but labour to draw down all that peace, joy, love, purity, which make heaven,

into your own souls, by growing up into the life of God daily. Reckon that you are never in a right temper, except you be in David's temper, when he waited for God, *more than they that watch for the morning*, when his soul broke for the longing that it had unto him at all times. I say not, that you should prepare for death; that seems too low, both word and thing: look and live beyond death and the grave; be lifting up your heads to discover the dawns of the day of your redemption; be laying hold upon immortality, and eternal life. Something to this purpose you will find in the second discourse, whither I refer you.

And now accept, I pray you, these poor labours, which, for the glory of my God, I make public, that since, with Hezekiah, I may not go up to the house of the Lord, to declare the goodness of the Lord, yet I may leave some monument of it in writing, as he did, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness. I will add no more, but intreat all serious and devout readers to magnify the holy name of God on my behalf, adding thereunto their earnest prayers to God for me, *viz.* that the same fire that burnt up the standing corn of my creature-comforts, may also happily consume the stubble of my creature delights and loves; that my God would give me *a name better than of sons and of daughters*, the blessed fruits of his Spirit instead of the beloved fruits of the womb; that I may for ever live under the most powerful influences of this dispensation; and that the glory of the Lord may never depart out of the temple of my soul, as it departed out of the temple made with hands.

Now, to the God of all grace and peace be all praise and glory! To him I commit you all, and rest

Your friend and servant

In Christ Jesus,

Feb. 27, 1665.

SAMUEL SHAW.

Quod sani quæsumus, hoc invenimus ægri:

Quæ nequii vallis visus, tulit hæc lachrymarum.

[What we ask for in health, we obtain when sick: What the valley of vision could not do, this the vale of tears has effected.]

A WELCOME TO THE PLAGUE.

PART I.

Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

AMOS iv. 12.

BEGINNING at the 6th verse of this sermon of the prophet, the Lord reckons up the many fearful plagues wherewith, from time to time, he had assayed to reclaim this perverse people, the ten tribes of Israel; but concludes the relation with a doleful epiphonema, *Yet have ye not returned unto me.* It is not my business to enquire into the several plagues, the clear meaning of them, or the particular time when they took place or ended, nor into the impenitence and stubbornness of the people; though many useful things might be observed from hence. But in the conclusion, because none of these judgments had prevailed upon them, God resolves to trouble himself with them no longer, but to destroy them utterly. All that he had done to them in the land, had not prevailed; therefore now he will cast them, and carry them out of the land, by the overflowing scourge of an Assyrian captivity. This threatening he denounces in the second and third verses, *I will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks, &c.* And after he had

reckoned up the many calamities whereby he had sought to bring them to repentance, but they repented not, and so had demonstrated the equitableness of this final judgment, he re-assumes the same threatening, and persists in his former resolution, ver. 12. *Therefore thus will I do unto thee; and then adds, Because I will do this unto thee, therefore prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.*

Which words may either be understood ironically, by way of derision of all their vain confidences and refuges; and then the doctrine is, "That there is no standing before, nor striving against, nor flying from God, when he comes to execute vengeance;" which is an excellent truth, and of great use. Or else the words may be understood seriously, by way of exhortation. The doubt seems to arise from the ambiguous meaning of the word meet: which signifies both to meet in a hostile manner, to assault, invade, or grapple with, as a man meets his enemy; so it is used concerning David addressing himself to fight with Goliath, 1 *Sam.* xvii. 48. *He ran to meet the Philistine;* and also to meet in a friendly amicable manner, by way of communication, colloquution, salutation, or converse; so it is used concerning Isaac going to meet Rebekah, *Gen.* xxiv. 65. and concerning God's meeting of Balaam, to speak with him, and impart his mind to him, *Numb.* xxiii. 4. If we take the word in the first sense, then it is spoken by way of irony or derision, and so the meaning of the words is contained in the proposition that I have laid down. If we take the word in the latter sense, then it is spoken seriously, by way of exhortation; and so the meaning of them may be thus expressed:—

“That it is the duty of God’s people to study a right behaviour towards him, and to converse with him aright in the way of his judgments, in the time of their afflictions.” And in this sense I shall take them, and prosecute them. Besides that general, unalterable godly frame and behaviour, which God’s people owe to him as a standing duty, and indispensable homage, there are some more especial behaviours and tempers which they owe to him in special cases and are duties *pro hic et nunc* [resulting from situation and circumstances,] as the season requireth; particularly, there are some special behaviours required of our hands in the time of our affliction; and these towards ourselves, as self-examination, self-judging, renewing of repentance, &c. Towards men, meekness, compassion, instructing, warning, comforting, &c. Towards God, as we shall presently point out. An afflicted condition doth call for some more especial tempers and behaviour towards ourselves and others: but these I am not to speak unto from this text. It is the soul’s meeting God, behaviour towards him, conversing with him, that my text leads me to treat of, and I shall not vary from it. In handling of which position, I shall take this method.

I. Premise some things needful to be known concerning the soul’s conversing with God; for I shall retain the word *conversing* throughout my discourse, as being a single, yet a large and significant word.

II. Shew what it is for a soul to converse with God; and how it comes to converse with him.

III. Prove the doctrine, that it is our duty to converse with God in the way of his judgments.

IV. Shew particularly, how we are to converse with God in the time of afflictions.

V. Apply it.

1. I shall premise some things needful to be known, that tend to clear up my way to the following discourse.

1. "It is the great duty of man to converse with God." I have read, that it was a common precept that the Jewish doctors were wont to give to the people, that they should single out some one commandment, and exercise themselves very diligently in the observation of it, that therein they might make God their friend, and make him some amends for the breach of many others. I fear it is a rule by which too many professors of Christianity live, who not having the genuine and generous spirit of true religion, do parcel out their obedience into some little portions of homage and devotion, and instead of consecrating their whole lives to God, do content themselves with some circumstantial and light obedience, and think themselves people of great attainments, if they do but severely tie up themselves to hearing the Gospel preached twice a day, and a few other acts of more solemn worship. Certainly this is a penurious and needy spirit, much unlike the generous, ample, and free-born spirit of true religion. The duty, the whole duty, the constant duty of man, is to converse with God, commended in Enoch by the name of *walking with God*, Gen. v. 22. where you may observe of him, that he did not only set out fairly

with God, and take a turn or two with him; but he walked with him three hundred years together. The same God calls for from Abraham, under the same name, *Gen. xvii. 1. Walk before me, and be thou perfect.* But it is not only the command of God that makes this a duty; if there had been no express commandment concerning it, yet would it be the duty of every man, necessarily flowing from his relation to God as a rational creature. As man is a creature, so he must needs live upon God; and as a rational creature, so he ought to live with him, and unto him. Therefore hath God given unto man a noble rational soul, not only that he might talk and work, manage the creatures, and converse with the world, but that he might converse with the God of the world, that infinite, blessed and glorious Being. This is the very end of man's creation, as man, as a rational creature; this was the end of his being created in the image of God; and when he was fallen from this image, this was the end of his redemption by Christ Jesus, that heaven and earth might be reconciled, and those that were far off might be brought nigh. Sin is a sinking of the soul down to self and the creature; and redemption from sin is nothing else but a recovery of the soul into a state of favour and fellowship with God; so that whatever is expressed by faith and repentance, is contained in this one word, converse with God. It is the great, the necessary, and, as I may say, the natural duty of the rational soul.

2. "It is the highest privilege of man." The prerogative of man above the beast is his rea-

son; and the glory of reason is, that it is capable of knowing, loving, enjoying, and conversing with the supreme and infinite Good. The privilege of reason is not, as too many think, that it is capable of understanding arts and sciences; that it is capable of searching into the nature and course of the heavenly bodies, diving into the secret depths of the earth and sea, and the creatures therein contained; but in conversing with the infinite and glorious God. How miserably do vulgar souls abuse this noble faculty, who exercise it only in discoursing, numbering, and ordering the poor concerns of the world and the body! Yea, certainly those wise men, those scribes, disputers of this world, as the apostle calls them, who exalt this faculty, and glory so much in it, and yet do not exercise it about that high and eternal being, do not converse with God in pure affections, and God-like dispositions and conversations, but expend those vast treasures of reason upon secrets in art, secrets in state, or some other created being, do enthrall their own souls, which they say are so free-born, and captivate and confine that noble principle, which they themselves do so much magnify; for sin is certainly the great and holy shame and reproach of an immortal soul. And indeed these men, though they put their souls to a more noble drudgery, are really no more happy than the vulgar sort, who spend the strength of their souls about eating and drinking, plowing and sowing, or keeping of cattle. What difference, I pray you, in point of true happiness, is there between

boys playing with pins and points, and old men clinging to their gold and lands? The noblest sciences, the greatest commands, the most enriching traffics, are as really toys in comparison of true happiness, as the poor dunghill-possessions of vulgar men; and the wise, the rich, the learned, the honourable, that take up with an employment in this world, and with a happiness in themselves, or in any creature, do as much disgrace their own souls, and as truly live below their own faculties, as he doth, that knows no higher good than to toil all his days in a ditch. For indeed, as to all things but conversing with God, man seems to be but equal, perhaps inferior to the beasts that perish. Doth man eat, drink, sleep, work? so do they. Doth man find any sensual pleasure which the beasts do not enjoy as well as he? Nay, the gormandizing emperor envied the crane's long neck; and others have envied the more able and permanent lusts of the brute beasts, because themselves have been inferior to them therein, and have enjoyed less sensual pleasure than they. If any glory in their knowledge of natural and political things, I could produce instances of the strong memory, great sagacity, quick fancy, wonderful perceptions of many beasts, and their strange knowledge of many secrets, which they never learned by books, nor gathered gradually by observation; and as for man's communication of his notions by words and phrases, I doubt not to affirm that there is something similar to be found in beasts and birds; yea, that very beauty and flower of sound, even music, which some men magnify so much, is more

fairly and sweetly uttered by the silly bird that sits solitarily upon a bough, than by the choristers of the pope's cathedral. What solid prerogative worth naming remains to man above his fellow-creatures, but his conversing with God, which we call religion, and is indeed reason rectified, sanctified, exalted, and increased to its pure and primitive perfection! in so much that I have sometimes thought that I never heard a more reproachful word spoken concerning degenerate man, neither do I think that any thing can be spoken of him more shameful and dishonourable than what the apostle saith of the heathen, *Eph. ii. 12.*—*Without God in the world.* By conversing with God in the world, is man truly raised above the beasts, and the godly man above all other men; nay, hereby is the godly soul advanced to the dignity and glory of the holy angels, or at least to a parity of happiness; for it is this that is their perfection and glory, as we find it described in *Matt. xviii. 10.*—*They also behold the face of God.* And therefore our blessed Saviour doth affirm, that the saints in the resurrection, who shall be raised above all creature communion, to live upon God singly and entirely, shall be equal to the angels of God, *Luke, xx. 36.* In a word, this is the most real heaven, setting aside all circumstances of place, &c. the perfect and proper happiness of a soul, to see God, *Matt. v. 8.* to be like unto him, *1 John iii. 2.* to converse with the Father by the Son, as our Saviour hath told us, who best knew it, *John xvii. 3.* *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* By this it is, that

God dwells in the soul, and the soul in God, as we shall see hereafter; and the kingdom of heaven doth really enter into every believer.

3. "The natural man is utterly unwilling and unable to converse with God." An earthly mountain may as soon rise up to heaven by its own power and good-will, as an earthly mind; and such are all natural and unregenerate minds. Sin, as I hinted before, is a falling from God, a sinking of the soul into self, whether sensual self or spiritual self, and a contracting of it into the creature; and the sinful soul is always, like a shadow, moving upon the surface of the earth, and higher it cannot get, *Rom. viii. 5.* Would you know what is the principle object of a natural man's admiration, inclination, and ambition? The Psalmist will tell you, it is some created good, *Psal. iv. 6. 7.* Would you know what is the disposition of the natural man towards the supreme uncreated Good? The apostle will tell you, it is ignorance and enmity, *1 Cor. ii. 14. Rom. viii. 7.* *The carnal mind is enmity against God.* This high duty of conversing with God in a right manner, is not pleasing to the temper of the wicked man: never any such man did perform it. It is a contradiction: a wicked man conversing with God is, as if one should say, an ungodly man that is godly. But that is not all: this duty is not only out of the hands of a wicked man, but out of his reach too, *Neither can he know him,* saith the apostle to the Corinthians; and again to the Romans,—*Neither can he be subject to him. Can two walk together except they be agreed?* saith the prophet: Can man walk with God, converse with God, ex-

cept he be reconciled to him? And what agreement but by a Mediator? What Mediator between God and man but Christ Jesus, who is a Mediator, as the logicians call a *medium participationis*, who is God-man? In a word, some converse with one thing in the world, and some with another, as I noted before; but all converse principally and mainly with the creature, that are not regenerated by grace, and reconciled by Christ.

4. "It is the duty of man, in all ages of life, at all times, and in all places and conditions, to converse with God." It is a necessary, natural, certain, constant duty, springing up out of the very nature and natural will of God, and out of the very nature and relation, and capacity of the reasonable soul, binding *semper ad semper*, [permanently,] as the school-men speak, and admitting of no dispensation or diminution. There is no time wherein it is not a duty, or wherein it is less a duty than at another time; however we are apt to give to ourselves many relaxations from it. The first fruits, nay, the very early buds of the tender soul, and of the springing faculties, are due to God, and ought to be dedicated to him, *Eccl. xii. 1. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.* Manhood is not allowed to attend unto cares and exploits, nor old age to pains and griefs, so as to neglect converse with God; but whether young men build or plant, fight or study, work or marry, or manage the affairs of the house or of the field, all should be undertaken and carried on in a way of converse and fellowship with God; or whether old men sit and muse, and meditate, or lie under the pain and grievances of de-

crepit age, still it ought to be in the Lord. Neither doth this duty admit of interruption, any more than of cessation: there is no dispensation given us from this duty; as in no age, so in no hour of our life. As we cannot live a moment out of God, so neither ought we to live a moment without God in the world. We ought continually to endeavour to walk in subservience to, and converse with God; yea, and as far as may be, in a feeling converse with him too. Holy David witnesses of himself, that the fear of God was continually before his eyes, and that he did continually converse with God, for so those words may be understood, *Ps. lxxiii. 23. I am continually with thee.* The like is recorded of many other saints, both in the Old and New Testament; concerning whom one may well say, as the queen of Sheba concerning the servants of Solomon, and with much better reason. *1 Kings x. 8. Happy are these thy servants, O Lord, which stand continually before thee.* Neither is it the duty of some few men, who have the greatest knowledge, or the most leisure; for it springs out of the relation of a creature and out of the very nature of the rational soul; so that no soul of man is exempt from it, however many ignorant and profane persons live rather in a professed independence upon God. Neither is it a duty only, upon supposition of leisure and freedom from worldly business, as some other things are, but is equally incumbent upon prince and peasant, upon him that sits in his closet, and upon him that plows in the field; yea, they that go down into the sea in ships, ought to go up to heaven in their hearts, and not only to converse

with the clouds, which they often do, but above them too. A hand full of earth, and a heart full of heaven, may well stand together; for as this duty deprives us of no honest business, so neither should itself be excluded by any. And as this high and excellent duty belongs to all ages, and times, and persons, so it agrees to all conditions too. Poor men think that rich men may well do it, and rich men think that poor men had need to do it: *prosperity* thinks it hath better things to mind than a God: and *adversity* knows it hath worse things, but it must mind them: *plenty* is too full to entertain him; and *poverty* hath enough to do to bear up under its own burden: *learning* knows how, but will not; *ignorance* says it would, but knows not how. But, notwithstanding all this evasion, the obligation to this duty ceases not: none so high as to be above it, none so mean as to be below it; for rich and poor, high and low, learned and unlearned, prince and peasant, though they are divided amongst themselves by punctilios and lesser differences, yet they are united in one universal Being, meet in one and the same centre, agree in the common capacity of reasonable creatures. As religion hath an interest and a concernment in the whole of the conversation, according to that of the apostle, *Phil. iii. 20. Our conversation is in heaven*; so also hath it a room in the conversation of every man in every capacity; no relation, condition, action, change, is exempted from the powerful influence thereof. So the apostle describes himself, by his *living in all good conscience before God, Acts xxiii. 1.* and by his exercising himself in this thing, to

have always a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men, Acts xiv. 16.

5. "It is more especially the duty of God's people to study to converse with him aright in the way of his judgments; which is the doctrine itself, which I must not proceed to confirm, till I have shewed, according to my promise,

II. "What it is for the soul to converse with God; and how it comes to converse with him."

Not to name those low and improper notions that men ordinarily have of this high and spiritual matter, conversing with God; to speak properly, it is "a complex act of the soul, whereby it entertains God in itself, and renders itself back again to him;" receives impressions from him, and then empties itself into him. You may conceive of it after the similitude of a plant, that is influenced by the benign beams of the sun, and in those beams spreads itself, and in the virtue and power of them grows up towards heaven: or after the similitude of a river, that is continually filled from the ocean, and is continually emptying itself into the same. This seems to be our Saviour's elegant allusion, *John iv. 14.* where he compares a divine and godly principle in the soul to *a well of water*, springing out from God, and continually boiling and bubbling up to towards him,—*springing up into everlasting life.* Or you may conceive of it after the similitude of a glass, which receives the image of him that looks into it, and reflects the self-same image that it receives: for indeed the brightness and beauty of holiness, wherewith a godly soul doth shine as a light in the world, is nothing but a reflection of

that light and brightness wherewith the Father of light shines into it.—And so the best of men have nothing of their own to glory in: for they behold God, but it is in his own light; they love him with a love which he hath shed abroad in their hearts; they are therefore like him, because hath stamped his own image upon them; and so they must needs acknowledge, concerning all their acts of love, communion, and delight, as David did in another case, *Of thine own we offer unto thee.* This is indeed the true and noble converse and communion with God, wherein the life of a godly man is infinitely advanced above the life of angels.—Their life is described in the holy scriptures, by a seeing of God, a beholding of him face to face; which we must not understand of a naked idle speculation, but of real assimilation, arising from the divine impressions made upon them; a beholding of him so as to be changed into his image: and such is a godly man's life, spiritual life, his life of converse with God, consisting in a participation of God and of his grace, and a holy reciprocation or reflection of affections to him; which are indeed two distinct acts, though originally springing from the same fountain: for the love wherewith the soul loves God, is itself an efflux from him; for by loving us, he inspires us; and by influences from God, we become God-like. But this converse with God is not only by the impressions of goodness from God, and the reflections of love and delight towards him, but is also seen in the various acts of the soul, according to the various impressions which God makes upon the soul, and suitable to the various occa-

sions of life: so we converse with God by acts, fear, reverence, joy, confidence, resignation, and the like.

Now, because we are in the body, and so cannot converse with God so purely, spiritually, and immediately, as the angels in heaven do, therefore it hath pleased God to appoint unto man ways and means of conversing with him, wherein he hath promised to communicate himself to the soul, and so to draw forth reciprocal acts of love, fear, reverence, confidence, resignation, dependence, and delight, out of the same soul towards himself. Now, these ways or means may be reduced to three heads, duties, ordinances, and providences; though indeed the two first may be contracted into one.

1st. I will speak of ordinances, such as the word and sacrament; for I shall name no more than these two. The preaching of the word is a way in which God doth usually meet the soul, to communicate life, *1 Pet. i. 23.*; light, *Psal. xix. 8.*; warmth, *Luke, xxiii. 32.*; growth, *1 Pet. ii. 2.*; and the soul doth answer these impressions, as in water face answereth to face, by the acts of faith, love, joy, meekness, and holy resolution. So also the administration of the sacraments is a way wherein God meets the soul, and communicates his love, sweetness, fulness, goodness, strength, and vigour to the soul; and it reflects upon him in the acts of holy complacency and delight, cheerfulness, thankfulness, and dependence.

2dly. Duties are also ways of converse with God such as, confession, petition, thanksgiving, conference, singing, meditation, observation. In

all which God impresses something of himself upon the soul, and draws answerable affections of the soul unto himself, as might appear in the particular explication of them; but that would be too much a digression. Only I will here note by the way, the mistake of many low spirited christians, who know no other converse with God, than the bare performance of these things: this they count the very top-stone of a christian's perfections, the very summit of the spiritual life. But, alas! this is a very gross mistake: there is, surely something more sweet, savoury, satisfactory in the spiritual life, than the dry duty; there is marrow in the bone, or else a holy soul would not covet it with so much fervour. Converse with God in duties is a spiritual, savoury, filling enjoyment, distinct from the duties themselves. This must needs be, except we will allow to wicked and hypocritical men the same dainties that the most sanctified souls feed upon, and say, that the children's bread is common to the dogs as well as unto them. The soul doth not converse with God in duties barely, when it prays or meditates; for even godly souls themselves do many times find little converse with God in these, *viz.* when he suspends the influences of his graces, or their hearts are clogged or cloyed with earthly objects, or other wise indisposed and shut up against him. It is not speaking to God that brings the soul really nigh unto him, nor bare thinking of God that advances the soul into the excellent state of feeling converse with him; even prayer itself may prove many times an empty sound, *vox et præterea nihil*; [sound, and nothing more;] and me-

dition, that most excellent and genuine offspring of the soul, may prove a poor, dry and tasteless speculation. It is not enough to set up the sails, but there must be also wind to fill them. But the soul doth then converse with God in duties, when the dark places thereof become filled with his divine light, and the empty places thereof filled with his divine love, and the low and languishing affections thereof are ravished and revived with the powerful insinuations of his almighty grace; when God draws, and the soul runs: he puts in his finger by the hole of the door, and the very bowels of the soul are moved for him, as it is described, *Song*, v. 4. Then doth the soul converse with God in meditation and prayer, when the Spirit of God moves upon the face of the waters, when he kisses it with the kisses of his mouth; and the shaking soul finds itself marvellously settled, the doubting soul established, the frozen heart thawed, the benumbed affections warmed, the scant and contracted capacity of it enlarged and wonderfully widened, and its slow and sluggish motions quickened into a lively and cheerful compliance with, and pursuit of the supreme and all-sufficient good; when the soul can use its feet to run after that glorious object which is presented to it; lift up its hands to lay hold upon the strength, the fulness, the faithfulness, the Christ of God, and bearing up itself upon the wings of faith and love, fly out to seek its rest and happiness, and no longer envy the birds of the altar, for itself enters into the holy of holies, and through the arms of its Mediator throws itself into the very heart of God. In a word, and that shall be the word of God,

then doth a soul converse with God in duties, when, with *open face beholding the glory of God*, it doth not only admire it, but itself is *changed into the same image, from glory to glory*, i. e. from grace to grace, 2 *Cor. iii. ult.*

3dly, Providences, these are another way wherein the soul converses with God. Now, by providences we mean in general, "the whole work of God in governing the world, and all things therein." And so indeed a religious, enlarged soul, a mind freed from particular vexing cares, low and selfish ends, converses with God in beholding and observing God's settled course of governing the world. The whole heavens, earth, and sea, and the admirable order kept up in them, do teach the knowlege of God, and draw up the contemplative soul into an observation and admiration of him in them; and the pious soul longs to find some impressions made upon itself by all these, and to be affected with God therein: it is not content with a bare speculation, but its meditation of God in these is sweet to it, as David's were, *Ps. civ. 34.* Particularly, God's providence towards mankind, as it doth most lively express his infinite love, justice, and wisdom, so we ought to converse with him therein, and in all the changes of any kind, that befall man in the world, that befall all the kingdoms of the world, the four great monarchies of it, and all other subordinate dominions; more especially in all the mutations that befall the church of God in the world, and all men of all sects and sorts therein, but most especially ourselves. Labour to converse with that infinite mind, wisdom, and under-

standing that ordains and orders all the changes that befall yourselves. Now, our conversing with God in the several changes that befall us in the world, is in general by endeavouring to serve the providence of God in every change. The providence of God serves itself even upon all creatures that do least understand it; but a godly man only knows how to serve the providence of God in the things that befall him: he hath no private selfish interest of his own, but counts it his interest cheerfully and faithfully to serve the will of God, to be what God would have him be, to be without that which God would have him to want, and to do what God would have him do. Every wicked soul in the world sets up some trade for himself, and drives on some particular self-interest distinct from God; but a godly soul counts it his greatest honour and happiness to be nothing in himself, or for himself, but is wholly at the disposal of his Creator; and, looking upon all his interests as being bound up in God, is solicitous for nothing else but to serve the will of God in his generation. So the life of holy David is described, *Acts* xiii. 36. *David in his generation having served the will of God*, i. e. the providence of God, say the Dutch annotators translating the words in this order. A good man eyeing nothing but the great and blessed God in the world, and knowing that he was not made for himself, but for a higher good, is only ambitious to be subservient to that infinite and sovereign Being; herein imitating his blessed Saviour, who lived not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him, *John* vi. 38. and again, to seek the glory

of him that sent him, *John* vii. 18. In a word, he looks upon himself, not as in himself, but in God, and labours to become wholly God's, and to live in the world only an instrument in the hands of him that worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will: that is, in general, for the conversing with God in all kind of changes.

Now, these changes are reduced to two heads—prosperity and adversity. In the first of these it is our duty to converse with God, and not with the creature comforts which we do enjoy from him, as one might shew at large. But I am to speak of the latter, and to shew how we ought to converse with God in that: This point I shall pursue in the subsequent discourse.

PART II.

Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

AMOS iv. 12.

In the preceding Discourse, it was pointed out, that the doctrine contained in this text, is, “That it is the duty of God's people to study a right behaviour towards him, and to converse with him aright in the way of his judgments, in the time of their afflictions.”—To elucidate this it was proposed,

I. To premise some things needful to be known concerning the soul's conversing with God.

II. Shew what it is for a soul to converse with God; and how it comes to converse with him.

III. Prove the doctrine, that it is our duty to converse with God in the way of his judgments.

IV. Shew particularly, how we are to converse with God in the time of afflictions.

V. Apply it.

III. The *third* thing promised, was, “to shew that it is the duty of God’s people to study to converse with him aright in the way of his judgments, in a time of affliction.”

And here, I hope, I need not be at pains to prove by scripture, that besides the general business of a christian’s life, some particular and more especial behaviours are required of him, in an afflicted state; all will readily grant it: besides, after I shall have declared what they are, I shall not need to prove that they are. Therefore, for the present, I shall content myself with giving three or four reasons of it. It is especially the duty of God’s people to study to converse with him aright in the time of afflictions.

First, Because “then it is hard to do it.”—We are then very apt to be taken off from it, therefore we should then especially labour to pursue it, and perform it. We are then in imminent danger of being taken off from it; and by the following means:

I. “Our senses do set us on work to converse with outward means;” and whilst we attend upon them too eagerly, we neglect and forget God. This might appear by an induction of particular affections; but that would be too long. I will only give an instance of one or two for explication.

—The sickness and pains of the body call out the mind to seek after and converse with physicians; bodily wants call us to seek after bodily supplies; and so all kind of distresses call out the soul to seek creature relief. Direct the sick and languishing patient to call upon, and hang upon divine help, to converse with God; alas! he hath enough to do to attend upon his pains and pangs. Tell him of ease of recovery, and he can hearken to you, for that he longs to hear. Call upon the poor emaciated beggar to seek relief from God, to converse with him; alas! he finds such a faintness in his limbs, such a gnawing of hunger, such a restless appetite within himself, that he can groan out nothing, but, Oh that one would give me bread to eat! In a word, the soul is more naturally addicted to mind its body to which it is joined, than the God that joined it to that body. Hence you may observe two things by the way, *viz.* 1. The reason why so few persons repent in time of sickness: the sense of sickness drowns the sense of sin. 2. The reason why so few poor people, who are always conflicting with the necessities of the body, do not at all mind the concerns of their souls: the exigencies and straits of the body cry louder in their hearts than all the words and works of God. So that, as health is the best time for repentance, it seemeth that the best way to teach the poor is to relieve them.

2. “The corruptions of the heart are then most apt to make war against heaven.” This is the opinion of him who knows the temper of man, *Job* i. 11. *Put forth thy hand against him, and he*

will curse thee to thy face. And I am persuaded that the devil acts much by this observation, which makes him endeavour all he can to make many good men poor, thinking thereby to make them less good, though the wise and merciful God graciously prevents him. For indeed the soul is naturally so tender of the body that it is unwilling that God himself should touch it: if he do, it is ready to rage and rebel against him. *Converse with God!* saith the wicked king; why, *this evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer?* 2 Kings vi. 33. There are many corruptions of the soul that are most ready to clamour against God in a time of affliction, as fear, anger, unbelief, yea, and sinful self-love, and creature-love: an affection that can never be taught to converse with God, yet will cry after him, when he takes away any darling from it; as Phaltiel cried on account of his wife; or it will rather cry against him; as Micah cried against the men of Dan, saying, *Ye have taken away my gods, and are gone away, and what have I more?* Judg. xviii. 24.

3 “Temptations do then come strongest from without.” Then it is the devil’s time to instigate the soul: ‘what, put up this reproach! what, will you sit down with this loss! up and revenge thyself.’ He that knows so well the temper of man’s heart that it is ready to curse God when he touches him, *Job ii. 5.* will not fail to touch the heart, and tempt it to curse him indeed, *Job ii. 9. Curse God and die.*

The 2d reason why we ought especially to study to converse with God in the time of afflic-

tion, is, because "that is a time wherein we are most apt to think ourselves excused from this duty;" as if it were allowed us in our extremity to forget God, and mind ourselves only; and that not only in respect of these bodily straits and distresses which I named under the last head, but in respect of our own passions. When the afflicting hand of God is upon us, pressing and grieving us, and taking our beloved comforts from us, we are apt to indulge our own private and selfish passions, care, fear, sorrow, complaining, &c. yea to think we are in some sense allowed to indulge them. How willingly do we suffer ourselves to be drawn into a converse with ourselves; to be contracted, as it were, into ourselves, and suffer ourselves to be carried down the stream of our own passions, which at other times we should think it was our duty to resist! Even as the heart in natural things draws home to it, in a time of danger, the blood that was dispersed abroad in the body, as it were to defend itself; so the heart in moral things gathers home its power and affections, which were formerly bestowed here and there, to employ them all about itself in a time of sore affliction. And we are apt to think ourselves excusable too in so doing; so that if God himself should ask a distressed soul, as he did Jonah, Dost thou well to be careful, fearful, sorrowful, querulous, because of those afflictions, losses, distresses, that are upon thee? It would be almost ready to give him the same answer. "I do well to be sorrowful, yea, and to refuse to be comforted." There seem to be allowed us some natural affections in case of extreme affliction, but

how far they are lawful, I will not now dispute; but sure I am, that if such be allowed us they must not be wild and extravagant, wandering beyond the bounds of religion and conscience, as if God had laid the reins upon the neck of the soul, and giving it leave to indulge itself in what passions it would for a certain time, as the daughter of Jephthah was allowed to go whether she would, wailing upon the mountains for two months. We are never allowed any passions or affections, surely, that do not comply with the will of God, and consist with our submission thereunto: but whatever they are, I find, that under the pretence of those, some men are apt to be carried into strange, inordinate conduct, and commit many passionate outrages; and indeed the best of men are too prone to suspend and interrupt that lively and feeling-converse with God, which they ought to maintain even when they suffer most.

The third reason why we ought to seek converse with God in trouble, is, "Because that is a time when there is more especial use for, and need of such converse with God." And that, 1. To give rest to the soul. In prosperity men forget God, and yet can find some kind of rest in their pleasures, friends, or employments; some take comfort in their cups and companions, and indeed all are apt to fancy a contentment in creature-enjoyments. But in a time of great affliction all these are gone, or at least have no savour in them; and where shall the weary soul find rest then? Then there is no rest but in God alone; when all other props fail, then either seek help of God or fall, there is now nothing left to give any ease or contentment to the soul but God alone; and in him

there is ease to the tottering, contentment to the troubled christian. Therefore converse with God in the day of great affliction, which is the same counsel in effect that our Saviour gave, *Mat. xi. 28.* *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* 2. There is need of it to give relief to the body also.

And so conversing with God in a right manner is the best policy, the surest way to recovery and relief. See what a speedy cure there is in it, *Ps. xxxiv. 5. 6.* *They looked unto him, and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed: this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.* In vain is it to converse with friends, physicians, counsellors; in vain is all creature-converse without this; no rest to the soul, no ease to the body in a time of affliction, without converse with God: so that a man in affliction, estranged from God, wandering from God, is altogether miserable. In a word, separate a soul from God and in prosperity his enjoyments are low, and in adversity the want of them is very bitter: so that there is good reason why a christian should study to converse with God in the way of his judgments.—But the great art is to know how. Therefore,

IV. In the *fourth* place, I shall shew particularly, “how we are to converse with God in afflictions.” Now, there are two ways of explaining this.

1. By shewing with what attributes of God we are to converse.

2. By what acts of the soul. But I shall bring both these into one.

1st. We ought to converse with the absolute and unlimited sovereignty of God, whereby he, as a free and supreme agent, doth what he will, and none can say unto him, *What doest thou?* Dan. iv. 35. This Job often eyes and owns, particularly in Chap. ix. 12. *He taketh away, who can hinder him? Who will say unto him, What doest thou?* This we must also eye often, and own heartily; this we may well argue from God's creating us; he that made us thus without any constraint, can he not, may he not make us otherwise, and alter us without restraint? So Job argues, Chap. i. 21. We may also argue it from the subordinate sovereignty and inferior supremacy of men; even a monarch among men doth whatsoever he pleases, and who may say unto him, *What doest thou?* Eccl. viii. 3. 4. Yea, a very centurion hath a kind of sovereignty in his sphere, over as many as are under him; he saith unto one man, *Go, and he goeth; and to another, Do this, and he doth it,* Mat. viii. 9. And shall we not then acknowledge a sovereign power, and independent absolute authority in the great and blessed God over the whole creation, the workmanship of his own hands? So the good centurion argues, and infers, in the place last quoted. Nay, as the apostle saith in one place, *We have fathers of our flesh,* who use us at their pleasure, and we do not gainsay their authority; we do not say to our father, *What begettest thou?* nor to our mother, *What hast thou brought forth?* Isa. xiv. 10. Nay, if these similitudes will not teach you, I will say to you, as God to the prophet, *Arise, go down to the potter's house;* there I will cause you to learn this lesson;

he maketh or marreth his vessels of clay as oft as he pleaseth; and are not ye in the hand of the Lord, as the clay is in the hand of the potter? *Jer.* xviii. 6. I speak the more to this, in as much as I find, that however men give God good words, and confess his dominion over them and theirs, yet when he touches them in any of their darling comforts, they are ready to clamour against him in their hearts, as if he did them some wrong; if not to curse him to his face. Certainly there is some atheistical opinion of propriety, that in some degree or other is apt to steal into the most devout minds: and sure I am, we do not barely offend, but we do ourselves much hurt; we wound our own peace, we shake the settledness of our own hearts, we put ourselves into briers; in a word, we both lessen our comforts and multiply our griefs, and aggravate our sorrows, by calling things our own; if we had not taken them to be our own, it would not have troubled us to part with them.

Be sure therefore to eye and own the absolute and unlimited sovereignty of God. But that is not all; it is not enough to believe it, we must converse with it otherwise than by thinking of it, or assenting to it. Then do we converse with the sovereignty of God.

“When the powerful sense of it doth silence quarrelling, yea, murmurings, yea, even disputing in the soul.” We may indeed modestly contend with men concerning their dealings with us; the potsherd may strive with the potsherds of the earth, but it must not say to the potter, Why hast thou made me thus? A peaceful and quiet frame of heart is a real conversing with the sovereignty of

God : so did Aaron when he held his peace, *Lev. x. 3.* and Job, when he attributed nothing unseemly to God, chap. i. &c.

We converse with the sovereignty of God, "When the sense of it doth suppress self-will." This is an unruly passion in the soul, a giant-like spirit, warring against heaven, and breeding hatred continually. This is that which maintains *a meum* and *tuum*, [a mine and a thine] even with God himself; that sets up interests, (as the Jews set up princes, *Hos. viii. 4.*) but not by God, yea, indeed, in opposition to him. This is the seditious party in the soul that is always crying out, We will not have this man to rule over us; and when that darling interest, which this proud rival hath set up is touched of God, and smitten and blasted from heaven, it is ready to fret and storm, yea, and to think it hath reason to be angry. If this son of the bond-woman were cast out, Abraham's family would be all united, all in order, and at rest. If this undisciplined and perverse spirit were quite banished, oh, what a calm day would it be in the soul! What fair and sweet correspondence would there be between God and his creature! For certainly this is the Jonah that raises the storm and makes the great deeps of the soul restless, and perpetually roll and toss, yea, and cast out mire and dirt continually. But, alas, I suspect this spirit is not quite driven out, no not in the most spiritual man: the best of men are ready to nourish and foster some darling, some private interest or other of their own, distinct from God and the grand interest of their souls, which God himself must not touch; some gourd or other that the cold wind must not blow

upon. He is a blessed man indeed, who lives and moves in God alone, and is so overpowered with the sense of the infinite goodness and holiness of God, and the absolute perfection of his divine will, as to reckon it his greatest perfection to be nothing in himself, and have nothing of his own distinct from God; but who only studies to be great in favour with God, to be filled with God, to live to him and for him, to enjoy all things as in and under him; who counts it his only interest to quit all self-interest, and private ends, and to be freely at the disposal of the highest Mind, conformable to the highest Good, cheerfully compliant with the uncreated Will. Potiphar had so committed all to Joseph, on account of his great faithfulness, that, *he knew not ought he had, save the bread that he did eat*, Gen. xxxix. 6. But this similitude is too low: a godly soul should commit all its interests, its life and livelihood, and all to God, in view of his sovereignty, and not know ought that he hath, no not his own life, but despise it in comparison of uncreated life, as Job speaks, chap. ix. 21. Methinks the sovereignty of God speaks such language to the soul, and in it, as Eli to Samuel, *My son, hide nothing from me, keep nothing back of all that thou hast*: and the pious soul should not, with foolish Rachel, conceal any selfish interest, so as not to be willing to part with it, when its sovereign Lord and Father comes to search the tent, but (with allusion to *Amos*, vi. 10.) when God comes to root out all self-interests, and shall ask, *Is there any such yet with thee?* should be able to answer boldly, No, there is none. Blessed is the man that is in such a case;

blessed is the man whose only interest it is to serve the will of the Lord! Well, improve the infinite sovereignty of God to this end, and impress it upon and in your own hearts, that all self-will may yield to it: and let the main interest of your souls be so planted and established in your souls that no other interest may be able to grow by it: disarm your own self-will with such severe reproofs as this, *Either deny thyself, O my soul, or deny thyself to be a creature: either be wholly at God's command, or call him not thy sovereign.*

We converse with the sovereignty of God "When the sense of it doth beget reverence in the soul towards God." We ought not only to be subject to the rod of God, but even to reverence him when he correcteth with it; and so not only to accept of the rod, but to kiss it too. And surely if the fathers of our flesh correct us, and we give them reverence, *Heb. xii. 9.* much more ought we to reverence the sovereign Father both of flesh and spirit. This is a devout act of the soul, whereby it looks up and adores the infinite and sovereign Majesty, and thinks equitable and honourable thoughts of him, even when he is in the way of his judgments. And these are the proper acts of a soul conversing with God's sovereignty in the time of afflictions. When we are silent before him, subject unto him, and reverence him, then we do really and truly converse with him as our almighty and absolute Sovereign. But God's authority and prerogative, though it may silence, will scarce satisfy; to such a corrupt and

rebellious pass are our natures grown. Therefore,

2dly, Converse with the perfect and infinite righteousness of God in the time of afflictions; that divine perfection whereby he renders to every man what is just and due, and no more. This we are to eye and own, and sincerely to acknowledge, even in the time of our greatest extremity, after the example of Daniel, chap. ix. 14. *The Lord our God is righteous in all his works*; and of the godly Levites, *Neh. ix. 33. Thou art just in all that is brought upon us, thou hast done right.* Argue with Abraham, *Gen. xviii. 25. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Can Righteousness itself err in judgment? shall the timber say unto the rule, Why hast thou measured me thus? or to the line, Thou art crooked? Are not my ways equal?* saith the Lord, *Ezek. xviii. 25. Are not the Lord's ways equal? let your souls say so too.* Be ye firmly persuaded of the infinite and incorruptible righteousness and equity of God. But that is not all; we do not then converse with the righteousness of God, when we do believe it, or acknowledge it: a very Pharoah may be brought to make such a confession, *Exod. ix. 27. The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.* But then do we converse with the righteousness of God, in general, when the sense of it doth give a rational satisfaction to the soul. And indeed, though the sovereignty of God is enough to silence, yet his righteousness had need to be called in to administer satisfaction: the former is sufficient to stop the mouth, but there is need of the latter to settle

the heart. And indeed, methinks it is a heart-settling consideration: for how can the interest of the creature be better secured than in the hands of a righteous God! Where can we venture all we have, better than on such a certain and steady bottom? How can we better trust ourselves than on such firm and even ground? We will trust ourselves far with an upright and righteous man: and if we hear of the miscarriage of any interest of ours at any time, it doth mightily calm and satisfy our hearts, if we are assured that it was in the hands of a just and upright person: much more rational and steady satisfaction may the infinite righteousness of God administer, even in the time of the greatest affliction, if it be duly wrought into the heart. But more particularly,

1. "The powerful sense of the righteousness of God should make us tender and serious." It becomes us seriously to ponder, duly to weigh, and in good earnest to lay to heart, all that is done to us by a righteous God. We slightly pass by, and disesteem the words or actions of vain man; but it is not for nothing that the righteous God afflicts any man, in any measure, at any time. The voice of God, though it be not always articulate, yet is always significant. Will a lion roar for nothing? Surely every action of the righteous God hath a meaning in it. A hair falls not from our head, nor a sparrow to the ground, without him; much less, surely, do greater changes befall us without him. And in all things he is infinitely righteous. Oh, how doth this call to tenderness and seriousness! How ought all the powers of

the soul to be awakened to attention, when the righteous God utters his dreadful voice; and the whole frame of the heart and life to be composed under his heavy hand! Now, if ever, one would “say of laughter, It is mad;” one would reckon trifling to be a kind of profaneness, and judge that foolish jestings do almost border upon blasphemy, formerly not convenient, now not lawful; for indeed a vain, light, trifling spirit, in the day of affliction, is in a sense, a blaspheming of the righteousness of God. As a consequent of this,

2. “It should put us upon self-examination.” Nature itself had taught the heathenish mariners to enquire where the fault was, in a storm, *Jonah*, i. 7.; much more may the knowledge of God’s infinite righteousness teach us. So may the holy word too, that word in *Lam.* iii. 40, *Let us search and try our ways, &c.* and many others. Now do the faculties of the godly soul, being awakened, begin to cast lots upon themselves, to find out the guilty party: and certainly God hath a great hand in ordering these lots; he doth ordinarily shew unto man his sin, even by the verdict of his own heart. Conscience, I mean, is God’s vicegerent in the soul: and though it is true, that this judge is oft times corrupted and bribed, or at least overruled in prosperity, yet God instructs it to speak out, and speak the truth in the time of affliction. I believe they struck at the root of the evil, who cried out one to another, *Verily we are guilty concerning our brother*, *Gen.* xlii. 21. Another cries, *Verily I am guilty concerning my master, concerning my people, guilty concerning my wife, concerning my children, concerning my estate, my*

time, my talents; and it may be all true. I believe that heathen was in the right, who looked upon his hands and feet, and cried out, *As I have done, so God hath requited me*, Judg. i. 7.: and the Babylonish monarch sounded upon a right string, after he was come to his right mind, *Dan. iv. ult.*—*Those that walk in pride, he is able to abase.* God hath not given to our faculties any infallibility indeed, but he enables them to make good surmises; and, I am verily persuaded, doth many times lay the hand upon the diseased part, and order this secret lottery from heaven; and consequently that faculty, or that frame, or that action, which stands convicted in the court of conscience, is seldom held guiltless in the court of heaven.

3. “It should produce in us humiliation and reformation; a heart broken, and a conversation healed of its breaches.” By humiliation, I mean a heart broken purely, properly and spiritually for sin. I do not mean by it, a heart broken for losses and afflictions, and bowing down itself heavily under the burden of its distresses; no: nor a heart broken for sin, as viewing it only in the calamitous effects and bitter fruits of it; which, I doubt not, is the humiliation of most. Many may say concerning their humiliation, (to use the prophet’s words in a different sense, *Zech. xiii. 6.*) *These are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends*, by the loss of my friends, the loss of my health, the loss of my goods; these tears that you see, these groans that you hear, are nothing but the scars which the sore hath left behind it, and the wales which the rod hath made. Our very sorrow for sin, in a time of af-

fiction, admits of a mixture of carnal self and passion, and so of sin too. But I mean a pure, spiritual, proper sorrow and hatred of sin; which I know may be broached by sharp afflictions, and have vent given it by piercing the vessel; but that is not the proper cause and ground of it. Moses, in his joy, had an eye to the *recompence of reward*, Heb. xi. 26.; and so a christian, in his sorrow, may have respect to the recompence of his sin, I mean his afflictions; but it is not primarily and principally caused by these; for though these dreadful showers from heaven should cease, yet the stream of his eyes, or at least the fountain of his heart, would not cease sending forth bitter waters; though the righteousness of God do serve to give vent to godly sorrow, yet it is the goodness and holiness of God that causes it. Do we sorrow for sin because it deprived us of our comforts, stripped us of our ornaments? Then, surely, we think there is something in the world worse than sin, for which we should bewail it, and hate it, and so, consequently, that there is something better than God, for which we would love him. Alas! how apt are we to run into practical blasphemy before we are aware! In a word, to decide this controversy, our afflictions, losses, distresses in the world, may possibly be as a bucket to draw up this water of godly sorrow, but they must not be the cistern to receive and hold it. Serious and spiritual humiliation is a real conversing with the righteousness of God: to meet God, is indeed to fall down before him; and to converse with him, is to be submissive under his dealings: the truth of which temper is best evidenced by that

excellent commentator, the life of a christian: this doth best declare the nature, and interpret the meaning of heart-humiliation. He that breaks off his sins doth best make it appear that his heart is broken for them. If you would know whether there has been rain in the night, look upon the ground, and that will discover. Oh, my friends! if the dust be laid, if all earthly joys, contentments, pleasures, concernments, be laid, you may conclude your sorrow was a shower sent into your souls from heaven.

If you see a boy both sobbing and minding his book, you may conclude he hath some right sense of his master's severity. Conversion to God is the most proper and real conversing with him in the way of his judgments: so he himself interprets in that complaint made, *Is. ix. 13.* *The people turneth not to him that smiteth them, &c.* That which happened to Moses, when he had been in the mount with God, (*Exod. xxxiv. 29.*) should also be the condition of every good Israelite, when he hath been with God in the valley, the vale of tears, an afflicted state; his face should shine, his conversation should witness that he had been with God; the smell of this fire should pass upon his garments, upon his whole outward man; the spirit of mourning should be demonstrated by the spirit of burning. If God from heaven consume the standing corn of our worldly comforts, we must answer him from within, and consume the stubble of our worldly lusts and corruptions. Let me change our Saviour's words therefore a little, (*Matt. vi. 18.*) and exhort you earnestly; thou, Christian, when thou fastest, when

thou humblest thy soul for sin, *wash thy face* also, cleanse thy outward conversation from all sinful pollution, that thou mayest appear to be humbled indeed : and this shall be accounted as a true and real conversing with the righteousness of God in the time of affliction.

3dly, Converse with the faithfulness of God. This attribute of God hath respect unto his promises, and therefore it may be, you will think strange that I should speak of this in a discourse of afflictions, as not having place there at all. Every one will readily acknowledge, that God's sovereignty and righteousness do clearly appear in his judgments ; but how his faithfulness can be exercised therein, they see not. What! faithful in punishing, in visiting, in afflicting, distressing his creature ; how can that be ? Many will be ready to think rather that God is not faithful at such a time, when he withholds what he had promised to continue ; when he plagues David every morning, when he had promised him that the plague should not come nigh his dwelling ; when he brings Abijah to the grave, to whom he had promised that his days should be long upon the land ; and Job to the dust, to whom all the promises were made, both of the life that now is, and of that which is to come ; Is this faithfulness ? doth God fulfil his promises by frustrating them ? Notwithstanding all this, it seems that the faithfulness of God hath place in the afflictions of his people ; for so hath David expressly, (*Ps. cxix. 75.*) *I know that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me ;* if indeed faithfulness be taken properly in that place. Neither indeed need it seem so

strange as some men make it; for God hath promised his covenant-people to visit their iniquity with a rod, (*Ps. lxxxix. 32.*) *the rod of a man*, a fatherly chastisement, as it is explained, *2 Sam. vii. 14.* where this seems to be made a breach of the covenant, and is understood by many as a promise. But if that be not a plain promise, I am sure there is one in *Ps. lxxxiv. 11.* *No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.* And if no good thing, then no correction neither; for that is often good and profitable for the people of God in this world, for many excellent ends; which, considering the nature of man, cannot well be accomplished without it, as might appear in many particulars; but it is not needful to enumerate them. God will take more care of his own people than of the rest of the world, and will rather correct them than not restore them. It is their main happiness that he cares for, and he will in kindness take out of the way whatever hinders it, and give whatever may promote it. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts; he judges otherwise of health, riches, liberty, friends, &c. than we do. We are apt to measure God by ourselves, and our own affections; which is the ground of our mistake in this business; we mind the things that please our flesh, our senses, our appetite, our fancy; but God minds the things that concern our souls, and their true happiness. The saints are much more beloved of God, and much dearer to him, than they are to themselves; and therefore he will not give them what is sweet, but what is suitable; he will give them what makes for their real and eternal hap-

piness, whether they would have it or not. He loves them with a strong and powerful love, and will not deny them any thing that is truly good for them, though they cry out under it; nor allow them any thing that is really hurtful, though they cry after it. So will a wise father upon earth do by his children, to the best of his skill and power; much more will God then, *qui plusquam patrum amorem gerit in suos*, [who exhibits more than a father's love towards his own,] whose compassions are infinitely greater and stronger than those of a father. Now then, labour to converse with the faithfulness of God in the time of afflictions, by studying the covenant, and the promises of it, and your present condition, and comparing them together, and observing how consonant and agreeable they are, each interpreting the other; as also, by persuading your hearts of the consistency of afflictions with divine love and favour, and by studying to reconcile the hand and heart of God together. But especially converse with it practically, by a holy establishment and settlement of heart under all afflictions; for, afflictions in themselves are apt to beget a fearfulness, despondency, or at least fluctuation in the soul, the lively sense of God's faithfulness in afflicting them will settle and sustain it. It is a firm and consistent thing, upon which the trembling soul may settle safely, and centre itself boldly.

4thly. Converse with the holiness and unspotted purity of God. He is angry, and sins not; he corrects for sin without sinning; *Fury is not in me, saith the Lord*, Is. xxvii. 4. There is no passionate, malicious temper, in the pure and holy God;

no revengeful appetite to feed upon the blood of his creature: he is of purer eyes than to behold the least iniquity, and of a purer nature than any way to miscarry in any of his dealings or dispensations. converse then with this infinite holiness of God: keep up pure, equitable, honourable thoughts of him in your hearts; take heed of fancying to yourself a God guilty of passion or partiality, or one carried away with such weak and mixed affections as we ourselves are. But, more practically, converse with God's holiness in the time of afflictions, by laying even little sins greatly to heart! Little sins, compared with infinite holiness and purity, ought to be matter of great and serious sorrow to a sensible soul. Again, take heed of the least miscarriages under affliction, of departing from God in the least. This I know is the great duty and care of every tender-hearted christian at all times; but, I conceive, we ought more especially to press it upon our hearts in the time of affliction, because we are then most apt to indulge some kind of human passions, which we call natural affections, as if we had a license to care, and fear, and grieve, and complain, not only in an extraordinary, but even in an irregular manner. Oh! let the sense of God's infinite purity, and perfect holiness, check and awe those very natural affections, be they what they will, if they offer to exceed their bounds, and overflow their banks. But this I touched upon before under another head, amongst the reasons of the doctrine; therefore,

5thly, converse with the almighty power of God.—That God is infinite and almighty in pow-

er, I need not undertake to demonstrate: no man hath read a leaf in Scripture, nor indeed turned over one leaf in the book of creation, who hath not learned this. I need not, surely, turn you to any particular mighty work of God. They that give, as an instance, his letting loose the power of the elements, in the case of the universal deluge; or his binding up of their influences, as in the case of the three captive Jews, and of Daniel and Jonah, when he kept the fire from burning, and forbade the lions to eat the one, and the fish to digest the other, whom he had swallowed, inadequately conceive of Almighty power, and do but faintly describe it. The creation of the least thing out of nothing is an higher proof of divine power, than the government of the greatest that is already created. Consider God duly in the notion of a Creator, yea, the Creator of your own souls and bodies, and you have enough to fill you with everlasting admiration, as David was filled, *Ps. cxxxix. 14. I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* But it is not enough to eye, or acknowledge, or admire; we must yet do more, if we would rightly converse with the omnipotence of God, *viz.* by acts of reverence and dependence.

We must “reverence that almighty and glorious God in our hearts,”—who can bring *quid libet ex quodlibet*, any thing out of any thing, yea, out of nothing, yea, any thing to nothing in a moment. Reverence that power of God, that can pour contempt upon princes; that can bring Job, the greatest of all the men of the east, to lie in the ashes, and make his bed in the dunghill; that can send home Naomi empty, who went out full and

flourishing. Hath he done so by you, debased you when you were high, cast you down from the clouds, and rolled you in the dust, emptied you when you were full, withered you when you were fresh and flourishing? Let not God lose the glory of his almighty power; reverence that glorious hand of God. —

“Rest upon the same almighty God,” who can also bring up the same Job from the dunghill, and set him with princes; and satisfy afflicted Naomi with a distinguished offspring, bringing into her bosom one of the ancestors of the Messiah according to the flesh. The same power that caused your sun to go down at mid-day, when you least expected, it can also cause it to rise at midnight, when you least hope for it.—Dwell not upon human probabilities or improbabilities; but lift up thyself, believing soul, and be assured, that God can do what he will, and he will do what is good for them that love him, according to the dictates of unsearchable wisdom and goodness. Thou that art prostrated in the dust, arise, and betake thyself to those almighty arms that brought thee thither, and that are able to advance thee; as I have seen a child thrown off by his father, and thrown down to the ground in a seeming displeasure, yet clinging to the same hand, and will not let it go, till at length he rises up again by it: a fit emblem of a child of God, whom his heavenly Father seems as if he had cast off. The wounding hand of God is apt to amaze indeed, and to beget consternation and astonishment; but remember, the same hand that wounds can also heal; he that breaks us, can also

heal all our breaches; let this beget confidence and dependence. God never wounds so deeply that he cannot easily bind up the wound again; never throws his people so low that they should be out of his reach. Take heed therefore of unseemly despondencies; cast not away your confidence, which shall have a recompense, if ye maintain it; a recompense, I say; for that God who can bring back the setting sun, and exalt it in its beauty and brightness, and doth so every morning; who can clothe the forlorn and naked trees with leaves and fruits; who can recover the verdure of the withering grass, and doth so every year; he can also cause light to arise to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, *Is. ix. 2.*

He who could give unto Amaziah much more than that with which he parted at his command, (*2 Chron. xxv. 9.*;) who could turn again the captivity of Job, and give him double for what he had taken from him, (*chap. ult. 10.*;) he can surely make his people *glad accordingly to the days wherein he hath afflicted them, and the years wherein they have seen evil*, *Ps. xc. 15.*; he can recompense and restore to his penitent people the fruits which the locusts and the caterpillars have consumed; (according to his promise, *Joel ii. 25.*;) he can recompense to his people the comforts of health and liberty, which sickness hath consumed; the comforts of friends and relations, which the grave hath devoured. He who made the springs dry, *Jer. li. 26.* can as easily make *the parched ground to become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water*, *Isa. xxxv. 7.* as you find both elegantly

joined together, *Ps. cvii. 33—35. He turneth water-springs into dry grounds, &c.* Say not therefore with the captive Jews, *Ezek. xxxvii. 11. Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost, &c. for God can cause even those dry bones to live.* Say not with that low-spirited courtier, *2 Kings vii. 19. If the Lord should make windows in heaven,* then might such plenty be in Samaria; for he did accomplish it, and yet not rain it from heaven neither: but say rather with Job, chap. xiii. 15. *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;* and with the three worthies, *Dan. iii. 17. Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us out of thine hand, O king;* so he is able to deliver us out of thine hand, O enemy, O prison, O sickness, yea, out of thine hand, O grave. If we despond and be dejected both in mind and body at the same time, then is our condition indeed sad and shameful; nay, we do more reproach God by such a temper in our affliction, than he reproacheth us in afflicting us. Make it appear, christians, that though God hath cast you down, yet you do believe that he hath not cast you off; and that you, although you be sorely shaken by him, yet are not shaken off from him. Thus you shall glorify the almighty power of God in the day of your visitation.

PART II.

Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

AMOS iv. 12.

IN the preceding Discourses it was stated, that the doctrine contained in the text, is, “That it is the duty of God’s people to study a right behaviour towards him, and to converse with him aright in the way of his judgments, in the time of their afflictions.” To illustrate this position, the subject was divided into five heads:—

I. Premised some things needful to be known concerning the soul’s conversing with God:—

1. That it is the great duty of man.

2. It is the highest privilege of man.

3. The natural man is utterly unable and unwilling to converse with God.

4. It is the duty of man in all ages of life, at all times, in all places and conditions, to converse with God.

5. It is more especially his duty, to converse with God aright, in the way of his judgments.

II. Under the second head, it was proposed to shew what it is for the soul to converse with God; and how it comes to converse with him.

1. By ordinances—as the word and sacraments.

2. By duties—as confession, petition, meditation, &c.

3. By Providences—as, his government of the world, dealings with mankind, &c.

III. Under the third head, it was inculcated,

that it is the duty of God's people to study to converse with him aright in the way of his judgments, in time of affliction.

1. Because it is then hard to do it.

2. Because it is a time in which we are most apt to think ourselves excused from the duty.

3. Because it is then especially necessary for our comfort.

IV. Under the fourth head, it was proposed to explain particularly, how we are to converse with God, in afflictions—by shewing with what attributes of God we are to converse; and by what acts of the soul.

1st. With the absolute sovereignty of God.

2d. With the infinite righteousness of God.

3d. With the faithfulness of God.

4th. With the holiness and unspotted purity of God.

5th. With the almighty power of God.

Having recapitulated the substance of the preceding Discourses, we shall now proceed to the remaining articles under this fourth head:—

6thly. Converse with the infinite and unsearchable wisdom of God; especially with the wisdom of God in reference to his judgments, and our afflictions: For He knows what, and what manner, and what measure of correction we stand in need of: and when and how best to deliver us; and How to make the best use of all for our good.

“He knows what, and what manner, and what measure of correction we stand in need of.” He is that wise physician, who knows what humour is most predominant in the souls of his servants, and what is the most proper medicine to purge

it out; where the most corrupt blood is settled, and from what vein to let it out. He perfectly knows the various tempers and distempers of his servants, and can apply a remedy suitable to them all. And as to the measure and degree, he is also infinitely wise and exact: he weighs out the afflictions of his people to a grain for quantity, and measures them to a day and hour for duration. He did not miss of his time, no not one day in four hundred and thirty years, *Exod. xii. 41.*: so many years of bondage were determined upon the people; and after these years were expired, the very next day the hosts of the Lord went up out of Egypt. And as for measure, he observes a certain proportion, as you may see in that full text, *Is. xxviii. 27, 28.* The husbandman uses different ways of purging and cleansing different sorts of grain, beating the fitches with a staff, and cummin with a rod, because they are a weaker sort of grain, and will not endure hard usage; but bruising the bread-corn, because threshing will not suffice, and he is unwilling to break it all in pieces with turning his cart wheels upon it. An elegant similitude, whereby God intimateth his different ways of correcting his people, and observing a suitableness to their strength and temper, when less would do, and more would overdo: he must correct so far as to bruise, but will be sure not to break and spoil. He that saith to the proud waves of the swelling sea, *Hitherto shall ye come, and no further, (Job xxxviii. 11.)* hath the same command over those metaphorical waves, those floods of affliction, which he lets loose upon his people, and they cannot go an inch fur-

ther than he hath appointed: he saith, Hitherto shall this sickness, this mortality, this persecution go, and no further; and even these storms, and this sea obey him. Now, we converse with him in this instance of divine wisdom, not only when we observe it, and acknowledge it, but,

“When it begets in us a friendly and charitable temper towards second causes:” when we are at peace with the whole creation, even with enemies themselves, and in perfect charity with those very plagues and sicknesses that do arrest us, rather admiring and delighting in their subserviency to God, than at all maligning their severe influences upon us. A good man is so much in love with the pure and holy, and perfect will of God, that he desires also to fall in love with, at least he is at peace with every thing that executes it, that serves the will of his heavenly Father: he sees no reason to fall out with, and fret against any man, or any thing that is a means to afflict him, but views them all as instruments in the hand of God, readily serving his will, and doing his pleasure, and under this motion is charitably affected towards them all. Observe a little and admire, how David was reconciled to the rod, because it was in the hand of his Father, and seems to kiss it for the relation that it had to the divine will, *2 Sam. xvi. 11., Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him.* This gracious soul is so wonderfully in love with the will of God, that he could almost find in his heart to be reconciled to sin itself, if it do accomplish it; and to be friends with the wrath of man, if it work the righteousness of God. And if David can be so charitably affected to-

wards a cursing Shimei, viewing him as an instrument in the hand of God, methinks we may be almost in love with any thing under that notion, and much rather say concerning a poor harmless sickness, Let it alone, let it put us to pain, for God hath sent it. To this sense may a devout soul apply the words of our Saviour concerning the woman in *Matt. xxvi. 10.* *Why trouble ye the woman? she hath wrought a good work upon me: Why do ye interrupt and disturb this disease? why do you fret against this persecutor? why do you repine at this prison? it executes the will of my God upon me. What though these men pour out their venom in such abundance? what though this disease spend its influences upon my body so plentifully; there is no waste in all this; there is need of just so much; God doth not lavish out his arrows in vain, nor shoot at random, as Jonathan did, who deceived his lad, making him believe he shot at a mark, when he shot at none. A soul overpowered with the sense of God's infinite wisdom in appointing, measuring, timing all afflictions, will easily be reconciled to a poor harmless creature, which is set on and taken off at his pleasure.*

We also converse with this instance of divine wisdom, "when it begets in us a holy acquiescence and resting in God," which is opposed to a larger and disorderly hastening towards deliverance. Then do we indeed own and honour the skill of our surgeon, when we do quietly suffer the corrosive plasters to be applied, and do not offer to tear them off, notwithstanding the smart they occasion. And surely he who believes the

infinite wisdom of God, who knows what, and what manner and measure of correction we stand in need of, will not make haste to be delivered from under his hand, but will compose himself quietly, as young Samuel laid himself down, and when he was called, answered cheerfully, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.*

A soul sensible of God's infinite wisdom in this particular, argues thus, Who am I, poor worm, shallow creature, that I should contend with infinite wisdom about the time or manner of my being in the world? Why did not I also undertake to appoint him the time and place of my being born? Shall I say it is too much, when infinite wisdom thinks it is not enough? Cease, wrangling soul, and be at rest, for the Lord deals wisely with thee. Such a soul, so conversing with the all-wise God, dares freely refer all to him, venture all with him; if he smite on one cheek, he turns to him the other; if he take away his coat, he offers him his cloak also; if he takes away his liberty, he trusts him with his life too; if he smite him in some of his comforts, he turns to him the rest also: for he knows that infinite wisdom cannot err in judgment, nor miscarry in his dispensations.

“God knoweth when and how best to deliver us.” This necessarily follows upon the former. To him all times, and all things, past, present, and to come, are equally present; in one single act of understanding he doth wonderfully comprehend both causes and events, sickness and cures, afflictions and deliverances. Let the atheistical world cry, These are they that are forsaken,

whom no man careth for, there is no hope for them in their God; as their manner is to blaspheme; still the promise stands unrepealed in both Testaments, *I will never leave you, nor forsake you*; though the case be ever so extreme and desperate, still the apostle's words hold good, *2 Pet. ii. 9. The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.* If all passages be blocked up, he will rather make a way through the sea than his people shall not escape, *Exod. xiv.* And this way and time of God's delivering is the most excellent, suitable, and certain, as might abundantly appear in many particulars: but that would be a digression. In general, be assured that God's way is the best way of deliverance, and his time is also the best time. He that sits as a refiner of silver, knows how and when to take out the metal, that it be purified, and not hurt. Here I might enter into a large discourse, and shew you how the judgment of man is ordinarily deceived, and his expectations disappointed, which he had built upon human probabilities; when in the mean time the purpose of God takes place in a far better and more seasonable deliverance of his servants. But it may suffice to have hinted it only.

Our duty is to converse with this instance of divine wisdom by the exercises of patience and hope. If God seems to tarry long, yet wait patiently for his appearance; for he will appear in the most acceptable time, and "in the end we shall consider it," and acknowledge it. Take heed of limiting the Holy One of Israel, as that murmuring generation did, *Ps. lxxviii. 41.* Take heed of fixing your deliverance to such or such a

train and series of causes which you have laid in your own heads, and of engaging God to act by your method; if God be a wise agent, it is fit he should be a free agent too. Bear up, christian soul, faint not when thou art rebuked of him; *Cast thy burden upon the Lord*, and he will, in due time, find out a way, either of lessening it, or removing it. *You have heard of the patience of Job, and you have seen the end of the Lord*, James v. 11. be you patient, and you shall see it too; a better end than ever you could have accomplished by your own art and industry. In the mean time, cherish in your hearts a lively hope of a happy issue; for your lives and comforts are all hid in him, in whom also are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. As the consideration of infinite wisdom, in knowing how and when best to deliver us, may settle our hearts and prevent their rising up, as a foam upon the waters, through impatience; so it may bear up our hearts, and prevent their sinking within us, as a stone in the waters, through desperation.

“God knoweth how to make the best use of all for our good.” I say, of all, both of the affliction, the manner and measure of it, of his delay, and of the season in which he chooses to redeem us. He can make Paul’s imprisonment turn to his advantage, *Phil. i. 19*. Job’s captivity to redound to his far greater state, chap. xlii.: Joseph’s banishment to make him great; and Manasseh’s to make him good. This is a large theme, and therefore I dare not enter into it particularly; take all in one word from the apostle, *Rom. viii. 28*. *All things do work together for good to them that*

love God. Whatever the premises be, the only wise God knows how to draw a happy conclusion from them. Get a firm belief of this radicated in your hearts; and converse with the wisdom of God, in this instance of it, by the great grace of resignation. The sovereignty of God may well cause in us a resignation of our interests, and comforts, and concerns to him; but this infinite wisdom of God ought, in reason, to work us into a resignation even of our very wills unto him. Oh! this debasing of self-will, this self-resignation is a noble and ingenuous act of a pious soul, (for so I dare call him in whom it is found,) whereby it honours God greatly in all that comes upon it! A godly soul, considering itself ignorant of many things, burdened with many corruptions, and clogged with an animal body, senses, appetite, fancy, which are always calling for things inconvenient, if not unlawful, doth conclude it would not be good for it to find, or care, or choose for itself; and duly eyeing that infinite mind and understanding, which, in a wonderful, unaccountable manner, orders all things, and all events, to a good and certain issue, is so overcome by, and indeed enamoured with the sense of it, that he renounces his own wisdom, and silences his own clamorous will, and complies readily with the all-wise God. This is truly to converse with the wisdom of God, when we do out of choice refer ourselves to it, and recline upon it. Every bare acknowledgment of divine wisdom is not a proper conversing with it; but when the same is wrought into the soul, and the lively sense of it doth so overpower the heart, that the will is prepared to

close readily with such methods as God shall please to use to accomplish his own ends, then do we properly and feelingly converse with God, under the notion of the all-wise God. But of self-resignation I have spoken under the first head, and much of that which is spoken there may be applied here. Therefore,

7thly. Converse with the unbounded goodness, love, and mercy of God. God is infinitely and unchangeably loving and merciful to his people: *he is good*, saith the psalmist, and *he is love*, saith the apostle, 1 *John* iv. 8. Those dreadful and terrifying apprehensions which men have of the blessed and good God, as if he were some austere and surly majesty, given to passion and revenge, are apt to destroy that cheerful and ingenuous converse with him, which the creature should maintain with its Creator at all times. But then we are most prone to entertain those apprehensions, and to harbour such unbecoming notions of him, when he appears in the way of his judgments, when we take a view of him in the ruins of our comforts, the blood of our friends, the spoil of our goods, and in the distresses of our lives. We are apt to frame notions of God according to what we find in our own disposition, to fancy a God like unto ourselves; and therefore we cannot eye an afflicting God, but we presently conclude he is an angry God; as though the eternal and pure Being were subject to passions and changes as we are. These apprehensions being once imbibed by the soul, it becomes unhinged presently, and almost afraid to behold the face of Love itself; but flies and hides itself.

as Adam in the garden: or if the soul do converse with God at all, it is a city that is besieged, converses with the enemy without, *viz.* sending out to seek peace, and to obtain a cessation of arms. And so a soul may bestow much upon God, surrender up the castle, give him all that he hath almost, not for any love that he bears to him, but as Joash gave Hazael a present of gold and precious things, to hire him to depart from him, *2 Kings* xii. 18. Oh! then they will up and do any thing, yea, circumcise their lives, as Zipporah circumcised her son, *Exod.* iv. 25. to escape the hands of an angry God. Every one will converse with God as an enemy does in time of extremity, will hang out a flag for peace, send presents, pay homage, send ambassadors to entreat his face; but few know how to converse with the goodness and mercy of God, with him as their dear and holy friend in a time of affliction, freely and cheerfully. Now, there seems to be a double account to be given of men's not conversing with the goodness and mercy of God in the time of afflictions.

1. "Many cannot believe the mercy and kindness of God, when he is in the way of his judgments." If it be so, why am I thus? cries the poor soul, struggling under its burden, and travelling in pangs to be delivered of its griefs. Thus unbelievably argues Gideon, who was otherwise famous for faith, in the time of his bitter bondage under the Midianites, *Judg.* vi. 13. When an angel from heaven was sent to assure him of the goodwill of God towards him, he could not entertain the news, nor believe the report, because of the anguish of his soul; but cries out, *Oh, my lord,*

if the Lord be with us, why is all this evil befallen us? No, the Lord hath forsaken us, for he hath delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. The sad soul is ready to cry concerning Christ's gracious presence, as the two sisters concerning his personal presence, John xi. 21—32. Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died: Lord, if thou hadst been here, if thou hadst loved me, if thou hadst any delight in me, my brother had not died, my husband, and wife, my children had not died; I had not been thus plagued, afflicted, wounded, tormented, as I am. Hence we have those many complaints of the afflicted soul throughout the psalms, Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious? is his mercy clean gone? hath he shut up his tender mercies in anger? and many such like. The smart of our senses is apt to pervert the judgment of our minds; and the sense of bodily evils is ready to destroy all sense of the infinite and unchangeable goodness and love of God. Now, this great evil seems to arise from these two causes, viz. our measuring of God, and his divine disposals, by ourselves and human passions and affections, as I hinted before; and our measuring the love of God too much by the proportion that he gives us of worldly prosperity. Wo to him in a day of distress, who was wont to judge of divine love by the things that are before him, as Solomon calls the things of this world, Eccl. ix. 1. This, I say, is the temper, the infirmity of many in the time of afflictions, though indeed there be no reason for it: for why should we conclude harshly concerning Job in his affliction, any more than we would conclude charitably con-

cerning Ahab on the throne? Besides, the scripture teaches expressly, that the love of God is consistent with correction, *Ps. lxxxix. 33. I will visit his iniquity, but my loving kindness will I not take from him.* Nay, it seems as if it could not well be without it, *Heb. xii. 6. Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

2. Others do indeed believe the goodness and mercy of God to them in a time of affliction; “but either they cannot, or dare not, or will not converse with it, nor take comfort in it.” They remember God with the psalmist, *Ps. lxxvii. 3. i. e.* the goodness, bounty, mercy of God, saith Molle-
rus, and yet at the same time are troubled; their hearts are unquiet, fluctuating, tumultuous within them: the soul is so impressed with the sense of sin, which it hath contracted from the consideration of its sufferings, that it dares not presume to meddle with mercy; but though this mercy of God be its own, yet it is ready to think that it is a duty to forsake its own mercies, as though it heard God chiding it in the words of Jehu to Joram’s messenger, *2 Kings, ix. 18. What hast thou to do with peace? what hast thou to do with mercy? turn ye behind me.* An afflicted soul hath much difficulty to believe it to be a duty to converse with the goodness and love of God in a time of affliction. It easily agrees to converse with the justice, holiness, and power of God indeed; but thinks it very improper and unseasonable, if not unsafe, to converse with his mercy. It is ready to cry, with Solomon, presently, *In the day of prosperity rejoice, but in the day of adversity con-*

sider ; or with the apostle, *If any be afflicted, let him pray ; if he be merry, let him sing psalms.* Conversing with the goodness of God seems not to be a duty at this season. I confess this is a high and hard duty. Every babe in religion will cry in his affliction, *Thou art just and righteous, O Lord ; but Thou art good and merciful ; blessed be the name of the Lord,* is the voice of a Job only, chap. i. 21. But it is a duty, though a hard one, and affords much pleasure and contentment to them that are exercised therein. That the kindness and benignity of God doth not fail, that his love is not broken off from his people, nor suspended even when he afflicts them most, is most certain : for though he works changes, in and upon us, yet he himself is eternally and unchangeably the same, *Jer. i. 17.* and though some of his dealings towards his people seem to be rough and severe, yet, if we judge rightly of them, they are all mercy and truth towards them that keep his covenant, *Ps. xxv. 10.* And that the people of God ought to converse with this divine love and mercy, even in their greatest afflictions, is as clear. To this purpose I might alledge the forecited example of holy Job, and might enforce this doctrine from the apostle's words, *Philip. iv. 4.* and *James i. 2.* *Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations ;* and from many good reasons too, if it were needful. I know indeed that it is a hard thing to keep up a right frame towards, and converse rightly with the righteousness and goodness of God at the same time : the one frame is ready to exclude the other. Sorrow is apt to contract the heart, and destroy the enlarged and cheerful

temper of it; and joy dilates and enlarges it, and is ready to make it forget its grief. But though it be hard, yet it is possible: these two may well exist together in the same soul, according to *Ps. ii. 11.*—*Rejoice with trembling.*

But how must we converse with the love and mercy of God in the time of afflictions? I have partly anticipated myself in this already, but I shall speak a little more distinctly of it. We do not then converse with the goodness and mercy of God, when we barely think of it, or acknowledge it; but,

1. “When we believe and apply it, and take to ourselves the comforts of it;” when we look through the clouds that are round about and quite cover us, and by the eye of faith behold the Fountain and Father of light; when we can look beyond the frowns that are in his face, and the rod that is in his hand, and see the good-will that dwells in the heart of God towards us: more especially,

2. When we do not only see and believe it, but also “draw virtue and influences down from it into our souls, to establish, settle, and satisfy them.” Not so much when we see it, as when we taste it; when we feel the Son of righteousness warm us, though it does not dazzle us, and though we cannot perceive it to shine upon us, yet we find it to shine in us. We do then converse with the love and mercy of God in an afflicted state, when the same doth bear us up, not only from utter sinking, but even from inordinate sorrowing; when we draw a virtue from it into our souls to sustain them, yea, and to cherish them

too. Thus Job comforts himself in his living Redeemer, chap. xix. 25. and the psalmist in the mercy of God, even when he was ready to slip, *Ps. xciv. 18. 19. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.* In a word, we converse with divine goodness, when we are really warmed with it: and with almighty love, when we rejoice in it, and can with holy boldness, and humble confidence, throw ourselves into the very bosom of it: when we receive impressions of it from the Spirit of God, and are thereby moulded into a temper suitable to it, and becoming it; for then indeed do we most happily converse with the love and goodness of God, when we for our part do live upon it; when we, being assured of an interest in a loving and good God, do surrender ourselves also unto him, in the most beautiful and becoming affections of love, joy, confidence, and holy delight. This is an excellent frame; and sure I am it is much for our interest thus to converse with God in the time of our afflictions. It is a high way of glorifying God, and bringing much credit to religion; and indeed he who keeps up this frame, can be afflicted but in part: he escapes the greater half of the evil: for though it be ever so stormy a time without him, a storm upon his house, upon his goods, upon his relations, yea, upon his own body, yet it is a calm day within; in the soul there is peace and tranquillity.

Lastly, and indeed everlastingly too, we are to converse with the infinite self-sufficient fulness of God, in a day of the greatest extremity; that is, as if I should say, not with any one single attribute,

but with the very God head of God, the immense perfection of God, the fulness of the Deity. Oh! how seasonably doth this blessed object present itself to the soul in a time of afflictions, losses, mortalities, persecutions, when we are most emptied of creature-enjoyments, and the emptiness of them doth most appear! for upon these two doth our conversing with God much depend. I need not tell you how apt we are to live without God, when we have our fill of creature-delights: whilst we can entertain our hearts with a created sweetness, we foolishly forget and neglect the supreme Good. And so fond and unreasonable is this affection, that no warnings, no precepts will prove effectual; God is forced to break that off from us, from which we would not be broken. Sure I am, the blessed and bountiful God envies not his servants any of their creature-comforts or delights; but he loves them, as I said before, with a strong and powerful love, and will not suffer them to live so much to their own loss as they do, when they spend noble affections upon transitory things, in the everlasting enjoyment of which they could never be happy. Now, afflictions are a negative, if we speak properly, even as sin is: and whenever we are afflicted in any kind, we are emptied of some created good; as poverty is nothing but the absence of riches; sickness the want of ease, of order, of health in the constitution; restraint is the loss of liberty, &c. So then it appears, that in a time of affliction God is emptying us of creature-enjoyments; for indeed affliction itself is little or nothing else but such an emptying or deprivation: and that then the emp-

tiness of the creature doth most appear, I suppose all will grant. The sick person looks upon his decayed strength, and withering members, and is feelingly convinced of the truth of the scripture, — *All flesh is grass*. Another casts about his eyes with Samson, and sees heaps upon heaps, and cries out like one that feels the weight of his own words, *Childhood and youth are vanity*: or, Alas! how soon is the desire of one's eyes taken away with a stroke! Another sees his goods carried away before his face, and his house on fire before his eyes, and then cries out, that he hath a real proof of the vanity of those things, which Solomon had long ago observed, *Prov. xxiii. 5. Riches make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle towards heaven*. Whilst we see the creatures stand, we will not believe but they are stable; whilst we see them fair and flourishing, we cannot rightly lay to heart the withering nature of them; but when we see them cut down, we then conclude they were but flowers; when we see them flitting, we conclude they are shadows; when God pours them out upon the ground, we are then convinced that they were unstable as water. To shew us what the best of our creature-enjoyments are, God is forced to take them quite away, that they may be no more.

Now, then, in such a case, at such a time, converse with the infinite self-sufficient fulness of God. Oh! now it is seasonable, now it is your duty, nay, now it will be your greatest policy. If that channel, that creature-channel be stopped, in which your affections were wont to run too freely, turn the stream of them into their proper channel

in which they may run freely, and neither ever meet with obstruction, nor ever overflow. Let your soul grow up into acquaintance and union with God by disappointments and failures in the creatures. More particularly, converse with the self-sufficient fulness of God,

1. By the act of creature-denial. Regarding an infinite, absolute, uncreated, fulness in a right manner, takes off the soul from all created objects, earthly things; even as beholding the sun in its glory dazzles the eye to all things below. God becomes so great to the eye of the soul, that it cannot see the poor motes of worldly comforts. Give a soul a feeling taste of the infinite sweetness and fulness of the Fountain, and its thirst after the polluted streams of the world is presently abated, if not perfectly quenched, according to that of our Saviour, *John iv. 14. Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, i. e. not after any other thing.* Like unto which is that gospel-promise, *Is. xlix. 10. They shall not thirst,* who do enjoy these springs of water. When this fountain is opened to the eye of the soul, and the soul begins to taste of it, it longs to drink deeper of that indeed; but as for all other waters, waters of the cistern, the soul looks upon them as nothing, or at least as being bitter, comparatively waters of Marah. We do then truly converse with the infinite self-sufficient fulness of God, when we look upon all created good with a noble disdain, and are content to part with it; or if we do still enjoy it, are resolved to enjoy it only in God, and so look upon it, and love it, only as a beam from the Father of lights, as a drop of the

infinite Fountain of all perfections. Tell me, is it not a poor and low thing that many professors do, who acknowledge and magnify the uncreated goodness, the fullness of God, and yet at the same time do covet and court the creature with all eagerness, and their worldliness is apparently too great for their religion? Methinks I hear God speaking to such seeming friends as Delilah to Samson, *Judg. xvi. 15.* *How canst thou say, I love thee, when thy heart is not with me?* For these men's hearts, methinks our Saviour's doctrine should strike cold, *Mat. vi. 21.* *Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also:* and those words of his beloved apostle, *1 John. ii. 15.* *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* Let a man pretend and profess what he will, and in words magnify the fulness and sufficiency of God as much as he will, if in the mean time his soul be bound up in the creature, such a man's religion is vain; nay, indeed. his profession of God becomes a real reproaching of him, and a blasphemy against reason itself. Let your low esteem of all created good in comparison of supreme Good, your readiness to quit your title to every creature-comfort, and in the mean time your care to live above it, witness the true and honourable esteem, the true and feeling sense that you have in your hearts of the infinite and self-sufficient fulness of God: for however men may cheat themselves, God is not truly magnified in the soul till all other things become as nothing; neither doth the soul rightly converse with his infinite fulness, so long as any thing stands in opposition to it, or competition with it.

2. Converse with the self-sufficient fulness of God by the grace of faith; I mean by that act of it, whereby we do interest ourselves, and, as it were, wrap up our own souls in this fulness, and make it our own. And herein there is no danger of an humble soul's being too bold or venturous; for the proclamation is full, and the invitation free, *Is. iv. 1. John vii. 37. Rev. xxii. 17. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* What Seneca says of the soul, in regard to the divine origin of it, may surely be better said of a godly soul, in respect to its divine nature and qualities. *Illum divino delectant, nec ut alienis interest, sed ut suis;* "It doth not converse with things divine, as with another's, but as its own." Indeed we cannot truly and comfortably converse with the infinite perfection and fulness of God, if we have no title to it; and we then converse with our own God, not another's, when the soul is able to say, All the fulness of power, wisdom, goodness, is wholly mine in my Head Christ Jesus, for in him all this fulness dwells, *Col. ii. 9.* and he dwelleth in me; in him are hid all these treasures, *Col. ii. 3.* and "my life also is hid with Christ in God," as theirs was in *Col. iii. 3.* You see then that a soul cannot converse with the infinite fulness and self-sufficiency of God but by Christ; for it is in and by him that we receive of divine fulness, *John, i. 16.*—Hence was that expression of the devout father, *Tolle meum, tolle deum;*—[Take away God, and you take my all,] to which I may add, *Tolle Jesum, et Tollis meum*—[Take away Jesus, and you take my all.] The fulness of a fountain is nothing to me, except it be mine. There is bread

enough in my father's house, says the poor prodigal, but still I perish with hunger; so are there living waters in this uncreated life, this infinite spring of all perfection; yet many souls are choaked with thirst, because the fountain is not theirs. It is a fountain sealed, as Solomon speaks in another case. *The well is deep, and they have nothing to draw with,* as the woman said concerning another well, *John iv.* Therefore be sure you get an interest in the fulness and sufficiency of God, or, as Solomon speaks in another case, *Prov. v. 15. Drink waters out of thine own well.*

3. converse with the self-sufficient fulness of God, by delighting yourselves in it. Drink of this fountain, yea, drink abundantly, ye beloved of God, *Cant. v. 1. yea, lie down by it, Ps. xxiii. 2. yea, bathe yourselves wholly in it: Enter into the joy of your Lord; lie down in his bosom, spread yourselves in his love and fulness.* The beloved disciple leaning upon the breast of his Lord at supper, was but a dark shadow, a faint resemblance of a beloved soul, which, by the lovely acts of joy, confidence, and delight, lays down in the bosom of Jesus, and doth feed upon him, and his all-sufficiency. Then do we converse indeed feelingly and comfortably with the infinite fulness, when the soul is swallowed up in it, doth rest in it, is filled with it, and centred upon it. Oh the noble and free-born spirit of true religion, that, disdaining the pursuit of low and created things, is carried out with delight to feed, and dwell and live upon uncreated fulness! Then is a soul raised to its just altitude, to the very height of its be-

ing, when it can spend all its powers upon the supreme and self-sufficient good, spreading and stretching itself upon God with full contentment, and wrapping up itself entirely in him. This is the way to live above losses; and he that so lives, though he may often be a loser, yet shall never be at a loss. He who feeds upon created goodness or sweetness, may soon exhaust all; the stock will be spent, and which is worse, the soul will be dried up that hath nothing else to nourish it. But he who lives upon uncreated fulness, is never at a loss, though he lose ever so much of the creature; for who will value the loss of a cup of water, who hath a well of living water at his door, from whence he obtained that and can have more as good, though not the same.—Nay, to speak properly, this is the only way to lose nothing: for how can he be properly said to lose any thing who possesses all things? And I am sure that he who is filled with the fulness of God, doth possess all things. Be sure, therefore, that in the want, in the loss of all things, you live upon the Fountain-fulness; delight yourself in the Lord, after the example of the prophet *Habakkuk*, iii. 17, 18.

I have gone through the doctrinal part of my discourse upon these words, which was the thing I mainly intended. Many inferences might be drawn from it; but I shall content myself to forbid, and so, as it were, to remove out of the way some things that hinder this great duty, and then conclude with one word of exhortation.

1. “Converse not with creature-comforts,” the poor, low, and scant enjoyments of this world, for so I may well call them. Though they be ever

so high in the opinion of them who have them, and ever so large as to the proportion that any one hath of them, they are low in comparison of that high and supreme Good for which the soul was made, and scant as to any real happiness or satisfaction that they can possibly give; for indeed those sinful and sensual souls that take up their rest and happiness most in them, are not properly satisfied, but surfeited; not filled, but for the present glutted with them. There are many unlawful and hurtful ways of the soul's conversing with created comforts: But converse not with them, fondly delighting in them, and doating upon them; especially take heed of this when God is shaking his rod over any of them. Doth God arise and begin to plead with you in Judgment, laying his hand upon any of these, and threatening to take them from you? Oh then, quit your hold; touch them not. What an unseemly and indeed monstrous sight it is to see a creature striving against his Creator, and maintaining his supposed right against heaven itself; Is it proper for a heaven-born soul to stand gazing and doating upon, or passionately weeping over created friends, the loss of liberty, corporeal health, houses made with hands, things below God, and even below itself too? Pore not too much upon them; value them only in God, and resign them freely to him. If you can say, you have any thing of your own, make much of it, and spare not; but give unto God the things that are God's; and when you have done so, I think you need not doat upon what is left. We ought indeed at all times to enjoy all our creature-com-

forts with hearts loosed from them; but if formerly our hearts have been too much joined to them, it is now time to loosen them.

2. "Converse not with creature-causes in a time of affliction." This a strange kind of atheistical temper, into which we are very prone to fall. I speak properly when I say, fall; for it is indeed a falling from God in our hearts, in whose infinite essence all creature causes are enclosed, and in whose hand the several successes and events of them all do lie. Let a senseless beast, kick at the thorn that pricks him; but let rational souls fix upon the highest and supreme Agent, who, in an infinite, powerful, and skilful manner, uses what creature he will, for what end he will, and sends it on an errand which itself knows not. Why do we seek after the poor perishing pleasures of the present world? Shall the noble faculties of an immortal soul spend themselves upon such a search? or is it just to pursue them thus? Is it proper to quarrel with the sword, because it suffered itself to be drawn; or beat the air, because it is infected?—This were indeed to go out with the king of Israel, with much warlike preparation, after a worthless insect. *1 Sam. 26. 20.* I deny not but that wise men may look into second causes, and make many profitable observations from them, both for present and future, and all men may and ought to learn many wholesome lessons even from the instrument that afflicts them. But sure I am, a godly man will not dwell upon these; he will not fix here, but readily resolve all into a higher cause, and so converse with that: much less will he blame or murmur at the harm-

less arrow, that flew no further than it was sent, and pierced no deeper than it was bidden. Yea, though the second cause were a sinful cause, a rational agent, and so consequently actuated by malicious and evil principles, yet a godly soul knows how to distinguish between him and his action: he hates him as a sinner, but bears well enough with him as God's instrument; and though he condemns his action as it varies from God's commands, yet he approves of it as being ordered by God's hand and counsel. David hated cursing as much as any man; yet did he eye the hand of God in every thing, and comply with it too; there was a time when he said concerning Shimei, *So let him curse.*

3. "Converse not with creature-cures, creature relief." These may indeed be looked after, and safely made use of when they are found: nay, I will add further, that they are to be sought diligently, and used carefully. Those who know the infinite sovereignty, power, and wisdom of God, will not restrict him to means, much less to those or these particular means: but, on the other hand, they that understand God's usual and ordinary way of acting, governing, and upholding the world, will not restrict him from means; no, nor expect that he should appear for their relief immediately and miraculously: though if any one have a miraculous faith, truly grounded upon some special and particular promise, I will not contend with him; only I would desire to see his miraculous faith justified by some miraculous works, which I conceive do always attend it. But the converse with creature-cures, which I oppose, is the immoderate seeking of them, or

the inordinate using of them. To use means in themselves unlawful, can never become lawful : but I speak not of these. For although some have reached that height of atheism and abjuration of God, as to employ satan himself for a counsellor in a time of straits, as Saul did ; and contract with the prince of death for the preservation of life in time of sickness, as Ahaziah did ; and I doubt not but very many do become acquainted with that evil spirit, and receive assistance from him before they be well aware, by seeking unscriptural, unwarrantable cures ; yet the greatest danger is not in these ; *in licitis perimus omnes* ; “the greatest danger is of miscarrying about things in themselves lawful,” and that is chiefly by those two ways which I just named. Take heed, therefore, of immoderate seeking after created helps ; be not anxious, perplexed, tormented in mind by a passionate desire of any of these. Oh what a raging and unquenchable thirst have many men after earthly cures ! They will move heaven and earth, and almost hell too, (with her in the poet), but they will find out relief. Give me a physician, or I die, says one ; give me trading, good markets, a plentiful crop, or I am undone, says another. What, man ! does thy life depend upon the physician, or is it incorporated into a potion ? is thy main happiness in the abundance of these things here below ? or wilt thou say to the wind, Blow here in this quarter, and nowhere else ? or restrict the supreme and free Agent to a form and method of operation that you shall dictate ? Let not such a profane disposition be found amongst us. Again, if

you have found out hopeful means of cure, take heed of using them in an inordinate manner, laying stress upon them, looking earnestly on them, as though they, by their own power and proper virtue, could make the lame to walk, or the sick to recover. Eye not, much less depend upon the virtue of any created means, as distinct from God; but acknowledge the power, and virtue, and goodness of God in that creature; and so consequently use it in subordination and subserviency to the supreme Cause, who can at pleasure pervert or suspend the influence and virtue of every such means.

4. "Converse not with creature-losses in a time of affliction." The sinful soul that hath wandered away from God, and centred upon the creature, is always intemperate and restless: if it be disappointed in its converse with human-cures, and sees that, in spite of these, his comforts are cut off, health, liberty, friends, are perished; then he seeks converse with his losses, and spends the powers of his soul in discontents, and many dismal passions. "Oh then! alas! I am undone! *What shall I do, for the hundred talents? I am the only man that hath seen affliction: no sorrow like unto my sorrow: I shall go softly all my days, for the joy of my heart is perished, the delight of mine eyes is cut off.*" Thus Rachel weeps for her children, and will not be comforted; Rizpah attends the dead bodies of her sons, and will not be parted from them, 2 Sam. xxi. 10. It is a strange thing that a soul should live upon its losses; and yet how many do so? Their very soul cleaves to the dust, where their earthly

comforts are interred; and their souls are so much bound up in the creature, that they would live and die together with them. If God smites the gourd, and makes it wither, Jonah droops, and would die too, *Jonah* iv. 8, 9. If Joseph be missing, Jacob will not be comforted; no, he will go down into the grave unto his son mourning, *Gen.* xxxvii. 35. Who would have thought of such conduct from such wise men, as a prophet and a patriarch! Oh the strange and unbounded power which this unseemly creature-love hath obtained over the best of men! which makes me call him a happy man, almost more than a man, a compeer of angels, who hath learned to converse with God alone. Well, converse not with creature-losses; let not your soul take up its lodging by the relics of your created comforts, with Rizpah; dwell not upon the lowest round of the ladder, but climb up by it to reach the meaning of God, and to some higher good, and more excellent attainment. They live to their loss who live upon their losses, who dwell upon the dark side of the dispensation; for every dark providence hath one bright side, wherein a godly soul may take comfort, if he be not wanting to himself.

5. "Converse not with flesh and blood." By flesh and blood, I suppose, the apostle means men, *Gal.* i. 16. And indeed, if we confer with men only for counsel, and repair to men only for comfort in a time of affliction, we fail of our object. But by flesh and blood, the scripture elsewhere often means man in his animal state, as he is in his corruptible, mortal body, as *1 Cor.* xv. 50, and many other places. And in this sense I speak,

when I say, converse not with flesh and blood. Judge not according to your senses; let not your own sensual appetite determine what is good or evil, sweet or bitter: consult with rectified reason, and not with brutish appetite; confer with faith, and not with fancy. Rectified reason will judge that to be really good which our sensual appetite disrelishes; an enlightened mind will judge that favourable to the interest of the soul, and its eternal happy state, which sense judges hurtful to the interest of the body and its animal state. It is not possible that there should be any order, nor consequently any peace or rest in that soul, where the inferior faculties domineer over the superior; and sensitive powers bear sway over the intellectual; and where raging appetite and extravagant fancy must ascend the throne to determine causes, and right reason must stoop and bow before it.

Be admonished to shun converse with all these, if you would converse rightly, purely, properly, comfortably with God, which is the highest office and attainment of created nature. Consider what I have said concerning this excellent and high employment, and awaken your souls, and all the powers of them, to meet the Lord God, and converse with him aright in the way of his judgments. Converse with God, with God in Christ, with God in his promises, with God in his attributes; and labour to do it, not speculatively, but really, practically, according as I have directed in the foregoing discourse. Religion is not an empty, airy, notional thing; it is not a matter of opinion, or of mere show, but it hath a real exis-

tence in the soul, and doth as really distinguish, though not specifically, one man from another, as reason distinguishes all men from beasts. Converse with God is described in scripture by living and walking with him, and the like. Let me inculcate this thing therefore again, and press it upon you, and I shall then close. As the way of glorifying God in the world is not by a mere thinking of him, or entertaining some notion of his glory in our minds, but consists in a real participation of his image, in a God-like disposition, and holy conversation, according to that expression of our Saviour, *John xv. 8. Herein is my Father glorified, &c.* so the way of conversing with God in his several attributes is not a thinking often with ourselves, and telling one another that God is just, wise, and merciful, &c. though this be good: but it is an imbibing of the virtue and value of these divine perfections, a working of them into the soul: and is on the other hand, the soul's rendering of itself up to God in those acts of grace which accord with such attributes, as in water, face answereth face. I do not call the bare performance of duties a conversing with God: prayer and meditation, &c. are excellent means, in and by which our soul converses with God; but communion with God is properly something more spiritual, real, powerful, and divine, as I have just described. As for example, the soul receives the impressions of divine sovereignty into it, and gives up itself unto God in the grace of self-denial, and humble subjection: the soul receives the communications of divine fulness and perfection, and entertains the same with delight and complacen-

cy; and, as it were, becomes filled with them; even as the communications of the virtues of the sun are answered with life, and warmth, and growth in the plants of the earth. So a soul's conversing with the attributes of God is not an empty notion about them, or a dry discourse concerning them; but a reception of impressions from them, and a reciprocation of them: the effluxes of these from God are such as do beget reflections in man towards God. This is to know Christ, to grow up unto him in all things, according to that in 1 John iii. 6. *Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*

A FAREWELL TO LIFE.

2 COR. v. 6.

Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.

THE holy apostle in the first verse of this chapter, lays down the doctrine of eternal glory, which will follow this transitory state of believers; and then shews in the following verses how he himself longed within himself, and groaned after that happy state; and then proceeds to give a double ground of his confident expectation. The one is in verse 5. where the apostle is confident concerning the putting off of this mortal body, because God had wrought and formed him for this state of glory, and already given him an earnest of it, even his Holy Spirit; the other ground of the confidence and settledness of his mind, as to his desires of a change, is taken from his present state in the body, which was but poor and uncomfortable, in comparison of that glorious state held forth in the words of the text. *Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.* Concerning the apostle's resolution, with

a quiet and sober mind, to suffer any kind of persecution or affliction whatever; but *we are always confident, i. e.* we do confidently expect, or at least we are always well satisfied, contented, well resolved in our minds, concerning our departure out of this life: the apostle was speaking, not of the afflictions, or persecutions in the former verses, but of death, which he calls a dissolving of the earthly house of this tabernacle, verse, 1. and a being clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, *ver. 2. 4.* Yea, and thus the apostle explains himself, *ver. 8.* where he tells, what he means by this his confidence, *we are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body,* where the latter words are explanatory to the former: *q. d.* It is better to be with the Lord than in this mortal body; but we cannot be with the Lord whilst we are in this body, it keeps us from him; therefore we have the confidence to part with it. It is the reason of the apostle's confidence and willingness to part with the body that I am to speak of; and the reason is, because this body keeps him from his Lord.—*Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.* The words are a metaphor, and are to be translated thus, *We dwelling in the body, do dwell away from the Lord;* which our translation renders with propriety, yet taking little notice of the metaphor, *whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord;* though indeed, if they had left out that word *at home,* it would have been as well, and so have neglected the metaphor altogether, as we may show hereafter. The words give a lesson of the apostle's willingness to be dissolved.

and contain a kind of an accusation against the body, and so seem to lay a blame upon it, and upon this animal life, which must be remembered. Now, for the former phrase of being *at home in the body*, it is easily understood, and I think generally agreed upon, to be no more than carrying about with us this corruptible flesh, and living this natural animal life: it only describes man in his compounded animal state, and doth not at all allude to his sinful, unregenerate, or carnal state: but the latter phrase, *absent from the Lord*, is capable of a double sense, both good and true; and, I think both well adapted to the context and drift of the apostle. I shall speak on both, but insist most upon the latter.

“Whilst we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord,” *i. e.* from the bodily presence of the Lord in heaven, absent from Christ Jesus and his glory; and so the words are the same in sense with 1 Cor. xv. 50. *Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*; for by flesh and blood there, must needs be meant man in his animal corruptible state. And so the apostle accuses this kind of life in the body, and as it were blames it for standing between him and his glorified Lord, and so, consequently, between him and the glory of his Lord, and this sense doth well agree with what went before, and with what follows. The apostle hath a great mind to depart, for whilst he is in the body, he is absent from his perfect happiness; for this is the consummation of a christian’s happiness, to be with the Lord, to be admitted to a beholding of his infinite glory, as appears by our Saviour’s earnest prayer for this,

John xvii. 24. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory. Besides, if we shall see him as he is, we must needs also be made like unto him, *1 John iii. 2.* else how can we be fit to live forever in his presence? Now are we kept from this seeing and beholding of the Lord in glory by this animal life; it stands between us and the crown, between us and our Master's joy, between us and the perfect enjoyment of God. To be with the Lord is a state of perfect freedom from sin. No unclean thing shall or can enter into heaven, *Rev. xxi. 27.* A perfect freedom from all manner of afflictions, *Rev. xxi. 4. There shall be no more sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, and all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes.* A state of freedom from all temptations to sin; for a tempting devil and all tempting lusts, shall be cast out forever: a state of perfect peace, without the least disturbance from within or without; of perfect joy, that shall never have end or abatement; and of perfect holiness; when the whole soul shall be enlarged, and raised to know, and love, and enjoy the blessed God, as much as created nature is capable. This is the happy state of seeing God, of being with the Lord; and it is our corruptible body, this animal life, that interposes between us and it; so that the apostle is confident, and rather willing to depart and be with the Lord, than stay here and be without him.

2. "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord," without any reference to the world to come; and so it may be fitly translated, *distant from the Lord, estranged from*

God. This agrees well with the context, and scope of the apostle also. And thus the words are also a good ground of the apostle's resolution and willingness to die: *q. d.* I am willing to be absent from this body; for whilst I am in it, I find myself to be at a great distance from God. And indeed the word signifies properly to be at a distance, or to be estranged: so I find it interpreted by a learned critic, without any mystery, (as he speaks,) of the distance that even believers themselves stand at from God in this life. And in this sense I shall choose to prosecute the words. In which sense the apostle blames this body and animal life, because it keeps us at a distance from God; it is a clog, a snare, a fetter, a pinion to the soul. And so the words do agree in sense with those of our Saviour, *Mat. xxvi. 41.* *The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak:* where by the flesh must needs be understood the body, if we consider the context, *viz.* the occasion upon which the words were spoken, the sleepiness of the apostles; or if we consider the propriety of speech, according to the style of the New Testament. True indeed, the corruption of nature is sometimes called *flesh*; but according to that way of speaking, our Saviour would rather have said, that the spirit was willing, but the flesh was strong; as he saith elsewhere, that the strong man armed kept the house.

I shall attempt to explain this doctrine, "That even the godly themselves, whilst they are in this body, are at a distance from the Lord." It must be granted, that the godly soul is nigh unto God, even whilst it sojourns in this mortal body, and

tottering flesh. All souls are involved in the apostacy of Adam, and are fallen from God, have alike wandered from their God, and are sunk into self and the creature: God opened a way for their return by the blood of Jesus; for we owe it unto Christ's death, not only that God is reconciled to us, pardoning our sins, but that any of our natures become reconciled to God, by accepting him as our God, and loving him as the chief Good. Now, there is a double attraction to God by Christ. The first is more general, external, and, as I may say, rational; thus the partition-wall being broken down, the Gentiles that were converted from their idolatry to a profession of God and Christ, and admitted to a communion with the visible church, are, upon that account, said to be brethren to the rest of God's children, *1 Cor. v. 11.* and are said to be within the church, *verse 12,* though at the same time they were fornicators, covetous, drunkards; and are said to be made nigh unto God, *Eph. ii. 13.* A professing of God is called being nigh to him; and even external performance is said to be drawing nigh to him; and so Nadab and Abihu, even in the offering of strange fire, are said to have drawn nigh to God, *Lev. x. 3.* And though this is a privilege, yet it is not that honourable privilege of the truly godly souls, who are by Christ Jesus raised up to God in their hearts, and reconciled to him in their natures, and united to him in their affections, and are so made nigh unto him in a more especial and spiritual manner. Thus all sinful and wicked souls, notwithstanding all their profession and performances, are far from God, estranged from the life of

God. Enmity and dissimilitude are the most real distance from God, and truly God-like souls only are nigh unto him; they dwell in him, and he dwelleth in them, as in his most proper temple. As to any kind of actual approach, no man can draw nigh to God; nor by any local accession; for so all men are alike nigh to him; for he is every where, and the worst as well as the best of men do live and move in him. But they only are really nigh unto God who do enjoy him; and they only enjoy him, whose natures are conformable to him in a way of love, goodness, and God-like perfections. We do not enjoy God by any palpable and external conjunction with him, but enjoy him and are nigh unto him, by an internal union; "when a divine Spirit informeth and actuateth our souls, and produceth a divine life in them, and through them." And so a godly soul only is really and happily nigh unto God. Thus the apostle Paul, I believe, was as nigh unto God as any man in the world; who did not only live and move in God, as all men do, (though few understand it,) but God did even live, and, as it were, breathe in him; the very life that he lived, was *by faith in the Son of God*, Gal. ii. 20. for though he walked in the flesh, yet he did not walk after the flesh, 2 Cor. x. 3. And yet this gracious soul, even as all other believers, was at a distance from God; and that not so much by reason of his being a creature, for of that he doth not speak, (so the very angels of God are at an infinite distance from God,) but by reason of this mortal body, and animal life, which hindered him from being so nigh to God as his soul was capable

to be: *Whilst we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord*; i. e. at a great distance from God.

1st. We are distant from God, "as to the knowledge which we shall have of him." Philosophical divines speak of a three-fold knowledge, 1. An essential knowledge of God. This is that unspeakable light, whereby the divine Nature comprehends its own essence, wherein God seeth himself. 2. By science. Of this, man is capable in the present life. . But this kind of knowledge of God, by way of science, is but a low and dry thing, common to good and bad, to men and devils; and is indeed the perfection of the learned more than of the godly: "and this kind of knowledge of God, the glorified soul will reckon but a fable, or a parable, when it shall be once swallowed up in God, feasting upon Truth itself, and seeing God in the pure rays of his own divinity." 3. Or by intuition. To this man cannot attain in this life, in its perfection, because it arises from a blissful union with God himself, which in this animal state is imperfect. This, in the Platonic phrase, is a contact with God; and, in scripture language, a beholding of God face to face, of which we are not capable in this animal state. So may the answer of God to Moses be understood, when he besought God to shew him his glory, *Exod. xxxiii. 18. i. e. to imprint a distinct idea of his divine essence upon his mind, ver. 20. No man can see me and live*; i. e. no man in this corruptible state and animal life is capable of seeing me as I am, to apprehend my divine essence, to see my face. The vision of God is

not in this life, but in the other; so that a man must die before he can thus know God. This is the exposition of Jewish doctors, and our learned countrymen do approve it also. This blessed knowledge of God we are at a distance from whilst we are in this body; so the apostle declares plainly, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. *Now we see darkly, as through a glass*; but the time will come when we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known. Now, our body principally hinders the operation of our minds, when they do exercise themselves about the nature of God, whilst it presents its fancies and gross imaginations to the soul; so it becomes, as it were, a veil upon the face of the soul, draws a cloud, and casts a mist over its eyes, that it cannot discern distinctly, nor judge properly and spiritually.—And, with allusion to this, that passage of the apostle is proper and significant, *We see as through a glass*, “which glass is indeed continually sullied and darkened whilst we look into it, by the breathing of our animal fancies and imaginations upon it.” Not only those fogs of pride and self-love, and other sinful corruptions, that do arise out of the soul itself, hinder our right perceptions of God; (as the earth sends vapours out of itself, which arise and interpose between itself and the sun;) but even the animal fancy throws its phantasms and imaginations as a mist before the eye of the soul, which, through divine grace hath been somewhat enlightened, and cleared from its imbred sinful humours. Though corruption in the mind be as a rheum in its eye, so that it cannot well see, yet that doth not hinder but that the fancy, by pre-

sending its unholy imaginations, doth also cast a mist before it, that it cannot see well, nor judge rightly; and so it is either held in gross ignorance, or relapses into error. But in the regeneration, this sense either shall not be, or shall be pure and spiritual.

2dly. Whilst we are in the body, we are distant from God, "as to that service which we ought to perform to him in the world." And herein it were endless to run through all those outward duties which we owe unto God in the body, and to shew how the body becomes a hinderance either to them, or in them. Though the soul be made willing and forward, by a divine principle implanted in it, yet the body remains a body, a weak and sluggish instrument; and so it will continue to be whilst it is animal; it will go down into the dust a weak body, 1 *Cor.* xv. 43. What man ever had a more willing and cheerful heart than Moses, the friend of God? yet his hands were heavy, and ready to hang down, *Exod.* xvii. 12. Shall I adduce as an instance the excellent duty of preaching and hearing, wherein the spirits of the most spiritual preacher are soon exhausted; the tongue of the learned is ready to cleave to the roof of his mouth; the head is seized with dizziness, the heart with panting, the organs of speech with weariness, and the knees with trembling? and the ears of the most devout hearers with heaviness, the eyes with sleepiness, and the whole body in a short time with weakness! Shall I adduce as an instance the noble duty of prayer, wherein the pious soul goes out to God, but can scarce get its body to accom-

pany it; and there the fancy distracts, the senses divert, and indeed all the members are ready to play the truant, if not the traitor too; especially the brain, where the soul sits enthroned, is suddenly environed with a rude multitude of sluggish vapours arising from the stomach, and being no longer able to defend itself against them, falls down dead in the midst of them; in-somuch that the poor soul is ready to wish sometimes with the sorrowful prophet,—*Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place, that I might leave my members, and go from them, for they are all an assembly of treacherous servants*; or wish that it were like its Saviour, who could leave his disciples asleep, and go and pray apart, and come again unto them! Shall I adduce as an instance that high duty of sustaining martyrdom, bearing persecutions for God? Come on, my body, cries the holy soul, come on to the stake; come my head, lay down thyself upon this block; come my body, compose thyself in this dark dungeon; come my feet, fit yourselves into these stocks; come my hands, draw on these fetters, these iron bracelets; come, drink the cup that my Father gives thee. But oh! how it follows to the stake! what shaking, shivering, trembling, and reluctancy, may you see in the whole structure of it! the head hangs down, the eyes run over, the lips quiver, the shoulders pull back, the hands tremble, the knees knock together, and the whole fabric is ready to tumble down for fear of falling. Either to this, (as some interpret) or to that duty of prayer, (as others,) doth that expression of our Saviour refer, *Mark* xiv. 38. *The spirit indeed*

is willing, but the flesh is weak. It seems the spirit of the weakest christian is strong, though the body (as we have seen) of the strongest saint is weak; though indeed it is not properly the weakness that is in the body, of which I am to speak, but the influence that the body hath upon the soul to weaken that; for whilst the soul sympathizes with the body, attends to it, spares it, pities it, itself becomes almost ill-affected to the service of God. I am not so much blaming the body, because it had need, by reason of its slothfulness, to be drawn on to duty; but because, by its influences it draws the soul also from them; for so we find it by woful experience, that if the body do sleep, the soul cannot wake; it cannot hear without the ear, nor see without the eyes; so that the body's weariness at length ends in the soul's unwillingness; and the weakness of the one grows to be the sin of the other.

3dly. Whilst we are in the body we are at a distance from God, "as to communion with him;" we are estranged from fellowship with him: and this is indeed to be absent from the Lord. Oh! how many weary and uncomfortable days do poor saints live, at a great distance from their God, their life, their happiness, whilst they are in their worldly pilgrimage, in their cage of flesh! Oh! how many days do they forget God, and are apt to think that God hath forgotten them too! how do they live sometimes, as it were, without God in the world, their souls being surfeited with worldly pleasures, benumbed with fears, frozen with self-love, choaked with cares, stifled with grief, and seem to have no more feeling of God,

their life, than a body in the dust hath of the soul its life ! Oh ! under what a heavy yoke doth the poor soul draw when it plows and harrows to the flesh, and cannot lift up its head to heaven ? Oh ! how is our intercourse with God obstructed ; our beholding of him obscured ; our entertaining of him prevented ; our enjoyment of him disturbed and violated ; our love to him deadened, and his love to us damped ; ours rendered infirm, and his rendered insensible ; and all by this debasing mortal flesh ! Alas ! what uncertainties and vicissitudes, what changings and tossings, turnings and windings, are our poor pilgrim souls here exercised with ! What breakings and piercings, reconciliations and fallings out, closing and partings, rising and falling, what elevation and depression, what forwards and backwards, doth the poor distressed soul experience in this animal state ! The flourishing soul withers, the lofty soul languishes, the vigorous soul faints, the nimble soul flags, the devout soul swoons, the lively soul sickens, and is ready to give up the ghost ; and she that was recently resting and glorifying in the arms of her Lord, now lies embracing a dunghill, and hath almost forgotten that ever she was happy ; her peace is violated, her rest is disturbed, her converse with heaven interrupted, her incomes from God are few and insensible, her out-goings to him are few and faint, and the rivers of her divine pleasures are almost dried up ; and all this whilst she is in this body ; and indeed a great part of it, by reason of this body in which she is ; the animal body keeps us distant from the Lord, that we cannot converse with him, mind him, enjoy him, live

upon him and unto him. The body being fitted only for this animal state, is ever drawing down the soul, when it would raise up itself in contemplation of, and communion with the blessed God. And so,

1. The necessities of the body hinder the soul's communion with the Lord. Not that the necessities of the body are simply in themselves to be blamed, but the caring for these doth so exercise the soul in this state, that it cannot attend upon God without distraction. Oh! how much doth the necessary caring for meat and drink, food and physic, yea, the ordering of temporal affairs, estrange from communion and converse with God! so that the soul, like poor Martha, is cumbered with many cares, and busied with much serving in this house, and cannot attend so devoutly and entirely as it ought upon the Lord. If the body be racked with pain, the soul cannot be at rest, but must needs look out for relief; if the body be pinched with hunger and thirst, the soul can take no rest till it have found a supply for it; if the one be sick, the other is sad; if the one be hungry or thirsty, the other seems to languish; like Hippocrates' twins, that laughed and cried, lived and died together.

It is a wonderful mystery, and a rare secret, how the soul comes to sympathize with the body, and to have not only a knowledge, but, as it were, a feeling of its necessities; how these come to be conveyed to the soul, and how it comes to be thus affected with them. But we find it to be so; and indeed, to speak truth, it seems necessary for the maintenance of this animal state that it should be so, that the soul should be, as it

were, hungry, weary, sick, and sleepy too together with the body. "For if our soul should not know what it is to be hungry, thirsty, cold, or sick, or weary, but by a bare ratiocination, or a dry syllogistical inference, without any more especial feeling of these necessities, it would soon suffer the body to languish and decay, and commit it wholly to all changes and casualties; neither would our body be any more to us than the body of a plant or of a star, which we do many times view with as much clearness, and contemplate with as much contentment, as we do our own." But in the mean time the soul is diverted from its main employment, and turned aside from its communion with God; not so much by providing somewhat for our bodies to eat, and drink, and put on, which is lawful and needful, as our Saviour implies, *Matt. vi. 32.* as by sinking itself into the body, being passionately and inordinately affected with its wants, and so being sinfully thoughtful, as our Saviour intimates in the same chapter, verse 31.

2. The passions of the body hinder the soul's communion with the Lord. So powerful is the interest and influence that this body hath in and over the soul, that it fills it with desires, pleasures, griefs, joys, fears, angers, and sundry passions. The body calls the soul to attend upon its several passions, which I dare not say are sinful in themselves, as they first affect our souls, any more than it is our sin that we are men; our blessed Saviour seems not to have been free from them, as grief, *Isa. liii. 3.* fear, *Heb. v. 7.* who yet was free from all sin, *1 Pet. ii. 22.* Nay, it seems ne-

cessary, as I said before, considering the nature of this animal life, that the soul should have the corporal passions and impressions feelingly and powerfully conveyed to it, without which it could not express a due benevolence to the body that belongs to it: and indeed, were it not so, we could not properly be said, in the apostle's phrase here, to be at home in the body; the soul would rather dwell *in domo aliena quam sua*, [in another's house rather than its own.] But the soul being called to attend upon these passions, is easily ensnared by them, but it slips insensibly into a sinful inordinancy. As for example, "The animal spirits, nimbly playing in the brain, and swiftly flying from thence through the nerves up and down the whole body, do raise the fancy with mirth and cheerfulness, which we must not presently mistake for the power of grace, nor condemn for the working of corruption: so also when the gall empties its bitter juice into the liver, and that mingles itself with the blood there, it begets fiery spirits, which presently fly up into the brain, and cause impressions of anger." Now, though I dare not say that the soul's first perceiving and entertaining of these passions is sinful, yet it is sadly evident that our souls being once moved by these undisciplined animal spirits, are very apt to sit upon and cherish those passions of grief, fear, mirth, anger, and, as it were, to work them into itself; in an inordinate manner, and contrary to the dictates of reason; and so the will presently makes those sinful, which before were but merely human; or, as one calls them, the mere blossomings and shootings forth of ani-

mal life within us. We see then, in these particulars, that not only the depraved dispositions of the soul do keep us at a distance from God, but even this body also is a great hinderance to that knowledge of God which we shall attain to; that service of God which we might perform; and that sweet communion with him which we shall enjoy. It is a clog to the soul that would run; a mist to the soul that would see clearly; a manacle to the soul that would work; a snare to the soul that would be free; a fetter to chain it to earthly material things; and, as it were, a pinion to the wings of contemplation. More particularly, it is a hinderance to it, as to these three things which I have named: as to the soul's knowledge of God, the body is an occasion of ignorance and error; as to its serving God, an occasion of distraction and weariness, lightness and trifling; and, as to its communion with God, an occasion of earthliness and sensuality.

Now, this distance at which the body keeps the soul from God, might more particularly appear in another way of explication, by observing the especial grievances, that arise to the soul from those three great animal faculties, (if I may so speak,) the senses, the appetites, the fancy.

1. The senses; I mean the external senses of the body, seeing, hearing, &c. These convey passions to the soul, upon which it insists and fees with a sinful fondness and eagerness. Set open the eye, and it will strive to convey some image to the soul of the earthly objects, that shall expel the ideas of God from it. Set open the ear, and it will fill the soul with such a noise of earthly tumult, that the secret whispers of the

Divine Spirit cannot be heard.—The like I may say of the rest. Oh! how easily do these discompose the fixed soul, distract the devout soul, cast a mist before the contemplative soul, and bear down the raised soul from communion with heaven, to converse with earthly objects! *Ut vidi, ut perii!* [what have I seen! what have I lost!] is the complaint of many a christian, as well as it was of the heathen. The souls of most men are quite subservient to their senses, and are nothing but, as it were, slaves to them all their lives; and so the servants are on horseback, and princes go on foot.—Though the eye will never be satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing; yet these importunate suitors must be gratified; the eye must see what it will see, and the ear must hear what it will hear: nothing must be withheld from them, that these petulant senses do cry after.—These men's souls are indeed incarnate, wholly devoted to the service of their eyes, ears, and mouths. But not only these, but even godly souls are often charmed and ensnared by their senses; even they converse not only in the body, but too much with it also, and it becomes as a Delilah to lull them asleep, and blind them too. Job found his senses so treacherous, that he was fain to make a covenant with them, *Job xxxi. 1.* and well would it be if he could even by that means escape. The words are a metaphor; for indeed the mischief is, that these senses are not capable of any discipline, one cannot bring them into any covenant-terms; so that whilst we have senses, they will be treacherous; whilst we have eyes they will be wandering after forbidden objects.

2. The appetite, the sensitive appetite ; which is a faculty of the sensitive soul, whereby this animal man is stirred up to desire and lust after the things which his senses have dictated to him. This bodily lust following upon the heels of the former, becomes a greater snare to the soul : this restless suitor comes to the soul begging for every trifle that the eye hath seen, or the ear heard, or the mouth hath tasted ; and by its continual coming, and importunate crying, wearies her into compliance : as the fond child comes crying to the mother for every toy and trifle that it hath seen in the shops, and she, though she cannot in judgment approve of the request, yet either in fond indulgence, or for peace sake, will condescend to purchase it. This is the daughter of the horse-leach, that cries continually, Give, give. Why, what would it have ? even any thing that it hath seen, or heard, or touched, or tasted, any thing that it sees a fellow-creature to be possessed of : and so indeed the appetite doth not only ensnare the soul into drunkenness and gluttony, but voluptuousness, lasciviousness, and all manner of sensuality. The evil of the sensual appetite appears in wantonness and lasciviousness, (whether real, verbal, or mental,) in immoderate and inordinate trading, ingrossing, sporting, building, attiring, sleeping, visiting, as well as in eating and drinking. I will determine nothing concerning the first motions of the appetite, whereby it solicits the will to fulfil it ; only this, that if it solicit to any thing simply and morally evil, it is sinful in that first act, and that at all times it ought carefully to be watched, lest it seduce to intemperance in things

lawful. But concerning the gratifying of the appetite, (seeing there must be in us a sensitive appetite,) whilst we are in this animal state, the endeavour as far as may be, should be not to gratify the appetite, as a sensitive appetite, but under this notion, because the thing that it desires is for our real good, and tends to the enjoyment of the supreme Good: to eat and drink, not because we are hungry or thirsty, because the appetite desires it, but with reference to the main end, with respect to the highest good, that the body may be enabled, strengthened, and quickened, to wait upon the soul cheerfully, in the actions of a holy life. But to this, man, in his animal state, cannot perfectly attain; which shews that the appetite doth keep us at a distance from God.

3. The fancy; this also keeps man at a distance from God, and hinders us in the knowledge and service of God, and interrupts the soul's communion with God. This is a busy and petulant faculty, or inward sense, and the soul doth readily feel the passions of it, so that it doth frequently hinder its mental operations, and becomes a great snare. An operative fancy, how much soever it is magnified by the wisdom of this world, is a mighty snare to the soul, except it co-operate with right reason, and a sanctified heart. I am persuaded, there is no greater burden in the world to a serious soul, especially in warm and dry constitutions, where it is commonly most pregnant, and most impatient of discipline; and, I confess, I have often wondered that the soul is so speedily affected with the phantasms and imaginations of it; and that it so unwillingly relinquishes them.

This indeed, if it be so far refined, as to present sober and solid imaginations to the mind, and to act in subserviency to sanctified reason, is an excellent handmaid to the soul in many of her functions; but otherwise is a snare, (as we have observed already) if we study the secrets of our own souls, and the mighty mysteries that are within us. And this doth not only ordinarily disturb, distract, and hinder in ordinary duties, but even when the soul is at the highest pitch of communion and contemplation, it essays to pull it down to attend to its vain phantasms, and indeed gives it many a grievous fall. I hesitate not to affirm, that this is the most pernicious enemy of the three that I named, to the soul's happiness, as might appear in many respects; I will only name one. It hath an advantage against us, which neither of the other two hath: it infests us and annoys us sleeping as well as waking. In sleep the senses are locked up, and the appetite is, for the most part, silent from its begging; but the fancy is as busy and tumultuous as ever, forming and gathering imaginations, and those are commonly wild and senseless, if not worse. The mind, through kindness and benevolence to the body, suspends its own actions, whilst the body takes its rest in the night, and then the rude fancy takes its opportunity to wander at liberty, as being without its keeper, and acts to the disturbance of the body: but that is not the worst; for it becomes so tumultuous and impetuous sometimes, that it awakens the mind to attend upon its imaginations; and to this the soul doth condescend, in an inordinate manner, and sets the stamp of sinfulness

upon them, to its own wounding. And now I cannot but observe how sleep also keeps us at a distance from God in this animal state. How is our communion with God interrupted by this! for herein we cease not only from the actions of an animal life, but commonly from the actions of a spiritual life too. What a great breach, what a sad interruption is there made in our converse with God by this means! A poor happiness it is that we have in this world, yet even that is cut off, and during a fourth part of our time, seems, as it were, not to be; for indeed a happiness that is not felt, deserves not the name of happiness. Some learned and active men have been ashamed that they have slept away so much of their time, when all was too little for their studies and exploits. Ah, poor christian! who, as it were, sleeps away so much of his God; being as much estranged from him in the night, as though he had never conversed with him in the day, and in the morning when he awakes, cannot always find his God with him, which is enough to make a poor saint wish, either that he might have no need of sleep, or that with the loving spouse, *Song. v. 2.* though he sleep, his heart might wake perpetually.

A FAREWELL TO LIFE.

2 COR. V. 6.

Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.

IN the preceding Discourse, we have seen in what sense this mortal body keeps believers absent from the Lord, and in what respects it keeps them at a distance from God, even in this life, from the *knowledge of God*, the *service of God*, and *communion with him*. This subject having been pursued, in a distinct consideration of various particulars, I proceed to remark,

1. We may see that it is for good reasons that the blessed apostle is confident and willing to depart; nay, he groans within himself, desiring that *mortality might be swallowed up of life*, as he speaks, *vers. 4*. I hope you see that the reason is good, and the ground of his confidence is sufficient. What! (will the men of the world say,) will you persuade us out of our life? should any thing in the world make a man weary of his life? *præstat miserum esse quam non esse*. [It is better to be miserable, than not be at all.] The apostle was surely beside himself, or he would never have been weary of his own life; or else he was in a passion, and knew not what he said; or else his life was bit-

ter to him by reason of the poor, afflicted, persecuted condition that he lived in, and so he was become desperate, and cared not what became of him. No none of these; the apostle was in his right mind, and sober too. It was not a passion, or a fit of melancholy, but his judgment and choice upon good deliberation; and therefore you find him in the same mind elsewhere, *Phil. i. 23. I desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.* Besides, he gives a reason for what he desires; but we know that passion is unruly and unreasonable. Neither was the apostle beside himself, for he gives a good, solid, and wise reason—*Whilst we are at home in the body, &c.* he will part with his life rather than not be perfectly happy. For, whereas worldlings put such a high price upon life, and think that nothing should persuade men out of their lives; (it is true indeed, if we speak properly, that life is the perfection of the creature; the happiness of every thing is its life; *A living dog is better than a dead lion*, Eccl. ix. 4.) but I may say to these, even as our Saviour said to the woman in *John iv. 18.* concerning her husband, the life that we live here is not our life. The union of the sensitive soul with the body is indeed, truly and properly the life of a beast, and is its greatest happiness, for it is capable of no higher perfection: but the union of the rational soul with God is the noblest perfection of man, and his highest life: so that the life of a believing soul is not destroyed at death, but perfected. Neither was the apostle weary of his life because of the adversities of it. The apostle had more forti-

tude than any Stoic; he durst live, though he rather desired to die. All the conflicts he endured with the world never extorted such a sigh from him, as the conflict that he had with his own corruptions did, *Rom. vii. 24. O wretched man, &c.* All the persecutions in the world never made him groan so much as the burden of his flesh and his great distance from the Lord did. A godly soul can converse with persecuting men, and a tempting devil, can handle briers and thorns, can grapple with any kind of oppressions and adversities in the flesh, without despondency, so long as it finds itself in the bosom of God, and in the arms of omnipotence; but when it begins to consider where it is, how far it is from its God, its life, and the happy state for which God hath prepared it, then it cannot but groan within itself, and be ready, with Peter, to cast itself out of the ship to go to its God, to land itself in eternity. Neither indeed, to speak truly, is it only the sense of sin against God which excites the godly soul to sorrow: for though it must be confest that this is a heavy burden upon the soul, yet the apostle makes no complaint of this here, but only of his distance from God, that necessary distance from God, at which the body kept him.

2. See here the excellent spirit of true religion. Godly souls do groan after a disembodied state, not only because of their sins in the body, but even because of the necessary distance at which the body keeps them from God. We may suppose a godly soul sometimes to have no manner of affliction in the world to grieve him, no sin unpardoned, unrepented of to trouble him;

yet for all this he is not at perfect rest; he is burdened, and groans within himself, because he is at such a distance from that absolute Good, whom he longs to know more familiarly, and enjoy more fully than he doth yet, or than is allowed to mortal men: and though nothing else trouble him, yet the consideration of this distance makes him cry out, *Oh! When shall I come and appear before God!*—be wholly swallowed up in him, see him as he is, and converse with him face to face. Bare innocency, or freedom from sin, cannot satisfy that noble and large spirit that is in a truly God-like soul; but that spirit of true goodness, being nothing else but an efflux from God himself, carries the soul out after a more intimate union with that Being from whence it came: God dwelling in the soul, doth, by a secret mighty power, draw the soul more and more to himself. In a word, a godly soul that is really touched with the sense of divine sweetness and fulness, and impressed with divine goodness and holiness, as the wax is with the stamp of the seal, could not be contented to dwell for ever in this kind of animal body, nor take up an eternal rest in this imperfect, mixed state, though it could converse with the world without a sinful sully of itself, but must endeavour still to obtain a closer conjunction with God; and, leaving the pursuit of all other objects, must pant and breathe not only after God alone, but after more and more of him; and not only when it is under the sense of sin, but most of all when it is under the most powerful influences of divine grace and love, cry out with Paul, *Oh, who will deliver me out of this body!*

3. Suffer me from hence to expostulate a little, to expostulate with christian souls about their becoming temper. Doth this animal life and mortal body keep us at such a distance from our God, our happiness? Why are we then so fond of this earthly and mixed state? Why do we so pamper this body? Why so anxiously studious to support it, so dreadfully afraid of the ruin of it? If we take the apostle's words in the first sense that I named, then I may ask with him in the first verse, *Know we not, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?* Or, as in ver. 3. Why are we not willing rather to be *absent from the body*, and to be *present with the Lord*? If we take them in the latter sense, as this animal body is an hinderance to the souls knowledge of, and communion with God, then I ask concerning this, as the apostle doth concerning rich men, *James ii. 6.* Why do ye pamper, prize, honour, doat upon this body? Doth not this body oppress you, distract you, burden you, clog you, hinder you? Doth not this body interpose between the Sun of righteousness, between the Father of lights, and your souls, that should shine with a light and glory borrowed from him; even as the dark body of the earth interposes between the sun and moon to eclipse its light? Why are we not rather weary that we are in the body? Surely there are some objections, some impediments to the soul's longing after its happy state, which I shall presently mention; but I suspect also, that there is something that chains the soul to this an-

imal life, some cords in this earthly tabernacle that bind the soul to it; but I cannot well imagine what they are. Say not, there is something of God to be enjoyed in this life, which makes it pleasant; for although this be true, yet I am sure God gives not himself to a soul to clog it, or satiate it. Did Moses send for some clusters of the land of Canaan into the wilderness, think ye, that the people might see and taste the fruits, and sit still, and be satisfied, and say, Oh, it is enough, we see that there are pleasant things in that land, but we will never go to it? Or did he not rather do it, that they might make the more haste to possess it? Will any man say, Away, I will have no more land, no more money, for I have some already? Can a godly soul say, God hath given me foretaste of happiness, I desire no more? No, no; but the report that a christian hears of a rest remaining, a happy life remaining for it, and the chariots of divine graces that he sees God hath sent to his soul to convey it thither, make him cry out, not with Jacob, *Gen. xiv. 28. It is enough, Joseph my son is yet alive, &c.* but, Oh! this is not enough: this report is not enough: it is not enough that I taste some of the good things of the land; it is not enough that I see these carriages sent for me; it is not enough that my soul hath an happy and honourable life prepared for it; I see it indeed before I die, but I will also die that I may see it better, and enjoy it more. But I suspect there is some earthly tie, even upon the heavenly soul, that chains it to this animal body; but sure I am, that whatsoever it is, it is but a weak one. Is there

any worldly accomodation, any created joy that should in reason step between a soul and its God? Is this life sweet, because there are creature-comforts to be enjoyed? and will it not be a better life, when creature-comforts shall not be needed? And are the pleasures of this body, the comforts of this life, the flattering smiles, the fawning embraces of the creature, such a mighty contentment to a soul, to a soul acquainted with the highest Good? Hast thou, O my soul, any such full and satisfying entertainment in thy pilgrimage, as to make thee unwilling to go home? Wilt thou hide thyself with Saul among the stuff, among the lumber of the world, when thou art sought for to be crowned? Are the empty sounds of popular applause, the breaking bubbles of secular greatness, the shallow streams of sensual pleasures, the smiling dalliance, and lispng eloquence of wives and children, the flying shadows of creature-refreshments, the momentary flourishes of worldly beauty and excellence, are these meet for a soul? Are these the proper object, or the main happiness of such a divine thing, as an immortal soul? Why are we not rather weary of this body, that makes us so weary of heavenly employment? Why do we not rather long to part with that life that parts us from our life? and instead of the young apostle, *It is good to be here*, cry out with the sweet singer, *Oh that one would give me the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest.*

I will now attempt to dissuade from two evils concerning your body; *viz.* fear and fondness.

1. Take heed of fearing for the body. I speak

not so much of those first impressions which our fancies and animal spirits do make upon our minds, (though it were to be wished that the mind did not so much as once perceive or entertain these;) but of those acts of the will, whereby it doth receive, allow, and cherish these impressions, until the cockatrice egg be hatched into a viper. I speak not against care and circumspection; nor against that kind of suspicion whereby wise and prudent persons are jealous of circumstances and events, and so do watch to prevent, remove, or manage bodily evils, which is called *fear*; though even in these there may be an extreme, a *fear where no fear is*; Ps. liii. 5. which is there ascribed to the wicked, and elsewhere threatened as a judgment, Lev. xxvi. 36. *The sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them*; Deut. xxviii. 65. *The Lord shall give thee a trembling heart, &c.* Prov. xxii. 3. *A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself*; but there are also many fools who hide themselves though they see no evil. But I need not speak of these; there is a vast difference between care and fear. By fear, I mean that trembling, fluctuating, tormenting passion, that doth not suffer the heart to be at rest; but doth, as it were, unhinge it, and loosen the joints of the soul, whether it breaks into expression or not; it clouds the understanding, unsettles the will, disorders the affections, confounds the memory, and is like an earthquake in the soul, taking it off from its own basis, destroying the consistency of it, and hurling all the faculties into confusion; this, whether it break out into any unbecoming acts or not, which commonly it doth, is itself an unlovely temper for a

wise man; much more for a godly. I might speak as a philosopher, and shew how unbecoming a man, and how destructive to him this passion is; so much, that whilst it doth predominate, it almost robs him of that which is his greatest glory, even reason itself. But, to say no worse of it, it is very opposite, if not contrary, to that noble grace of faith, whereby the steady soul rests and lodges in the arms of God, as in its centre. But, to speak to the thing in hand, what an unlovely passion is this? We would have the world to believe that we have laid up our happiness in God, and that we are troubled because we are so far from him; and yet we are afraid lest that should be taken out of the way that keeps us at a distance from him: we flatter ourselves that we are in haste for heaven, and yet we are greatly afraid lest our obstacles should be taken out of the way. How can these things be reconciled? Are we persuaded, that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were taken down, we have a building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? If not, why do we call ourselves christians? But, I think, I may take it for granted, we are all persuaded of this; and if so, why are we afraid that it should be taken down? I am unwilling to speak what I think; yet certainly the entire and ardent love which we either do bear, or ought to bear, to the blessed God, and our union and communion with him, should cast out this fear. This is consonant to scripture, 1 *John* iv. 18. I will not attempt to decide how far sinful fear for the body may carry a godly soul; the further the worse, I am sure; but if any one will be so indulgent to his own pas-

sions, and so much an enemy to his own peace, as to encourage himself to fear, (which is a strange thing,) from the example of Abraham denying his wife, or Peter denying his Lord, let him compare the issue, and then see whether he dare go and do likewise: but if that will not hinder you ponder upon these two considerations.

(1.) I pray you seriously consider the matter with yourselves, how far fear of sickness and death may consist with that ardent thirst after union and perfect communion with the blessed God; with which we ought to be possessed.

(2.) Consider seriously how far it can consist with the sincerity of a christian. God hath not left us in the dark as to this matter. I will point you to a text or two, which, methinks, should strikè cold all slavish, trembling professors, *Prov. xxviii. 1. Job xv. 20, 21. The wicked travaileth with pain all his days, a dreadful sound in his ears.* They are the words of Eliphaz indeed, but they do agree with the words of God himself, *Is. xxxiii. 14. The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites.* When I read over these texts, I cannot but pray, and cry, O my soul, come not thou into the number of the wicked, and be not united unto the assembly of hypocrites!

2. Take heed of fondness of the body; of priding, and pampering it.

(1.) Take heed you pride not yourselves in any excellencies of the body. Doth this mortal body keep us at a distance from our God? do we well then to love that which keeps us from that which is most lovely? Why do we stand fondly

gazing upon that which keeps us from the blessed sight of God? If you ask me, Did ever any man hate his own flesh? I will ask you again, Did ever any wise man love his flesh above him that made it? Did ever any godly soul love his body in opposition to his God? Oh, but it is a comely body! And what is a beautiful body but a fair prison? A silver cord, or a clog of gold, do as really hinder the flight of a bird, and take away her liberty, as a stone bound to her wings. Nay, those very excellencies which you so much admire, are so much the greater hinderances. If we had learned the excellent lesson of enjoying all things only in God, then the several beauties and attractions of the body would be a help to our devotion; they would carry us up to an admiration and contemplation of that glorious and most excellent Being, from whom they were communicated: so we might, in some sense, look into a glass, and behold the beauty of God. But, alas! these commonly prove the greater snares; many would have been more beautiful within, had they been less beautiful without; more chaste, if less comely; many had been more peaceable, and more at peace too, if they had been less able to quarrel and fight.

It was said of Galba, who was an ingenious man, but deformed, that his soul had an ill habitation; sure I am, it might better have been so said of beautiful Absalom, or Jezebel, whose bodies became a snare to their souls. On the other hand, they that want beauty in their bodies, will perhaps labour to produce an excellency in their minds far beyond it; as the philosopher advised to

look often into a glass, *ut si deformis sis, corrigas formositate morum, &c.* (that is, if you are deformed in body, you may obviate it, by decency of manners, &c.)

(2.) Take heed of pampering the body, of treating it too gently or delicately. Deny it nothing that may fit it for the service of God and your own souls; and allow it no more than that. Thy pampering is, 1. Unseemly: What! make a darling of that which keeps us from our Lord; conduct gently, and delicately, and tenderly towards that which whilst we carry about with us we cannot be happy! 2. Injurious: If you bring up this servant delicately from a child, you shall have him become your son at length, yea, your master. If you do, by your bodies, as the fond king did by his son Adonijah, 1 *Kings* i. 6. never displease it, never reprove it, never deny it, it will do with you in time as he did, raise seditions in your soul. Go on, and please, and pamper your bodies, and it will come to this at length, that you must deny them nothing; you must give whatsoever an insatiable appetite will crave, go whither your senses will carry you, and speak whatsoever wanton fancy will suggest. Doth not the body itself set us at a sufficient distance from God, but we must estrange ourselves more from him, by pleasing it, and spend the time that should be for God, in decking, trimming, and adorning it! When you indulge this, you feed a bird that will pick out your eyes; you nourish a traitor when you gratify this Adonijah. In a word, is it not enough that we do all carry fire in our bosoms, but we must also blow it up

into a flame? *Nay, my brethren, do not so foolishly.*

And now, I would exhort you,

1st. "To watch against the body." You have heard how the senses, appetite, and fancy, become a snare to the soul's living unto, and conversing with God. Now then; if you seriously design to commune with heaven; if you place your happiness in the knowledge and enjoyment of that supreme and eternal Good, it becomes you to watch against all things that may distract or divert you from it, or make you fall short of the glory of God. Men that live upon earthly designs, whose sole ambition it is to be great in the world, do not only use the most effectual means, and take the most direct courses to accomplish those designs, and attain those ends, but do continually suspect, and diligently watch against all the moths that would corrupt, the rust that would consume, the thieves that would plunder their treasures; and, in a word, against all possible hinderances, frauds, and disappointments: so should we suspect and watch against all enemies and traitors to our souls, if we live here upon eternal designs, if it is our ambition to be great in God alone. And the more imminent the danger is, the more should we watch. Have you not found by experience, which of these three have been most prejudicial to your communion with God? If not, you have not been so studious to know the state, or to pursue the happiness of your own souls as you might; if so, then watch against that most of all, which you have found to be most injurious. For it ordinarily comes to pass, either by the difference of constitutions, or

difference of temptations, or different ways of living, or some other thing, that God's children are more ensnared by one of those than another. Well, be sure to watch and pray, and strive more especially against the more dangerous enemies of your souls.

2dly. "To live above the body;" above bodily enjoyments, ornaments, and excellencies. Though these bodily enjoyments be ever so sweet, these bodily ornaments ever so glorious, yet is not your happiness in these. Certainly they live to their loss, who pride themselves upon the excellencies of their own souls, whether natural or acquired; they deprive themselves of the infinite glory, fulness, and sufficiency that is in the blessed God, who take up their happiness in these: much more do they pinch and impoverish their own souls who live upon bodily ornaments or excellencies, in which many inferior creatures do excel them; the rose in beauty, the sun in brightness, the lion in strength, the stag in swiftness, &c. If a woman were as lovely as the morning, *fair as the moon, clear as the sun*; if a man were full of personal grace and majesty, *terrible as an army with banners*; yet their happiness would not be found in these accomplishments. Nay, which is worse, these ornaments stand between us and our happiness. When you begin therefore at any time fondly to admire any of these bodily excellencies, then think with yourselves, Oh, but all these do not make my soul happy! Nay, this beautiful outside must decay, and be deformed; these fair and flourishing members must wither in the dust; this active, strong and graceful body, must be buried

in disgrace and weakness, before I can attain to an entire and perfect happiness. This consideration will induce us to live above the body.

3dly. "Be content to be disembodied for a time." Is it true, that we can no otherwise be happy, no otherwise be present with God, know him familiarly, enjoy him perfectly and entirely? Cannot we get to him, except we go through the dust? Be it so then; be content to be disembodied for a time. *Occidat, modo imperet*, [Let him slay, only let him rule,] could the heathen say concerning her son; much rather may a christian say concerning his Father, Let him slay me, if my soul may but reign with him; which is by his reigning in it; Let him kill, if he will but replenish me; let him draw me through the dust of the earth, if he will but draw me out of this dust of the world, if he will but draw me nigh unto himself, and bring me into a full and inseparable conjunction with my Lord! Methinks I need not use many arguments to persuade a soul that is feelingly overpowered, mastered, ravished with the infinite beauty, goodness, glory, and fulness of his God, to be willing to quit a dusty tabernacle for a time, wherein it is almost swallowed up, to depart, and to be entirely swallowed up, in him. Nay, suppose a christian in the lowest form, who hath but chosen God for his highest good and only happiness, as every sincere christian hath, surely, he should have learned this lesson, to comply with that infinitely perfect will, that governs both him and the whole world. A godly soul will subdue his self-will, and a sincere saint will certainly possess the habit of self-resignation Therefore I will

add no more concerning this, but proceed to say, 4thly, "Long after a disembodied state." Desire to depart, and to be with the Lord; groan within yourselves to have mortality swallowed up of life, in which temper you find the holy apostle. To be content to die, is a good temper! a temper scarcely to be found, I think, in any wicked man; not from a right principle, I am sure; but, methinks, it is no very great thing, in comparison of what we should labour to attain to. Pursue the thought, what a strange, uncouth phrase it is to say, Such a man is content to be happy! Men are not said to be content to be rich, but covetous; not willing to be honoured, but ambitious; and why should ye only be content to be with God? I am persuaded there is no shew nor semblance of satisfactory bliss and happiness for a soul, a noble immortal nature, but only in the supreme, essential, perfect, absolute Good, the blessed and eternal God: and should not this noble active being be urged on with vehement longings after its proper and full happiness, as well as this earthly sluggish body, which it carried, with restless desire after health, safety, and liberty? Why should a soul only be content to be happy, when all other things in the world do so ardently court, and vehemently pursue their respective ends and several perfections? Certainly, if the blessed and glorious God should display himself in all his beauty, and open all his infinite treasures of goodness, and sweetness, and fulness, within the view of a soul, it could not but be ravished with the object, earnestly press into his presence, and, with a holy impatience, throw itself into his

arms; there would be no need of setting bounds to the mount, to keep it from breaking through unto the Lord. What is said of the queen of the South, when she had heard the wisdom, and seen the glory of Solomon, 2 *Chron.* ix. 4. would be more true of a christian; there would be no more spirit left in him. Some have therefore observed the wisdom of God, in engaging the soul in so near an union with the body, that it might care for it, and not quit it: yea, the heathen observed the wisdom of God, in concealing the happy state of a separated soul, that so men might be content to live out their time, *Victurosque Dii celant, ut vivere durent, felix esse mori*, [The gods conceal from the living that it would be a happiness to die, that they may be willing still to live.] But, alas! we see but as through a glass, darkly, and our affections towards God are proportionable to our apprehensions of him; these are dark, and therefore those are dull. And oh! would to God they were but indeed proportionable! for then we should love him only, if not earnestly; and desire him entirely, if not sufficiently. Consider what I have hinted concerning the happiness of the soul in the enjoyment of God, and what I have more fully demonstrated concerning the body's hindering it, and keeping it at a distance, and then argue, is happiness the main end of every being? Must not this soul, then, being of a noble and immortal nature, look out for some high and noble happiness suitable to its excellent self? can that be any where found but in the enjoyment of the highest and uncreated Good? and can this never be attained whilst we are in this

animal state? Oh! why then do we not look out after so much enjoyment of this blessed God as we are now capable of, and long after a departure hence, that we may enjoy him freely and fully, and be eternally happy in him? Oh! be not only content, but even eager.

But what! shall the soul break the cage, that she may take her flight? God forbid! how can he pretend to be a lover of God, who is not formed into his will, subject to his devotion, content to abide in the station that he hath allotted him? But if we may not break it to escape, yet, methinks, it may be safe enough, with submission, to wish it were broken; if we may not with Saul, dissolve ourselves, yet, with Paul, we may desire to be dissolved. The perfection that most christians attain, is but to desire to live, and be contented to die. Oh! consider what I have said in this matter, and invert the order of those words in your hearts, Be contented to live; desire to die.

But what! would you have us pray for death? Answer: I speak not of praying formally either for one or other. What the apostle says of the greatest of sins, *1 John* v. 16. I am ready to say of this state of freedom from all sin, *I do not say that ye should pray for it.* You will tell me, that David and Hezekiah prayed for life; and I can tell you that Elijah prayed for death, *1 Kings* xix. 4. he was indeed a man, subject to passions, *James* v. 17. but I believe was enslaved to none of them. But I will not intangle myself in any controversy: Methinks the sad consideration laid before your eyes, Whilst we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord, should wring out

an *O wretched man that I am, &c.* or an, *I desire to be dissolved*; or if not words, yet at least a groan after immortality, with our apostle here,—*We groan within ourselves that mortality may be swallowed up of life.*

But can a soul possibly long for the destruction of the body? Philosophy indeed tells us that it cannot. Be it so; yet I am sure divinity teaches, that a soul may long after the redemption of the body, the redemption of it from this kind of animal, corruptible, ensnaring condition in which it now is, *Rom. viii. 23.*—*We groan within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of our body.* If we cannot wish to be unclothed, yet we may long to be clothed upon, (*vers. 4.* of this chapter,) at least, methinks, the heathen should not outdo us, who could say, *Mori nolo, sed me mortuum esse nihil curo*, [I am unwilling to die, but I do not regard being dead.]

But, will all cry, Oh! if we were sure of an interest in Christ, of pardon of sin, of truth, of grace, of eternal life, then we could freely leave all.

Ans. 1. That is you would live to be more holy before you die; you are not yet holy enough, no, nor ever will be till you die. If you long after holiness, long to be with God, for that is a state of perfect holiness. To desire to live, upon pretence of being more holy, is a mere fallacy, a contradiction. But, it may be, this is not the meaning of the objection: therefore,

2. Though we do not possess what we wish, yet that is not an excuse for not doing what we should do. It is our duty to rejoice in the Lord, *Phil. iv. 4.* but our not having the assurance of

God's favour doth not exempt us from the duty; though if we have assurance, we might indeed rejoice the more. But, to destroy this plea at once,

3. Our earnest longings after a full and perfect enjoyment of God, and our breathings after an immortal state, do not depend upon our assurance, but, indeed, assurance rather depends upon that. I suspect we are commonly mistaken in the nature of assurance; and, it may be, we are in a wrong manner curious about the signs of Christ's appearing in our souls, for certainly a well-grounded assurance of the love of God doth most discover and unfold itself in the growth of true godliness in the soul. Now, the love of God, and an earnest desire to be like unto him, and to be with him, is the better half of all religion, *Matt. xxii. 37, 38.* so that it rather seems, that assurance springs up from this frame of soul, than that this arises out of assurance. If assurance be the thing that you desire, get your souls joined to God in an union of affections, will, and ends, and then labour and long to be closer to him, more like him, perfectly holy and happy in him, and be assured that Christ is in you of a truth; for these mighty works which he hath wrought, these divine breathings, these holy pantings after him, do bear witness of him.

4. Whether ever you obtain that certain knowledge, that powerful sense of your state, which you call assurance, yet know that it is your duty to long after immortality. We are wont to call assurance the privilege of some few; but the Scripture makes this temper, of which I am speak-

ing, the duty of all believers; which I do the rather name, because I find that few professors are of this temper, and indeed but few that are willing to believe that they ought to be. Our Saviour calls all believers to as much, in effect, as I do. *Luke* xxi. 28. *Look up, and lift up your heads, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh*: whereby is not meant a bare posture and speculation, but joy, and longing are required by that phrase, say the Dutch annotators. See also *Rev.* xxii. 17. Consider further, (what, methinks, should strike terror to the hearts of cold-hearted professors,) that this very temper is made one of the greatest characteristics of true and sincere saints: I do not know of any one oftener named! See *Rom.* viii. 23. *We groan within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of our body.*—*2 Tim.* iv. 8. *The Lord shall give the crown to them that love his appearing.*—*Tit.* ii. 13. We should live godly in this present world, *looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*—*2 Pet.* iii. 11, 12. *What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?*—*Jude* verse. 21. *Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.* Do all these plain and pathetic scriptures stand for cyphers in your estimation? Doubtless they should not. But not to insist upon the proof of it as a duty, it matters not whether there be an express command for it or not: this, of which I am speaking, is not so much the duty of godly persons, as the very na-

ture, *genius* and *spirit* indeed of godliness itself. A godly soul, that is truly touched with divine Goodness, influenced by it, and impressed with it, as the needle is with the loadstone, must needs strive powerfully, within itself, to be in conjunction with it: a holy soul, that, after all its wearisome defeats; and shameful disappointments in search of worldly good, finds itself perfectly matched with this infinite, full, and perfect object, must certainly and necessarily be carried, without any other motive, with fervent longings after union to it, and communion with it. The spouse might say concerning Christ, as he concerning her, *Song. vi. 12. Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib:* and every godly soul may, in some degree, say with that spouse, *Cant. v. 4. 5. My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him: I rose up, &c.* Tell me, friends, how can divine grace, that well of living water in the soul, fail of springing up into eternal life? *John iv. 14.* I doubt not to affirm, that what is of God in the soul must needs carry the soul after God; as it belongs to heaven, so it will be pressing towards heaven. That which is of a divine origin, must needs have a divine tendency; that which is of divine extraction, will have in it a divine attraction, and pursue a divine perfection, *Col. iii. 1.* That divine life and spirit that runs through godly souls, doth awaken and exalt, in some measure, all their powers into an active and cheerful sympathy with that absolute Good that renders them completely blessed. Holiness, and purity of heart will be attracting God more and more

to itself; and the more pure our souls are, and the more separate from earthly things, the more earnestly will they endeavour to attain the nearest possible union with God: and so, by consequence, they must, in some sense, desire the removal of that animal life, and dark body that stands in their way; for they know that that which now letteth, will let, (such is the unchangeable nature of it,) till it be laid in the dust, till it be taken out of the way. The thirsty king cried for water of the well of Bethlehem, and his champions broke through the host of the Philistines and brought it, *2 Sam.* xxiii. 15. and will ye not allow the thirsty soul, if not to break through to bring it, yet at least to break out into an *Oh that one would give me to drink* of the living water of the fountain of grace, and peace, and love? Will ye allow hunger to break down stone walls: and will ye neither allow the hungry soul to break down these mud walls, nor to wish within itself that they were broken down? In a word, then, give me leave earnestly to press you to seek the perfect fruition of, and eternal converse with God; and, to change the apostle's word, *Heb.* xii. 1. Seeing we are compassed about with so great a divine light, and glory, and brightness, let us be willing and desirous to lay aside this weight of flesh, and this body, that so easily resists us, with sins and snares, and run with eagerness to the object that is set before us. Amen, Amen.

THE ANGELICAL LIFE.

MATT. xxii. 30.

—*Are as the Angels of God in Heaven.*

THE doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the great things of the Christian Religion were accounted strange things by all the world, when they were first published and preached; and were by none less entertained, or rather, more opposed, than by the wisest of men living in that age, viz. Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees; (who were the *disputers of this world*, as the apostle's phrase is, 1 Cor. i. 20.) a thing worthy of observation, not only to us in our day, but even to our blessed Lord himself in the days of his flesh; who attributes the cause of it to Heaven, and adores the infinite wisdom of God in it, *Matt. xi. 25.* Amongst other formal disputations that the Sadducees held with our Saviour, that in this chapter is very remarkable; where they dispute against the resurrection of the dead, by an argument *ab absurdo*, [By an argument that reduces an assertion to absurdity.] ver. 25. grounded upon an instance of a woman that had been married to seven husbands successively. Now, say they, if there be a resurrection, whose wife shall she be then? Our Saviour answers by destroying the

ground of their argument, and shewing that they disputed upon a false supposition; for, saith he, *In the resurrection there shall be no marrying; but men shall be as the angels of God.* In which words the following doctrine is plainly laid down;

“That the glorified saints shall be as the angels of God in heaven. The other evangelists assert the same truth, see *Mark* xii. 25. *Luke* xx. 36. In the explication of which point I will shew, I. Negatively, wherein the saints shall not be like the angels. II. Affirmatively, wherein they shall be like unto them, or, as St. Luke expresses it, equal to them.

I. Negatively. 1. “The glorified saints shall not be like the angels in essence.” The angelical essence, and the rational soul are, and shall be different. Souls shall remain, shall keep their own essence: the essence shall not be changed; souls shall not be changed into angelical essences.

2. “They shall not be wholly spirits without bodies,” as the angels. The spirits of just men now made perfect, are more like to the angels in this sense than they shall be after the resurrection; for now they are spirits without bodies, but the saints shall have bodies, (not such as now, so corruptible, so frail, not in any thing defective, not needing ordinary supplies; but incorruptible, glorious bodies, in some sense, spiritual bodies; which are described by three characters, *1 Cor.* xv. 42, 43. incorruptible, (somewhat more than immortal,) glorious, powerful.—Neither doth their having bodies in the least abate their perfection or glory, nor render them inferior to the angels; for even the glorious Redeemer of the world who

is superior to the angels, hath a body; and he shall change the vile bodies of the saints, and make them like unto his glorious body, *Phil. iii.*

3. "Neither have we any ground to believe that the saints shall be altogether equal to the angels in dignity and glory:" but rather, as man was at first made a little lower than the angels, so he shall never come to be exalted altogether so high as they; for it seems, that the natural capacity of an angel is greater than that of a man, and so shall continue to be, for they are a distinct kind of creatures.—As a beast cannot become so wise and intelligent as a man, for then he would cease to be a beast; so neither can a man become so large and capable as an angel, for then he would cease to be a man.

II. Affirmatively. The glorified saints shall be like the angels of God in heaven, 1st, In their qualities; that is,

1. "In being pure and holy." Whether they shall be equal to them in positive holiness or not, I know not; whether they shall understand, and know, and love God, in all degrees, as much as the angels; it seems rather that they shall not, because, as I said before, their capacity shall not be so large. But if in this they be not altogether equal to the angels, yet it implies no imperfection; for they shall be positively holy, as far as their nature is capable, and so shall be perfect in their kind, *Heb. xii. 23. The spirits of just men made perfect*: they shall in this be like unto the angels, if not equal to them, yea, like unto God himself in it; *Be ye holy, as I am holy, 1 Pet. i. 16. Matt. v. 48.* But as to negative holiness,

the saints shall be even equal to the angels of God in heaven, *i. e.* they shall have no more sin, no more corruption than they have; they shall be as perfectly freed from all iniquities, imperfections, and infirmities, as the angels. What can be cleaner, than that which hath no uncleanness at all in it? But, so clean shall all the saints be, *Rev. xxi. 27. No unclean thing shall enter into heaven.* They shall be without any kind of spot or blemish, *Eph. v. 27.* which is a perfect negative holiness; more cannot be said of the angels in this respect. As branches of this :

2. "As the holy angels do reverence the divine Majesty, *Is. vi. 2, 3. They cover their faces with their wings, crying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; so shall the glorified saints also reverence him.*" You may see what sweet harmony they make, consenting together to give the glory of all to God, *Rev. vii. 9—11, 12.* The saints stood and cried, *Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb;* the angels stood round about, saying, *Amen, Amen.*

3. "In their readiness to do the will of God, and execute his commands;" therefore the angels are described as having wings, *Is. vi. 2. With twain they did fly.* How God shall please to employ angels or saints in the world to come, is not for us to inquire; but they shall be alike ready to do his will, and serve his pleasure, whatever it shall be. Even whilst the saints are imperfect on earth, they can cry, *Here am I, send me,* *Is. vi. 8.* how much more ready shall they be then, when all their fetters are knocked off!

4. They shall be as the angels, "in their cheerful and unwearied execution of the will of God." So the angels are, and so shall the saints be. The spirit shall be then more willing, and the flesh shall be no more weak, as it is now; for when it is raised again, it shall be in power, 1 *Cor.* xv. 43. More things of this nature might be added, but I pass lightly over them; because, although they be true, yet they are not principally aimed at in this text: therefore I come to the second thing, wherein the glorified saints shall be like unto the angels; and this is,

In their way of living. They shall be like the angels, *i. e.* saith one truly, living like the angels. How is that? our Saviour tells us, neither marrying, nor being given in marriage; it is added presently in *Luke* xx. 36. *For neither can they die any more.* If there be no dying, there will be no need of propagation; if no need of propagation, then why should they marry? The angels are single, and know no other conjunction but with God in a spiritual manner; neither shall the saints. But what great benefit is it to be like the angels in this respect? What perfection is it? Many saints, yea, and sinners too upon earth, are in that respect like the angels; even the devils are thus. Therefore, you must know that our Saviour under this phrase of not marrying, &c. doth comprehend by a synecdoche, (*i. e.* by taking a part for the whole; as is customary in the Scripture,) all manner of creature-converse, all kind of living upon, and delighting in the creature, *I have not given upon usury, saith the prophet, yet the people curse me, Jer.* xv. 10. *i. e.* I have had no dealing in the

world, no negotiation. By one kind he understands the whole, *Ezek.* xxv. 41. where, by eating their fruits, and drinking their milk, is understood the possessing of all that was theirs; and in many other places the Spirit of God uses this figurative way of speaking.

The angels of God neither marry, nor are given in marriage, *i. e.* they live not upon any created comfort, but live entirely upon God, converse with him, are everlastingly beholding his glory, and delighting themselves in him.—Thus shall the glorified saints live for ever; their bodies shall not need nor use created supplies, food, physic, raiment, &c. of which things, in this animal state they stand in need, *Matt.* vi. 32. But that is not all, for their souls shall not any longer desire, nor be importunate for any created thing; but as the angels, shall be possessed of God, filled with the fulness of God; all their powers and faculties shall be perfectly refined and spiritualized, abstracted from all created things, eternally rejoicing and delighting themselves in the contemplation and participation of the supreme and infinite Good: for during this earthly and imperfect state, not only the bodies of good men feed upon, and are sustained by the creatures, in common with other men; but even their souls do taste too much of worldly contentments, and drink too deeply of earthly pleasures and creature-comforts: even the most refined souls upon earth, though they do not properly feed upon any thing below God, yet do oft dip the end of their rod in this honey that lies upon the earth, (with Jonathan,) do cast an unchaste eye upon their

earthly enjoyments, and delight in them in a way too gross and unspiritual, having abstracted them from God, and loving them with a distinct love. But in the resurrection it shall not be so; for the holy souls shall be perfectly conformed to the holy God, shall feed upon him singly, live upon him entirely, be absolved in him wholly, and be satisfied with him solely and everlastingly, and so shall they be equal to the angels. The creature does not fill any truly sanctified soul upon earth, yet it hath some place there; but then it shall be perfectly cast out, and the soul shall be filled with all the fulness of God. The creature now hath much place in some godly souls, and something in all of them; but then it shall be nothing at all to them, or in them, but God shall be all in all; all things in all of them; as the way of the saints living, and their glorified state is described, *1 Cor. xv. 28. That God may be all in all. They shall inherit all things*; but how is that? see the explication of it in the following words, *He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, Rev. xxi. 7.* God will be their God; God shall be unto them instead of all things. In that state there shall be no need of sun or moon, *Rev. xxi. 23.* by which excellent and useful objects the whole creation seems to be intended; for they that shall live above the sun and moon, shall certainly live above all things that are below these: but how? Why, it follows, *The glory of God shall enlighten them, and the Lamb shall be their light*: so *Rev. xxii. 5.* *And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun: for the Lord giveth them light.* All

happiness is derived to them from God, and therefore there shall be no night, no want of any creature-comfort to them; neither shall they desire any thing more of created objects, whether small or great, whether candle or sun. For explication of this their blessed life, let me allude to that expression of our Saviour, *Luke xii. 24. The fowls of heaven neither sow nor reap, yet God feedeth them;* so the saints in heaven neither want nor desire any created good, for they feed upon God the supreme and infinite Good: and again, *ver. 27. The lilies neither toil nor spin, and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.* These blessed souls have no respect at all to things terrestrial and created, yet these terrestrial things are so filled and adorned with the glory of the infinite Majesty, that Solomon in all his glory was unattractive, and had no glory in comparison with them. In a word, the state of the glorified saints and angels is depicted by our Saviour in the same manner, by one and the same description, and that is, the seeing of God; the life of angels is called a continual beholding of the face of God, *Matt. xviii. 10.* and the state of the saints' glory and happiness is also a seeing of God, *Matt. v. 8. Heb. xii. 14. Rev. xxii. 4. They shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads.* Now, this phrase, the seeing of God, applyeth both to the saints and angels; it doth place their happiness in God alone, excluding the creature; and it doth import the fulness and clearness, and certainty of their bliss.

Thus I have shewed, in what sense, though I am not able to shew in what degree, the glorified

saints shall be like the angels of God in heaven: their way of living, viz. upon the blessed God alone, shall be the same with that of the holy angels.

APPLICATION.

From the discovery of the future state and blessedness of the saints, I am filled with indignation, that many conduct as they do.

1. I would therefore bring a reproof against the unworthy conceptions that many christians have of heaven. Christians do I call them! nay, herein they are rather like Mahometans, who place heaven in the full and lasting enjoyment of all creature-comforts, nay, indeed of sinful and abominable pleasures, as one may read in their Alcoran. It may be, that few christians are altogether so sensual; but, sure I am, the far greater part of christians, so called, are very gross and carnal, at least, very low in their conceptions of the state of future happiness. Heaven is a word as little understood as holiness; and that, I am sure, is the greatest mystery in the world. It would be tedious to recount the particular various apprehensions of men in this matter, and indeed impossible to know them. The common sort of people understand by heaven either nothing but a glorious name; or at best but a freedom from bodily torment: as nothing of hell affects them but that dreadful word *fire*, so noth-

ing of heaven but the comfortable word *rest* or *safety*. Others, it may be, think there is something positive in heaven, and they dream of an honourable, easy, pleasant life, free from such kind of toils, labours, pains, persecutions, reproaches, penuries, which men are subject to in this life; this is a true notion, but much below the nature of that happy state. Others are yet more highly affected with the words *glory* and *glorious*, and seem to be much ravished with them, but are like men in a maze or astonishment, who admire something that they understand not, and are altogether confounded in their own apprehensions of it! as if a man should be mightily pleased with such a fine name as Arabia the Happy, and by a blind fervour of mind should desire to go and visit it. Others rise yet higher in their apprehensions of heaven, and look upon it as a holy state; but that holiness is negative, *viz.* a perfect freedom from sin, and all temptations to it; and indeed this is a precious consideration, and one wherein many a weary soul finds much rest: but yet this amounts not to the life of angels; it is a lower consideration of heaven than what our Saviour here presents us with. The state of the glorified saints shall not only be a state of freedom from temporal pains, or eternal pains, or a freedom from spiritual pains and imperfections, but a state of perfect, positive holiness, pure light, ardent love, spiritual liberty, holy delights; when all created good shall perfectly vanish, all created love shall be swallowed up; the soul shall become of a most God-like disposition, shining forth in the glory that he shall put upon it, glorying in

nothing but the blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in his divine image and perfections, and absorbed entirely in his infinite fulness to all eternity : which hath made me oft-times disrelish and indeed disdain the poor, low descriptions of the kingdom of heaven, which I have found in books and sermons, as being too tasteless and gross. For they describe heaven principally as a place, and give it such circumstances of beauty, firmness, security, light, and splendor, pleasant society, good neighbourhood, as they think will most commend an earthly habitation. True indeed, the Holy Ghost in scripture is pleased to condescend so far to our weak capacities, as to describe that glorious state to us by such things as we do best understand, and are apt to be most pleased with, and which do most gratify our senses in this world ; as a kingdom, paradise, a glorious city, a crown, an inheritance, &c. but yet it is not the will of God that his enlightened people should rest in such low notions of eternal life ; for in other places God speaks of the state of glory according to the nature and excellency of it, and not according to the weakness of our understanding, and describes it at another rate, calling it the life of angels, as here ; the beholding of God, *Matt. v. 8.* a coming unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, *Eph. iv. 13.* God's being all things in us, *1 Cor. xv. 21.* it is called a knowing of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, *John xvii. 3.* In a word, which is as high as can be spoken, higher indeed than can be perfectly understood, it is called a being like unto God, *1. John iii. 21.* *We*

shall be like unto him. But this use is not so much for reproof, as it is for information.

2. Here is matter of reproof, yea, and of just indignation, against the gross, low, sensual, earthly life of professors, who yet hope to be the children of the resurrection, and to be as the angels of God in heaven. What! hope to be like them then, and yet altogether unlike them now! I speak not in a passion, but out of a just indignation that I have conceived against myself, and against the generality even of saints themselves. I am not going to speak of covetousness commonly so called; there is a sin much like to it, which is not indeed a single sin, but an evil and unseemly temper, which is, earthly mindedness, or minding of earthly things; or, because I would not be misunderstood; a living upon the creature, or a loving of the creature with a distinct love. Oh! the insensible secrecy, and insuperable power of this creature-love! I cannot sufficiently exclaim against it. Why do we spend noble affections upon such low and empty nothings? Are we called with such a high calling, think you, that our conversation should be so low? Is the fulness of the fountain your's, and do ye yet delight to sit down and bathe yourselves in the shallow streams? Is your life hid with Christ in God? Why then do you converse as if your life were bound up in the creature? Have you laid up your treasure in the blessed God? Why are your hearts then so far from it? Is your happiness in heaven? why then is not your conversation there too? Do ye count it your bliss to see God? What then mean those fond and wanton

glances that ye cast upon created comforts, and that unchaste love which you bestow on things below? I mean not only the *bleatings of the sheep and the lowings of the oxen*; I speak not of the grosser sort of earthly-mindedness, sensuality, or covetousness, but of that more refined and hidden creature-love, a loving of friends, relations, health, liberty, life, and that not in God; but with a love distinct from that love wherewith we love God. To love all these in God, and for his sake, and as flowing from him, and partaking of him, and with the same love wherewith we love God himself, is allowed us; but to love them with a particular love, as things distinct from God, to delight in them merely as creatures and to follow them as if some good, or happiness, or pleasure, were to be found in them, distinct from what is in God, is a branch of spiritual adultery, I had almost said idolatry. To taste a sweetness in the creature, and to see a beauty and goodness in it, is our duty; but then it must be the sweetness of God, in it, and the goodness of God, which we ought alone to taste and see in it. As we say, *Uxor splendet radiis mariti*, “the wife shines with the rays of her husband;” so more truly every creature shines, but by a borrowed light, and commends unto us the goodness, and sweetness, and fulness of the blessed Creator. You have heard that the glorified souls shall live upon God alone, entirely, wholly, eternally; and should not the less glorious souls, I mean gracious souls, do so too, in some degree? Yea, even we who are upon earth, and do yet use created things, should behold all the scattered beams of goodness, sweet-

ness, perfection, that are in these creatures, all united and gathered up in God, and so feeding upon them only in God, and upon God in all of them. It is the character of wicked and ungodly men, that they set up and drive a trade for themselves; live in a way distinct from God, as though they had no dependance upon him; they love the world with a predominant love; they enjoy creature-comforts in a gross, unspiritual manner; they dwell upon the dark side of their mercies; they treasure up riches, not only in their chests, but in their hearts: they feed upon the creatures, not only with their bodies, but their very souls do feed upon them; and thus, in a word, they *live without God in the world.*—All this is not wonderful; for that which is of the earth must needs be earthly, *John iii. 31.* but is it not a monstrous thing that a heavenly soul should feed upon earthly trash? I speak without any hyperbole; the famous king of Babylon, forsaking the society of men, and herding with the beasts of the earth, and eating grass with the oxen, was not so absurd a thing, nor half so monstrous or unseemly, as the children of the most high God forsaking the true bread of souls, and feeding upon the low fare of carnal men, even created sweetness, worldly goods; nay, a glorious star falling from its own sphere, and choaking itself in the dust, would not be such an eminent piece of baseness; for what is said of the true God in one sense, *John iii. 31.* is true of the truly godly in this sense, *what cometh from heaven is above all, i. e.* above all things that are below God himself.

3. Shall this life of angels be also the life of saints? This may then serve as a powerful con-

sideration to mortify in us the love of this animal life, to make us weary of this low kind of living, and quicken us to long after so blessed a change. Well might the apostle say, that to die was gain, *Phil. i. 21.* for is it not gain, to exchange an animal for an angelical life? a life which is, in some sense, common to the very beasts with us, for that which in some sense may be called the life of God? For, as the blessed and holy God lives upon his own infinite and self-sufficient fulness, without being beholden to any thing without himself, so shall the saints live upon him, and upon the self-same infinite fulness, and shall not need any creature-contributions. The apostle indeed saith, that *the last enemy to be destroyed is death*, *1 Cor. xv. 26.* which is true of enemies without us; and it is true with respect to Christ, who shall make a general resurrection from the dead; for that is the proper meaning of it; but it is true also, that the last enemy to be overcome within us, is the love of life; therefore it is said, that a man will part with any thing to keep his life, *Job ii. 4.* and we do generally excuse the matter, and cry, Oh! life is sweet, life is precious. It must be confessed, and it may be granted; I believe that there is an inclination of the soul to the body, arising from that dear and inconceivable union that God himself hath made, which is purely natural, some say altogether necessary for the maintaining of man in this complex state, and not in itself sinful: possibly there may not be found a man upon earth so holy and mortified, in whom this is not found; certainly it is the last hinderance to be removed out of the way of our perfect happiness. Although this is

in itself natural, yea necessary, and without blame, yet in the inordinateness of it, ordinarily, if not constantly it becomes sinful. I esteem him the most perfect man in the world, who loves not his own life with an inordinate sinful love; who loves it only in God, and not with a love distinct from God. There are two ways whereby this natural and lawful love of life becomes sinful, *viz.* immoderateness and inordinateness: immoderateness is when men love their lives at that rate, that they are filled with unreasonableness and distracting fears, cares, and thoughts about them; when the whole business of life is almost nothing else but a studiousness to preserve the being of life. Inordinateness is, when men, though they do not love their lives at that excessive rate, yet do love life as a creature-good, not in God, nor in order to him, but love it for itself, as something out of God. Every carnal man in the world is guilty of the latter, and I suspect but few saints are altogether free from the guilt of it. Now that this immoderate love of life ought to be subdued in christians, all men will grant: if any will not grant it, we can easily prove it from the command of God, *Matt. vi. 25. Take no thought for your life.* *1. John ii. 15. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.* Which phrases in the most favourable interpretation that can be given of them, do in the judgment of all, forbid immoderation, nay, a mere philosopher would enforce this from moral considerations. But as this inordinate love of life is a more secret abiding evil, a more refined corruption, so it is harder to be discovered, and men are loth to be convinced of the evil of it. Now,

this particular distinct loving of life, not as in God, but in itself, as a created good, is clearly condemned in that first and great commandment, *Matt. xxii. 37. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. q. d.* God the supreme, infinite, perfect, original, essential, self-sufficient Good, is to be loved in the highest, and purest, and strongest manner, that the heart of man is capable of loving; and all other things only in him, and under him, and as being of him, and for his sake. Let it be allowed that life is good; yet it must be added, that it is but a created good; let it be allowed that life is comfortable: yet it must be acknowledged that man's chief comfort and happiness doth not consist in this animal life. So then, life itself is to be loved in God, who is the fountain and spring of life, it is to be loved in the quality of a created good, and not otherwise.

Now, created good is to be loved only in the Creator, as coming from him, as partaking of him, as leading to him. In other words: The soul of man is allowed to love its body, to which the great God hath united it; and to love union with this body, which union we call *life*; but this body being a creature, and a creature much inferior to the soul, and much more ignoble than that, cannot in reason be judged to be the fit and adequate object of its strongest and best affections: such an object should be something more excellent than itself; and that cannot be any thing in this world; (or this world hath nothing so noble, so excellent in it as the soul of man;) it must indeed be the Creator himself. Well, seeing

God is the supreme, self-sufficient, perfect Good. he is to be loved with all the strength and powers of the soul, singly and entirely: and the will of God being God himself, is not only to be submitted to, or rested in, but to be chosen and loved above all created things, yea, even above life itself, the best of creatures. So then, if it be the will of God to call for our lives, we ought readily to give them up; because we ought to love the will of God more than our lives. I pray you entertain that notion, viz. that the will of God being pure, holy, and perfect, should not only be submitted to, or rested in, but even loved and chosen above all things. Now, the will of God is not that only whereby he teaches men, and prescribes laws to them, but that whereby he rules and governs the world, and disposes of men in any condition of life, or takes away their lives from them. The, eternal Fountain of goodness can send forth nothing but what is perfectly good; and that which is perfectly good ought to be loved with an universal, pure, and, as far as possible, perfect love. This you will say, perhaps, is a high and hard saying; but let it not seem impossible for a man to love his own life only in God, and in subordination to him; for this God requires, and he requires not things impossible, Luke xiv. 26. *If any man come after me, and hate not his own life, he cannot be my disciple; i. e.* not simply hate it, but in comparison of me and my will. It is not then impossible, nay, you see it is a necessary duty, without which we cannot be Christ's disciples. The saints of old found it possible. Holy Paul gives this answer readily;

Acts xxi. 13. *I am ready to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus*; and Acts xx. 24. *I count not my life dear unto me, so that I might finish my course with joy.* It is witnessed of the whole army of the saints, in *Rev. xii. 11.* that *They loved not their lives unto the death, i. e.* they did not value them in respect of God and his truth.—Neither let any one flatter himself, and say, *Yea, if I were called to die for God, I would rather do it than deny him*; for the will of God is as much to be noticed in his sending for us by a natural death, as by martyrdom; and not giving up our lives to him at any time, is as truly to deny him and his will, as not to give them up at the stake when we are called to it. Besides, how shall we imagine that he, that is unwilling to die in his bed should be willing to die at a stake? Now, this duty of being mortified to the love of this animal life, being so difficult, yet so necessary, and so noble, how doth it become every saint to study to attain to this perfection? To do which, let us press upon ourselves this consideration, this doctrine, that the glorified saints shall live as angels of God in heaven. We know that if this body were broken down, this low life cut off, we should live like angels, not being beholden any more to poor creatures for help or comfort, but should be filled with the fulness of God, filled with his image and glory, and live upon him entirely for evermore. *Yea, I may add, that this very living above our own lives, and merely at the will of God, is a participation of the angelical life even in this world*; therefore labour to be mortified to that love of this life which is here upon

earth, yea, to be weary of it, yea, almost ashamed of it.

4. Shall we thus live the lives of the angels, subsisting in God, feasting upon him, filled with him to all eternity? This may moderate our sorrow for the loss of any created good, houses, lands, husband, wife, children, &c.: yet a little while and we shall not miss them, shall not need them, shall not desire them any more. The blessed angels live a glorious life, and they have none of these things, but are perfectly satisfied in the enjoyment of God alone: they have no wives nor children, yet they want none; and, yet a little while, and we shall have none, neither shall we want them, having all things in the God of all things: they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are in conjunction with the Father, with love, and goodness, and truth itself; and so they have no want of any thing. If you have no candles left in the house, yet it is towards day-break, and the sun will rise upon you, and you shall need none, and yet have light enough too. In a word, learn to live above them whilst you have them, and you will be the better able to live without them when they are removed.

5. I come now to the fifth and last use that I shall make of this doctrine; and, O that you and I may make this happy use of it! Shall the saints be as the angels of God in their way of living upon God, and enjoying all happiness in him alone for ever? Shall this certainly be our life in heaven? O, then, labour to begin this life upon earth. If you cannot perfectly transcribe, yet, at least, imitate that angelical kind of life. Though you are

here imprisoned in a body of earth, and oft cumbered and clogged with bodily infirmities, called to attend upon bodily necessities; yet, as far as this animal state will permit, live upon God. Do not excuse nor vindicate that low kind of earthly life, do not justify your living below and aside from God, but stir up yourselves to behold where your happiness lies, and live not willingly below it. Certainly a godly soul hath more than bare hope in this world: God the blessed, infinite, and communicative Good, hath not locked himself so far out of sight, but that he gives his people a comforting vision of him even whilst they are in their pilgrimage; and what Solomon saith of the life of the godly, he means of their present life, *Prov. xv. 24. The way of life is above to the wise*: their living not only shall be, but is now above; it is a high way of living. They are certainly a puny sort of mechanical christians, that think and talk only of a heaven to come, and dream of an happiness without them, and distinct from them. The truly godly and God-like soul cannot so content himself, but being spirited and principled from above, is attracted towards the infinite and almighty Good, as a thing is attracted towards its centre; and hastens into his embraces, as the iron hastens to the loadstone, and seeks to be in conjunction with it. If therefore ye be from heaven, live above all, above all earthly things. *If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above*, Col. iii. 1. If ye be born of God, living upon God, and not on the dainties of a stranger, deny self, live above self, *i. e.* live not to your lusts, live not to the service of your senses, to the

lust of the flesh, to the lust of the eye, to the pride of life; let not your souls be servants to your sins, nor to your senses; that would be for servants to ride on horseback, and princes to walk on foot, *Eccl. x. 7.* Live above self, *i. e.* let your souls quit all their own interest in themselves, and entirely resign themselves to God, as to all points of duty and service. But that is not all; neither is it that which I press upon you from the word of the text; but live above the creature, and whatsoever is in it, *viz.* delighting in God, conversing and communing with him alone as the chief Good; desire not any creature any further than as it may help you forward to the Creator; neither delight in it any further than as it either represents some of the divine perfections, witnesses something of divine love, or leads to some divine participation or communion. Seeing we shall hereafter live upon God, and delight in him alone, without any created good, let us now live upon, feed upon, love God alone in every created good.

Now to give you a more distinct knowledge of this high and noble life, I will, in the next discourse, explain it in some particulars, negatively and affirmatively.

THE ANGELICAL LIFE.

MATT. xxii. 30.

—*Are as the Angels of God in Heaven.*

HAVING explained, in the preceding discourse, in what *sense*, though not in what *degree*, the glorified saints shall be *like the angels of God in Heaven*, viz. that they shall live upon the blessed God alone; and having applied the subject in a distinct enumeration of particulars, I had exhorted to a *resolute commencement of this happy life on earth*. Agreeably, then, to the engagement, with which the preceding discourse concluded, I will now explain this high and noble life, in some special views of it.

1. Negatively. 1st. "Live not upon self." I speak not of living unto self, but live not upon self, self-excellencies, self-sufficiencies, any created accomplishments; such was the life of the Stoics, those great philosophers, who placed happiness in the enjoyment of themselves. To enjoy one's self, indeed, is a high duty, a noble privilege, a duty of the gospel, *Luke xxi. 19. Possess ye your souls*. But how must we enjoy ourselves? Why, only in God. It is not he that enjoys himself, who, in sullen melancholy, retires to a solitary and monastical life, as many of the rigid

sort of papists do : Nor he who, in a proud mood, disdains the perfections of God shining forth in other men ; and hiding himself from them through envy, contents himself to sit and admire his own personal accomplishments, as many humourists do. Nor he, who, finding nothing without him, nor knowing any thing above him to give his soul its full rest, settles upon a foundation of his own, and admires a self-sufficiency in the temper of his own spirit, a little subdued by philosophical precepts, as the Stoics did, and our Quakers do. But it is he who enjoys himself in God, who doth not view himself in the narrow point of his own being ; but, taking a view of himself in the unbounded essence of God, loves, and enjoys, and values himself, and all his personal excellencies as he is in God, and as he partakes of his perfections. To live in a way of self-converse is below the end of man's creation, who was made for a higher good ; and hereby a man shall never obtain true happiness, for it is peculiar to God alone to be happy in himself. " In a word, a soul that confines itself to itself, and lives, and moves, and rejoices only within the narrow cell of its own particular being, deprives itself of that almighty and original Goodness, and Glory that fills the world, and shines through the whole creation."

2dly. " Live not upon any creature without yourselves." Self indeed is a creature ; but yet, for clearness in proceeding, we shall distinguish them. Now, this is the life of the greatest sort of men, they live apart from God, and move only within the sphere of the creature. You will easily understand that I speak not of the body's liv-

ing upon the creature, for so God hath appointed that it shall live; and yet as to this too, I say with our Saviour, *Man liveth not by bread alone, &c.* but I speak of the soul of man living upon the creature as its highest good, and feeding upon it as its best fare; they rise up early, and sit up late, and God is not in all their thoughts: they are filled with domestic and foreign comforts, but behold not the Father of lights from whom all these descend: they live upon the good things of the world, yet live without God in the world. Now, by these men,

1. I do not mean those Heathens that in the most idolatrous manner do, in the literal sense, set up the creatures for gods.

2. Nor those christians that in a most gross manner do make idols of the creatures, and place their happiness in them.

3. Nor those earthly professors only, who follow the world too eagerly, and have such a deep and rooted respect for it, that they can be ordinarily content to suffer creature employments to banish God and duties out of their hearts and houses, whose worldliness is apparently too hard for their religion. Who then? Shall we come any nearer? Yes.

4. Those are guilty of creature-converse who do not enjoy all creatures in God; who love any thing in any creature with a distinct love, who do not love it only in God; who love silver, gold, houses, lands, trading, friends, with a particular contracted love. Oh, take heed of this creature-love, of valuing any created thing any otherwise.

than as being from God, partaking of him, and leading to him.

3dly. "Live not upon ordinances." These are God's institutions, love them, cleave unto them, attend upon them, let no temptation cause you to leave them; but live not upon them, place not religion, place not your hope, your happiness in them, but love them only in God; attend upon them, yet not so much upon them, as upon God in them; lie by the pool, but wait for the angel; love not, no not a divine ordinance for its own sake. Why, who doth so? Alas! who almost doth not?

1. Thus did they in *Ezek. xxxiii. 32.* who delighted in the prophet's eloquence, and in the rhetoric of his sermons, as much as in a well-tuned voice and harmonious music: and so do thousands now, who read the Bible for the sake of the style or story, and love to sit under learned and elegant discourses, more for accomplishment than for conversion: and there are swarms of priests, who preach themselves more than Christ Jesus, even in his own ordinances; as a proud boy rides a horse into the market, to set forth himself more than his master's goods.

2. But there are many not so gross as these, who do yet use ordinances in a way very gross and unspiritual, placing their devotion in them, and sinking their religion into a settled course of hearing or praying; who will wait upon God, as they call it, at some set and solemn times, new moons, and sabbaths, it may be evening and morning; but religion must not be too busy with them, nor inter-meddle in their ordinary affairs, or world-

ly employments; it hath no place there; they do not esteem it a garment for a every day's wear.

3. And not only these, but even almost all men are too apt to rest in duties and ordinances, or, at least, to be well satisfied with the work done, whether they have conversed with God or not. Oh, if you love your souls, seek your happiness higher! Conversing with divine ordinances, I confess, is honourable and amiable, but it is too low a life for an immortal soul.

II. Affirmatively. Let nothing satisfy you but God himself; take up with no pleasure, no treasure, no portion, no paradise, nay, no heaven, no happiness, below the infinite, supreme, and self-sufficient Good. Let your eye be upon him, and his all filling fulness; let your desire be unto him, and to the remembrance of his name; follow hard after to know the Lord, and to enjoy the Father through his Son Jesus Christ; let your fellowship be with the Father, and with the Son by the Spirit, 1 John i. 3. *O love the Lord all ye his saints, Ps. xxxi. 23. Yea, love him with all your soul, and with all your strength, Matt. xxii. 37. Yea, and keep yourselves always in the love of God; preserve and increase in the love of God; Keep yourselves in the love of God, Jud. ver. 21.* Oh sweet duty! Oh amiable, pleasant task! Oh! sweet and grateful command! Away, ye crowd of creatures, I must keep my heart for my God: away, ye gaudy suitors, away, ye glittering toys, there is no room for you; my whole soul, if its capacity were ten thousand times larger than it is, were too scant to entertain the supreme Good, to receive infinite goodness and fulness. Oh, charge

it upon yourselves with the greatest vehemence ! Love the Lord, O my soul, keep thyself in the love of God ; let the love of God constrain you, and keep yourselves under the most powerful constraints of it. In a word, live upon God as upon uncreated life itself ; drink at the fountain ; feed upon infinite fulness ; depend upon almighty power ; refer yourselves to unsearchable wisdom, and unbounded love ; see nothing but God in the creature, taste nothing but God in the world, delight yourselves in him, long for communion with him, and communications from him, to receive of his fulness grace for grace. Then do we live most like angels, when we live most purely in God, and find all the powers of our souls spending themselves upon him ; and ourselves, our life, and all the comforts of it, flowing from him, and again swallowed up in him. But because we are yet in the body, I shall explain it in these following particulars :—

1st. “Converse with God in all your own excellencies.” I bade you before not converse with these ; now, I say, converse with God in these. Thus do the angels ; they know nothing that they have of their own, they enjoy nothing distinct from God : they are excellent creatures, excellent in knowledge, power, holiness, &c. yet they enjoy all their excellencies in God, and ascribe them all to him, *Rev. vii. 12.* and so let us labour to do.

View yourselves not in your own particular beings, but in the essence of God ; look upon yourselves as being and subsisting in the midst of an

infinite essence, in which the whole creation is, as it were, enveloped, and doth subsist.

And whatever excellency you find in your souls or bodies, look not upon it as your own; maintain not a *meum* and *tuum*, [a mine and a thine,] a distinction of interests between God and yourselves, but look upon all as God's, and enjoy it in him.

When you find yourselves tempted to cast a fond and unchaste look upon the beauty, strength, activity, or temper of your own bodies, upon the ingenuity, wisdom, constancy, courage, composedness of your own souls, take heed of settling into a selfish admiration of any of them, but enjoy them in God, and say, This, O my body, this, O my soul, is no other than the portraiture of the blessed God; these created excellencies are broken beams of the infinite, unspotted, uncreated perfections, *Jer. ix. 23, 24.* Having once attained to this, we shall no longer covet to be admired, desire to be commended, repine at being undervalued; I mean, not in a selfish manner, but rather break out in a spiritual passion with the psalmist, *O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!* *Ps. cvii. 8.*

Nay, let me add, when you find yourselves ready to put your own stamp upon God's best coin, to look upon supernatural gifts and graces with a sinful, selfish admiration, remember that you have them only in Christ Jesus, and enjoy them in him as your Head; labour to enjoy grace itself only in Christ, as the apostle, *Gal. ii. 20. I, yet not I, but Christ in me. 1 Cor. xv. 10.*

I labour, yet not I, but the grace of God. So ought we to glory: I believe, I love, I am patient, penitent, humble; yet not I, but the grace of God that is with me, Christ Jesus that dwelleth in me. And indeed a godly man, who thus lives at the very height of his own being, yea, and above it too, knows best how to reverence himself, yea, and to love himself too, and yet without any selfish love; for he loves himself in God, and his own endowments as divine ornaments.

2dly. “Converse with God, and live upon him in the excellencies of all other creatures, and in all your creature-enjoyments.” We cannot live without creatures, as the angels do indeed, but let us be as much like them as we can, which is by living above creatures; place your happiness in God, and your hearts upon him; labour to find God all things to you, and in you, and to be filled with his fulness; labour to get your understandings filled with the knowledge of God, your wills filled with his divine will, your hearts filled with his infinite goodness and sweetness, your memories filled with the remembrance of his name, your whole souls filled with his holy and pure image, filled with the fruits of his Holy Spirit: nay, let these very bodies be filled not only with his providential favours, but more especially with his good-will in these favours. It is said indeed of the sensual epicures of the world, that their bellies are filled with God’s hid treasures, *i. e.* with rare and precious delicacies: but how much better doth God fill his saints with his hid treasures, when he feedeth them with his divine favour, and kindly directeth them in all their ways?

This is meat indeed which the saints eat, of which other men, though they feed at the same table, know nothing. The glorified saints shall be satisfied wholly and perfectly with the divine image shining gloriously on them, and in them; to which purpose that expression of the psalmist may be accommodated, *Ps. xvii. ult. I shall be satisfied when I awake, &c.* Well, we cannot be so satisfied in this life: however though we cannot be so satisfied with it, yet let us not be satisfied without it, nor satisfied with any thing besides it. Resolve thus, holy soul, Well, if I must not be fully satisfied with the image of my heavenly Father till I awake, I will lie down, and sleep hungry as I now am; for I will not fill my mouth with chaff, nor my soul with the husks that the swine do eat. But, in the mean time, enjoy God as much as possible in his earthly favours.

Enjoy all things for God, and that in these two ways;

(1.) Use all for him. Let those riches, honours, interests, friends, which are clogs upon the wheels of others, be as wheels to you to carry you heaven-ward; let your souls be winged with these very enjoyments, wherewith the wings of others are pinioned; and let that which is fuel to their worldly lusts, be as fuel to feed and nourish your spiritual love. To use what we have for God is the only way of not abusing it; this is one way of enjoying all for God, to use all for him; and yet there is something higher in that phrase of enjoying all for God, than this, *viz.*

(2.) Value no creature-comfort any further than as it leads to God; and this in a double

sense too. 1. Value things to be good only by this, by their leading you unto God: *Perfectum in suo genere est mensura reliquorum.* [Perfect in its own kind must that be which is the measure of other things.] Now God being the supreme and infinite Good, any thing is so far good as it leads to the enjoyment of him. But the enjoyment of God is only in being like to him; holiness is his image; so then every thing is good that tends to sanctification, and to make men partakers of a divine nature. We are usually mistaken in the true notion of good, and evil, of mercies and judgments, judging according to the taste, as unwise patients do; but God's thoughts are not as our thoughts. Measure all things by the proportion they bear, and the tendency they have to the supreme Good: and call not any thing evil that brings nearer to him, nor any thing good that draws off from him. 2. When you have found a thing that is really good, tending and leading to the chief Good, and to the possession of him; labour to enjoy it, and rejoice in it only under this notion, as such; when you love it, let it be with a pure spiritual love; and so order your delight in it, that it may be said, you do rather rejoice in the design of it, than in the enjoyment of it

Another way of living upon God in his favours is, to enjoy all things as coming from him. *Every good and perfect gift is from above,* James i. 16. Every beam of created light floweth out from the Father of light. When the blessed and glorious God framed this stately fabric of the visible world, because there was nothing better in the world than himself, he was pleased to copy out himself

in it, and to spread his own infinite perfections over it, and through it, *Rom. i. 20.* so that every particular good is a blossom of the first goodness; every created excellency is a faint sketch of God, and a broken beam of this infinite Sun of righteousness. Created life, beauty, wisdom, goodness, sweetness, are nothing but effluxes, or rather ebullitions from the self-sufficient Fountain, partial communications made of himself from uncreated Life, essential Wisdom, universal Goodness; and under this notion only we ought to enjoy them, and delight in them; and if we do so, we do not so much enjoy them, as God in them. Oh labour to do this! look upon the perfections which you find here below, not so much as the perfections of this or that particular being, but as so many drops from the Fountain of all perfections, in whom they all meet, and concentrate. It is well expressed by one, "In a particular being, love the universal Goodness;" let the whole world be as the garden of God to you, where every creature is a flower, from which you may collect something of the divine sweetness. Alas! at what a low and sensual rate do we live, when we rejoice in creatures, either as in themselves excellent, or as belonging to us; whereas, indeed, neither of these is true; for they are not excellent, but God is excellent in them; and how can we call any thing our own, when God made both us and all things for himself? Oh! how injurious is it to the blessed God, when we rob him of his own perfections that he hath imprinted upon the creature, by loving it, and delighting in it, not as in him, but

as something distinct from him! nay, we are then injurious to ourselves. Labour to enjoy and to converse with God in the creatures, *O how precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God!* cried David, when he had been meditating of the created excellencies, *Ps. cxxxix. 17.* Labour to abstract your minds from terrestrial things even in the enjoyment of them, and call upon yourselves to love, and live, and feed upon God in them; live not upon the dark side of your mercies, but upon the representations of God in them. Is there any thing good? oh, this is a state of infinite goodness! Is there any thing sweet? oh, how sweet is the God that made it so! Is there any thing lovely? it is a picture of him whose name is Love. Is any thing firm, stable, lasting? It is a shadow of that glorious Essence with whom is no shadow of change. Have you any thing strong? it arises out of that God with whom is everlasting strength. Doth any creature give rest, ease, refreshment? it springs out of the all-satisfying fulness of God: In a word, labour to rise by every created excellency, as by so many beams, to the Father of lights: Let all the world be to you as God's temple, and be ready to say of every place, as Jacob, *How dreadful is this place! surely this is none other but the house of God;* that God who pervades all created beings, and from himself derives the various prints of beauty and excellency throughout the world. But especially take heed of your own created comforts, that they do not insensibly lead away your hearts, and ensnare you into a sinful, particular, distinct love of them; which is

a sin easily committed, hardly discerned, and most hardly reformed. Few, if any, are wholly freed from these inordinate affections; and those few have come dearly by it; as one said in another case, With a great sum they have obtained this freedom: they have paid for it, not with the foreskins of the Philistines, but with the lives of what they so loved, there being no way to cure this evil distemper, but cutting off the member affected with it, the part that it fed upon. As a branch of this head, let me add, Labour to live upon God in the excellencies of other men: value them, and all their accomplishments, only in God, as he that did *diligere Deum habitantem in Augustino*, admire God, and enjoy them in God. Wherever you see wisdom, goodness, ingenuousness, holiness, justice, or any other accomplishment, say, here and there is God. And this is the honest way of making ourselves masters of whatever is another man's, and enjoying it, as truly as he himself doeth, yea, as truly as if it were our own; when we behold all these beams, as coming from the same Fountain of lights, and do love them all in him, with an universal love. This is the rare art of having nothing, yet possessing all things; of being rich, though one have nothing; and of being wise, though one know nothing.

Another way of living upon God in the creatures is, to taste and feed upon the love of God in them, not only his common bounty, but his special love in Christ. The good-will of God gives a sweet relish to every morsel, as I have already said. Even in the midst of all your delightful, pleasant,

sweet enjoyments, let your souls be more affected with this than with them; let this be as the manna lying upon the top of all your outward comforts, which your spirits may gather up and feed upon. But this I touched upon before, therefore I shall add no more concerning it. Thus I have shewn you how you may imitate the life of angels, in living upon God, even whilst you live in the body. To this I may add another particular or two.

3dly. "Converse with God, and live upon him in all his ordinances." Let communion with God be your object in every duty, and the very life, and soul, and sweetness of every ordinance. Never was a soul more thirsty after ordinances than David, as might appear abundantly; yet if you examine his expressions, you will find, that it was not so much after them, as after God in them; not after the dead letter, but after the living God, *Ps. xlii. 2. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God;* and *Ps. lxxxiv. 2. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.* Let the word preached or read be as a voice from heaven talking with you: let your conference be a comment upon that word; let meditation be as a kind of bringing down God into your souls, and prayer as a raising up of your souls into God, nothing but faith and love put into praises. And so of all the rest.

4thly. "Converse with God in all his providences," prosperity, adversity, plenty, penury, health, sickness, peace, and perplexity. This is a large theme: but I have already alluded to prosperity, under the head of conversing with God in crea-

ture-enjoyments; as for adversity, I have said much in a long discourse to describe and commend the art of conversing with God in afflictions. Briefly at this time, converse not with losses, wants, afflictions, but with God in them; and that not only with the justice, righteousness, severity, and sovereignty of God in them, but with the goodness and mercy of God in them. They are dark providences, we need not dwell altogether on the dark side of them. If all the ways of the Lord towards his people be mercy and truth, *Ps.* xxv. 10. then his roughest and darkest ways are so too: if God be wholly love, *1 John* iv. 8. then his very corrections proceed not from hatred: if it be his name to be good and to do good, *Ps.* cxix. 68. where have we learned then to call his afflicting providences evils, and to divide evil, which is but one, even as God is one, into *culpæ* and *pœnæ*, sin and affliction? Surely we speak as men: and if God call them so, he speaks after the manner of men, as he often doth. If the governing will of God be pure, perfect, and infinitely good and righteous, ought we not to converse with it in a free and cheerful manner, yea, and to love it too? In a word, ponder not upon creature-changes, nor the uncertain wheels of motion, that are turning up and down, we know not how, nor how oft; but fix yourselves upon that all seeing Eye, that unbounded Understanding, that unsearchable and infinite Goodness, that diffuses itself through the whole universe, and sits in all the wheels of motion, governing all the strange motions of the creatures in a wonderful and power-

ful manner, and carrying them all in their several orbs to one last and blessed end.

Thus imitate the angelical life, even whilst you are in the body: converse with God in self-excellencies, in the creature-excellencies, ordinances, providences; and yet labour to be more like him still, to abstract your mind from all these material and sensible things, and to converse with God without the help of any creature, I mean in the Spirit, and by a secret sense of his almighty goodness, and energy of grace, and the communications of a divine life in your souls. In a word, if you would taste of heaven whilst you are upon earth, labour above all things for a true conjunction of your hearts with God, in a secret feeling of his goodness, and a reciprocation of love to him; and to find the holy and blessed God exercising his grace and power upon all the faculties of your souls, and rendering them like unto himself, and all these powers of the soul mutually spending themselves upon him freely and entirely, as upon the highest Good, which is their proper and full object. Seeing the saints in glory shall be like unto the angels of God, in their way of living in and upon God alone, receive, I pray, this exhortation, which I have so largely prosecuted, and labour to begin that life, as far as you can, upon earth. Is there not reason for such an inference? Doth it not now flow naturally from the doctrine? If you think it do not, I will add two or three particulars to strengthen this inference, or at least to clear it.

1. It is highly reasonable that we now begin to be that, which we expect to be for ever, to learn

that way of living in which we hope to live to all eternity : so that I infer, upon as strong ground as the apostle, *1 John iii. 3. He that hath this hope purifieth himself, &c.*

2. If this be the life of angels, then it is the highest and noblest life, of which any created being is capable. As by the bread of angels, and the tongue of angels, the most excellent food, and the most excellent language is understood in scripture, so must we understand this life of angels. Now, it is very suitable to the reasonable soul, that immortal, noble being, to aim at the highest and noblest life : see *Matt. xvi. 26. What shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?*

3. This shall not only be our life in heaven, but itself is something of heaven, a beginning of heaven. This life is not a thing really distinct from life eternal, *John xvii. 3. This is life eternal, &c. 1 John v. 13. Ye have eternal life.* Therefore we read of eternal life abiding in men, and not abiding in them, *1 John iii. 15.* so also *John vi. 54. Whoso eateth my flesh hath eternal life.* A holy soul thus deified, thus living in and upon God, is as truly glorified upon earth, in some degree, as the world is enlightened by the morning-sun, which is as truly, though not so gloriously, as by the sun in its greatest height. Oh low and ignoble spirits, who can be satisfied with a happiness, which shall only be in the world to come! Certainly it is true and proper to say, that a participation of God, is an anticipation of heaven ; and to be like unto him, is to be with him. You see what reason I have to make such an inference, and to form it unto such an earnest exhor-

tation; oh, therefore, I beseech you before God, and his holy angels, to endeavour to be like him, and to live like them!

Obj. Say you, How can men on earth live like angels? *Ans.* 1. But fall on, and imitate them, though it be—*haud passibus æquis*: [with faulting, unequal steps.] 2. We are bidden to live the life of God, *Matt. v. ult. Be perfect, &c.* so 1 *Pet. i. 15. Be ye holy, &c.* If I speak high, how high speak these texts.

Obj. Say you, But how can this animal life permit this? *Ans.* 1. Thus men have lived in the body; thus lived Enoch, *Gen. v. 22.* thus lived Paul, *Phil. i. 21.* thus lived David, that man after God's own heart, (the greatest and most divine character that can be given of a mortal man,) *Ps. lxxiii. 25. There is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* 2. Cannot we live in the body, except we live to the body? You see saints upon earth live above other men upon earth; and you with a little more pains may take the other flight, and may live above yourselves too, higher than you now do. I will only add a motive or two to this duty of living upon God.

1. "The last enemy to be overcome is creature-love." This is the last enemy that keeps the field, by which alone the greatest part of men do perish everlastingly: conquer this, and you win the day, and shall wear the crown; nay, the very conquest of it is a crown, as I said before.

2. "To live upon God in the creature, is to enjoy the creature in the best sense." You will lose nothing of the creature by this means, but shall enjoy it more fully than ever you did; for

the creature is ten thousand times sweeter in God than it is in itself. Yea, in a word, this is the way to enjoy all the world, and to enjoy the accomplishments of all men, and all things as much as if they were your own.

3. "It is the way never to lose any thing." He that lives upon God, spends upon a stock that cannot be wasted, drinks at a fountain that cannot be exhausted. So much as we enjoy of God in the creature, we do not lose with it; and that which we do not so enjoy, we deserve to lose. This, then, is the secure and honourable life, in comparison with which the life of a prince is but wallowing in the mire. "Lord, give us evermore this bread," and hearts to feed upon it. Amen.

Dei & Animæ Consortium :

SIVE

PERIPHRASIS IN POSTERIUS HEMISTICHUM,

1 John iv. 16.

— in Deo manet, et Deus in eo.

*Omnia mi Deus est ; idem Deus est meus omnis :
Ipse Deo totus ; totus et ipse Dei.*

Omnia mihi Deus est.

*In Deo cujusque boni creati
Singule vires penilissime insunt
In Deo solaminaque implicantur
Omnia vitæ.*

Omnis Deus est meus.

*Omne quod fecit mihi dat benignus ;
Omne quod præ se quia nil pependi,
Insuper menti dedit appetenti
Omne quod ipse est.*

Ipse in Deo totus.

*In Deo versor medio, que spiro,
In Deo grandescere concupisco,
Luceo totus radiis paterna
Luce receptis.*

Ipse totus Dei.

*Non mei, non alterius creati
Sum, (Deus) sed quantus ego, tuus sum :
Vita quos a te radios recepi,*

Oro, reflectat !

*Cuncta te subter (Deus alme) quæ sunt,
Judico mente inferiora nostra :
Absit ut rebus studeat caducis
Mens generosa !*

*Fac teipsum, mi Deus, ipsiorem
Huic meæ menti penitus seipsa,
Fac meipsum, mi Deus, uniozem,
Quam mihi tecum !*

GOD AND THE SOUL;

A PARAPHRASE UPON 1 JOHN V. 16.

— *dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

MY God is all things unto me;
All God is also mine:
I am, O Lord, wholly in thee;
And also wholly thine.
God is all things unto me.

The powers of each created good
In God are all contain'd;
In him my comforts all do bud,
Flourish, and are maintain'd.
All God is mine.

He gave me all that he had made;
All which did not suffice
My larger soul; therefore I pray'd,
He gave himself likewise.
I am wholly in God.

I' th' midst of God I live and breathe,
In him alone I'm bright;
The rays with which I shine beneath
Are borrow'd from his light.
I am wholly God's.

O Lord, I'm not at all mine own,
Nor for another free;
Let life be a reflection
Of beams receiv'd from thee.

All things below thee, Lord, I judge
To be below my soul;
O let my nobler mind ev'n grudge,
Itself in dust to roll.

Be more myself, O God, to me
Than I myself have been;
Make me, O God, more one with thee
Than with myself! Amen.

ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

The Royal Society of London, for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge, was instituted in the year 1660, by a charter from Charles II. The society is composed of members who are elected by their fellow members, and who are bound by a solemn oath to promote the advancement of natural philosophy, and to communicate their discoveries to the world. The society has since that time made great progress in the advancement of natural knowledge, and has been the source of many important discoveries in the natural sciences.

The society is divided into several classes, and each class has its own officers and regulations. The classes are the Astronomical, Philosophical, and Natural History. The Astronomical class is concerned with the study of the heavens, and the Philosophical class is concerned with the study of the earth and the atmosphere. The Natural History class is concerned with the study of the plants and animals of the earth.

The society has a library of books and instruments, and a museum of natural history. The society also publishes a journal, the Philosophical Transactions, which contains accounts of the experiments and discoveries of the members of the society. The society has also been instrumental in the establishment of many scientific institutions, and has been the source of many important scientific discoveries.

PREFACE

TO THE IMMANUEL.

Amongst the many spectacles that usually surprise and amuse inquisitive minds, there seems to be nothing in the world of a more sad and astonishing appearance, than the small progress and propagation of the Christian religion. This I call a sad appearance, because religion is a matter of the most weighty and necessary importance; without which it is not possible for an immortal soul to be perfected and made happy. I call it astonishing, because the Christian religion hath in itself such advantages of recommending itself to the minds of men, and contains in it such mighty engines to work them into an hearty compliance with it, and to captivate their reason unto itself, as no other religion in the world can with any face pretend to. I do earnestly, and as I think rationally and scripturally hope that this great truth, those sacred oracles, will yet more prevail, and that the Founder of this most excellent religion, who was lifted up upon the cross, and is now exalted to his throne, will yet draw more men unto himself: and this, perhaps, is all the millennium that we can warrantably expect. But, in the mean time, it is too evident, that the kingdom of satan doth more prevail in the world than the gospel of Christ, either in the letter or power of it. As to the former, if we will receive the probable conjecture of learned inquirers, we shall not find above one sixth part of the known world yet Christianized, or giving so much as an external worship to the crucified Jesus. As to the latter, I will not be so bold as to make any arithmetical conjectures, but judge it more necessary, and more becoming a charitable and Christian spirit, to sit down in secret, and weep over that sad but true account given in the gospel, *Few are chosen*, Matt. xx. 26. and again, *Few there be that find it*, Matt. vii. 14. being grieved, after the example of my compassionate Redeemer, *for the hardness of their hearts*, and praying with Joab, in another case, *The Lord make his people an hundred times so many more as they be!* 1 Chron. xxi. 3. It is foreign to my present purpose to inquire into the immediate causes of the non-propagation of the gospel in the former sense; only it is easy and obvious to con-
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ture, that few will enter in by *the way of the tree of life*, when the same is guarded with a *flaming sword*! And it were reasonable to hope, that if the minds of Christians were more purged from a selfish bitterness, fierce animosity, and arbitrary sourness, and possessed with a more free, generous, benign, compassionate, condescending, candid, charitable, and Christian spirit, which would be indulgent toward such as are, for the present, under a less perfect dispensation, as our Saviour's was, Luke ix. 49, 50—51, 55. would not impose any thing harsh or unnecessary upon the sacred and inviolable consciences of men, but would allow that liberty to men, which is just and natural to them in matters of religion, and no way forfeited by them; then, I say, it might be reasonable to hope, that the inherent power and virtue of the gospel would prove victorious. Judaism, Mahometism, and Paganism, would melt away under its powerful influences, and satan himself would *fall as lightning* before it, as naturally as the eye-lids of the morning do chase away the blackness of the night, when once they are lifted up upon the earth. But my chief design is to examine the true and proper cause of the ill success of the gospel, in regard to its power and inefficacy upon the hearts and consciences of those that do profess it. But in finding out the cause of this, I shall not endeavour to be *wise above what is written*, leaving that daring course of searching the decrees of God, and prying into the hidden rolls of eternity, to them who can digest the uncomfortable notion of a self-willed, arbitrary, and imperious deity; which I suspect is the most common apprehension of God; men measuring him most grossly and unhappily by a standard of their own. And as I dare not soar so high, so neither will I adventure to stoop so low, as to examine into particulars; which are differently assigned, according to the different dispositions and interests of those who assign them: for each sect in the world is so exceedingly favourable to itself, as to be ready to say with David, *The earth, and all the inhabitants of it, are dissolved; I bear up the pillars of it*, Ps. lxxv. 3. and to think that the very interest of religion in the world is involved in their persuasions and opinions; and that the whole church is ruined, if but an hair fall from their heads, or their notions be in the least controverted or abridged. Such conduct is the more unpardonable, inasmuch as it destroys the design of

the gospel, by confining or limiting the Holy One of Israel, and making God as much confined to one people as when he dwelt no where upon earth but at the temple in Jerusalem.

Waving these extremes therefore, I conceive the cause in general of the so little prevalence of true religion in the hearts and lives of men, is the false notion that men have of it; placing it where indeed it is not, nor doth consist. That this must needs be a cause of the ill success of the gospel, wherever this false notion is found, I suppose every one will grant; and that it is almost every where to be found, will, I doubt not, too evidently appear by that description of the Christian religion, which the sacred Author of it, the Lord Jesus Christ, made to the poor Samaritan woman; which I have endeavoured briefly to explain, according to the tenor of the gospel, in this small treatise; which I commenced for private use, in a season when it most behooved me to understand the secrets of my own soul, and do the utmost service I was able, for the salvation of those that were under my roof; expecting daily to render up my own or their souls into the arms of our most merciful Redeemer, and to be swallowed up in that eternal life, towards which true religion daily tends; and into which it will at length infallibly conduct the Christian soul. This work thus undertaken, and in a great measure then carried on, I have since perfected, and do here present to the perusal of my dear countrymen; having published it for no private end; but, if possible, to serve the interest of God's glory in the world. And this I am persuaded will be done, if, by his blessing, I may be instrumental of undeceiving any soul mistaken in so high and important a matter as religion is; or any way to awaken and quicken any religious soul not sufficiently ravished with the unspeakable glory, nor cheerfully enough springing up into the full fruition of eternal life.

What certain and unfailing tendency true religion hath towards the eternal happiness and salvation of men's souls, will, I hope, evidently appear from the substance of this small treatise: but that is not all, (though indeed that would be enough to recommend it to any rational soul, that is in the least degree candid and ingenuous,) for it is also the wisest policy imaginable, and the most unerring expedient in the world, for uniting and establishing a divided

and tottering kingdom or commonwealth: to demonstrate which, was the design of this preface. It is well known, (O that it were but as well and effectually believed!) that *godliness is profitable to all things*, and that it hath the promise and blessings of the *life that now is, and of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 3. that the right seeking of the kingdom of God and his righteousness, hath no less than *all things* annexed to it, Matt. vi. 33. How immeasurable is the body and bulk of that blessedness, to which all the comforts of this life are only as an appendix compared to a volume! But men are apt to evade generals; therefore I will descend to instances, and shew in a few particulars, what a mighty influence religion, in the power of it, would certainly have on the political happiness and flourishing state of a nation. Wherein I doubt not but I shall make it appear, that not religion, as some slanderously report, but the want of it, is the immediate troubler of every nation, and individual society; yea, and of every soul too; according to that just saying of the holy apostle, *From whence come wars and fightings? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?* James iv. 1. Here let me desire one thing of the reader, and that is, constantly to bear in mind, that where he finds the word religion, I have principally a respect to the description given of it in the text; and that I mean thereby, “a divine principal implanted in the soul, springing up into everlasting life.”

And now I should briefly glance at those faults, both in governors towards their subjects, subjects towards their governors, and towards each other, which do destroy the peaceful state and the sound and happy constitution of a body politic; and indeed I fear it will cause me some inconvenience, if not confusion, to wave this method: But out of a sincere desire to avoid whatever may be interpreted as ill-will, curiosity, presumption, or any other bad disposition; and that it may appear to an ingenuous eye, that I am more desirous to bind up than to tear open sores, I will expressly shew how religion would heal the distempers of any nation, without taking any more than an implied notice of the distempers themselves.

First then, It is undoubtedly true that religion, deeply rooted in the nature of princes and governors, would most effectually qualify them for the most happy way of reign-

ing. Every body knows what an excellent euchrasy,* and lovely constitution the Jewish polity was in under the influences of holy David, wise Solomon, devout Hezekiah, zealous Josiah, and others of the same spirit; so that I need not spend myself in that inquiry, and so consequently not upon that argument. Now, there are many ways by which it is easy to conceive, that religion would rectify and temper the spirit of princes.

This principle will constitute the most noble, heroic, and royal soul, because it will not suffer men to find any unhal- lowed satisfaction in a divine authority, but will be spring- ing up into a God-like nature, as their greatest and most perfect glory. It will certainly correct and limit the un- due desire of unwieldy greatness and unbounded dominion, by teaching them that the most honourable victory is self- conquest; and that the propagation of the image and king- dom of God in their own souls, is infinitely preferable to the advancement or enlargement of any temporal juris- diction.

The same holy principle being the genuine offspring of divine love and benignity, will also polish their rough and over severe natures, and instruct them in the most sweet and obliging methods of government, by assimilating them to the nature of God; who is infinitely abhorrent from all appearance of oppression, and hath most admirably provid- ed that his servants should not be slaves, by making his service perfect freedom.

The pure and impartial nature of God cannot endure su- perstitious flatterers, or hypocritical professors; and the princes of the earth, that are regenerated into his image, will also estimate men according as God does; I mean ac- cording to the example of him who loves nothing but the communications of himself; and according to their partici- pation of his image, which is the only amiable object in the world. What God rejected in sacrifices offered to him, religion will teach princes to dislike in the pretended devotions of their courtiers; I mean not only the leaven of superstitious pride and moroseness, but also the flattery of mercenary prostrations and fawning adulations.

* A Greek word, implying a good temperature and condition, or state of the body.

In a word, this religious principle, which makes God its pattern and end, springs from him, and is always returning to him, would powerfully heal the distemper of ruling by caprice, self-interest, and arbitrariness; and teach men to seek the good of the public in preference to self-gratifications. For God rules the world in this manner; who, however some men slander him, I dare say, hath made nothing the duty of his creature, but what is really for its good: neither doth he give his people laws for the purpose of shewing his sovereignty in making them, or his justice in punishing the breach of them; much less doth he give them any statutes, which he is as willing they should break as keep, provided he might but exact the penalty.

What I have briefly said concerning political governors, the judicious reader may review, and apply to the ecclesiastical. For I do verily believe that if the hearts of these men were in that right religious temper and holy order of which I have been speaking, it would plentifully contribute towards the happy and prosperous state of any kingdom. I will speak freely, let it light where it will, of that principle which terminates in popular applause, secular greatness, worldly pomp and splendor, flesh-pleasing, or any kind of self-exaltation, (which is manifold,) is really in contradistinction to that divine principle, that religious nature, which terminates in everlasting life. And certainly, notwithstanding all the recriminations and self-justifications which are, on all hands, used to evade the guilt, these governors must lay aside their sullen pride, as well as the people their proud sullenness, before the church of God be healed of its breaches, purged of Antichrist, or can probably arrive at any sound constitution or perfect stature.

But I suppose religion will not have its full and desirable effect upon a nation, by healing the sickly heads of it; except it be like the holy oil poured upon the head of the sacrificer, which ran down also upon the skirts of his garments, *Ps. cxxxiii. 2.* Therefore,

Secondly, It is indispensably requisite for the thorough healing and right constituting of any political body, that the subjects therein be thus divinely principled. This will not fail to dispose them rightly towards their governors, and towards one another.

1. Towards their governors. There are many evil and perverse dispositions in subjects towards their rulers;

all of which, religion is the most excellent expedient to rectify.

The first and radical distemper seems to be, a want of due reverence toward these vicegerents of God upon earth; which easily grows up into something positive, and becomes a secret wishing of evil to them. This fault, as light as some esteem it, was severely punished in Queen Michal, who despised her lord King David in her heart, and she, in barrenness, went down to her grave under great reproach, *2 Sam. vi. 16. Prov. xxx. 16.* And if an ordinary hatred be so foully interpreted by the holy apostle, *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer,* † *John iii. 15.* surely disloyal and malignant dispositions towards governors must needs have a fouler aspect; and we may say, by parity of reasoning, *Whosoever hateth his prince is a rebel and a regicide.* Now this distemper, so fundamental and epidemical, the spirit of true religion, and that only, will heal; for I know of nothing in the world that hath; nay, I know that nothing in the world hath that sovereignty and dominion over the dispositions and affections of the soul, that this principle thoroughly ingrafted in the soul, doth challenge to itself. This alone can frame the heart of man into that beautiful temper and complexion of love and loyalty, that he will not curse the king, no not in his conscience; no, not though he were well assured that there were no winged messenger to tell the matter, *Eccel. x. 20.*

Another distemper in subjects, in respect to their governors, is impatience of bearing the yoke; which is an evil so natural to the proud and imperious spirit of man, that I believe it were safe to affirm, that every irreligious subject could be well content to be a prince; however there may be many who, utterly despairing of such an event, may, with the fox in the fable, profess they do not wish it. From this principle of pride and impatience of subjection, I suspect it results that the rigid Chiliasts do so scornfully declaim against, and so loudly decry the human ordinances of the magistracy and the ministry: not that they do, by such conduct, verily seek the advancement of Christ's kingdom, (which indeed every disorderly, tumultuous, proud, impatient soul, doth in reality oppose, and endeavour to destroy,) but of themselves. To whom one might justly apply, with a little alteration, the censure which Pharaoh injuriously passes upon the children of Israel, *Ye are proud,*

therefore ye say, *Let us go, and do sacrifice to the Lord*, Exod. v. 17. This distemper the power of religion would excellently heal, by mortifying ambitious inclinations, and quieting the impatient turbulence of the fretful and envious soul, by fashioning the heart to a right humble frame and cheerful submission to every institution of God. You will see in this treatise that a truly religious soul, powerfully maintaining the Christian life, hath no wish nor leisure to attend to such poor attainments and sorry acquests, as domineering over other men; being feelingly acquainted with a life far more excellent than the most princely, and being overpowered with a supreme and sovereign good, which charms all its inordinate inclinations, and laying hold upon all its faculties, draws them forth by a pleasing violence, unto a most zealous pursuit of itself. A principle of humility makes men good subjects; and they that are indeed probationers for another world, may very well behave themselves with a noble disdain of all the glories and preferments of the present.

The last distemper that I shall name in subjects towards their governors, is discontent about imagined misgovernment and mal-administration; which commonly spring from an evil and sinister interpretation of the ruler's actions, and are attended with an evil and tumultuous zeal for relaxation. Now this distemper, as great as it is, and as destructive to the well-being of a body politic, true religion would heal, both root and branch. Were universal charity, that noble part and branch of the Christian religion, rightly seated in the soul, it would not suffer the son of the bond woman to inherit with it; it would cast out those wrathful jealousies, sour suspicions, harsh surmises, and imbittered thoughts which lodge in unhallowed minds, and would display itself in a most amicable sweetness and gentleness of disposition, of putting fair glosses upon doubtful actions; by friendly censures, or none at all; by kind extenuations of greater faults, and covering of lesser: for it is the proper characteristic of this divine principle, to be very unbelieving of evil, and easily entertaining of good reports, gladly interpreting all things to a good meaning that will possibly admit of such a construction; or if you will, in the apostle's phrase, *Charity is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil*, 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

And as charity doth eradicate this root of discontents, so will faith allay and destroy those discontents themselves, which regard mis-government and ill-administration. This noble principle administers ease and satisfaction to the soul, if she happen to be provoked: for it will not suffer her long to stand gazing upon second causes, but carries her up in a seasonable contemplation to the supreme Cause; without whom no disorder could ever befall the world; and there commands her to repose herself, in the bosom of infinite wisdom and grace, and wait for a comfortable issue. He may be perplexed indeed, that has reason sufficient to observe the many monstrous disorders which are in the world, and not faith sufficient to eye the inscrutable providence of a benign and all-wise God, who permitteth the same for the purpose of accomplishing the most beautiful end and blessed order imaginable. Though faith abhors the blasphemy of blaming God, yet it so fixes the soul upon him, and causes her so to eye his hand and end in all mal-administrations of men, that she hath no leisure to fall out with men, or quarrel with instruments.

These discontents, I said, were frequently attended with an evil and seditious zeal for relaxation, discovering itself in secret treacherous conspiracies, and many times in boisterous and daring attempts. These are at the first sight so directly contrary to the character given of religious men, namely, *the quiet of the land*, Ps. xxxv. 20. and the genius of religion, which is wholly made up of *love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness of mind, forbearance, forgiveness, charity, thankfulness, wisdom*, Gal. v. 22, 23. Col. iii. 12—16. that it is easy to conceive that religion, in the power of it, would certainly heal this evil disease also. There are many pretenders to religion, who complain still concerning oppression and persecution; their cry is all for liberty and deliverance; but to make it the more passable and plausible, they style it the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. This pretence is so fair, yet so deceitful, that I deem it worth my time to speak a little more extensively in regard to it. And here I do heartily protest, that I account the advancement of the glory of God and the kingdom of Christ, to be the most desirable thing in the world; and that it is highly becoming the greatest minds upon earth to employ their utmost zeal and diligence to assist in its accomplishment: yea, so utterly

do I abhor irreligion and Atheism, that, as the apostle speaks (*Phil. i. 13.*) in somewhat a similar case, I do verily rejoice that Christ is professed, though it be but pretended; and that truth is owned, though it be not owned in truth. I will further add, that the oppressing and obstructing of the external progress and propagation of the gospel is hated of Christ, and to be lamented of all true Christians. Yea, I will further allow men a due sense of their personal oppressions and injuries, and a natural warrantable desire to be redeemed from them. And now having thus freely expressed myself, I entreat the Christian reader patiently, and without prejudice, to suffer me to speak more closely to this matter: yea, I do verily assure myself that I shall be accepted, or at least indulged by all free and ingenuous spirits, who are well acquainted with the genius of the Christian religion, and do prefer truth before interest.

And, first, for the complaint that is mostly concerning oppression and persecution: certainly religion, if it did really prevail in our hearts, would very much heal this distemper, if not by perfectly silencing these complaints, yet surely by putting them into another strain. Religion quite silences these complaints, when it engages the soul so entirely in serving the design of God in afflictions, and in a right improvement of them for religious purposes, that she wishes not to spend herself in fruitless murmurings and unchristian indignation. As fire seizeth upon every thing that is combustible, and makes fuel for itself, and as a predominant humour in the body converts into its own substance whatever is convertible, and makes it nourishment to itself; so doubtless this holy flame, this divine principle, if it were predominant in the soul would nourish itself by all things that lie in its way, though they seem ever so heterogeneous and hard to be digested; and rather than want meat it would, with Samson, fetch it out of the very eater himself. But if religion should not utterly silence these complainings, by rendering the soul thus forgetful of the body, and regardless of its pain, in comparison of the happy advantage that may be made of it; yet, methinks, it should draw the main stream of these tears into another channel, and put these complaints into another strain. It is very natural to the religious soul to make God all things to itself; to lay to heart the interest of truth and holiness more than any particular interest of its own; and to be-

wail the dishonour done to God more than any personal inconvenience. Must not he be a good subject to his prince, who can more heartily mourn that God's laws are not kept, than that he himself is kept under; who can be more grieved that men are cruel, than that they kill him; who can be more troubled because there are oppressions in the world, than because he himself is oppressed? Such subjects religion alone can make.

As for the cry that is made for liberty and deliverance; I confess I do not easily apprehend what is more, or more naturally desirable than true liberty: yea, I believe there are many devout and religious souls that, from a right, noble, and generous principle, and out of a sincere respect to the Author and end of their creation, are almost immoderately desirous of it, do prefer it above all preferments, or any thing that may be properly called sensual, and would purchase it with any thing that they can possibly part with. But yet that I may moderate this thing a little, if not quite stifle it, I must freely profess that I do apprehend too much of sensuality generally in it; because this liberty is commonly abstracted from the proper end of it, and desired merely as a naturally convenient good, and not under a religious consideration. Self-love is the very heart and centre of the animal life; and doubtless this natural principle is as truly covetous of self-preservation, and freedom from all inconveniences, grievances, and confinements, as any religious principle can be. And therefore I may well allude to our Saviour's words, and say, *If you love and desire deliverance, only under the notion of a natural good, what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans the same?* Matt. v. 47. But were this divine principle rightly exercising its sovereignty in the soul, it would value all things, and all states and conditions, only as they have a tendency to the advancement and nourishment of itself. With what an indifferent, not to say disdainful eye, would the religious soul look upon the fairest self-accommodations in the world; and be ready to say within itself, What is a mere deliverance from afflictions worth? Wherein is simple freedom from afflictions to be accounted of? Will this make me a happy man? Was not profane and impudent Ham delivered from the deluge of water, as well as his brethren? Were not the shameless daughters of Lot delivered from the deluge of fire, as well as their father? And

yet we are so far from rising up and calling these people blessed, that the heart of every chaste and modest Christian is ready to rise against the very mention of their names, when he remembers how both the one and the other, though in a different sense, discovered their father's nakedness. If we did really value ourselves by our souls, and our souls themselves by what they possess of the image of God; if we did rightly prefer the advancement of the divine life before the gratification of the animal, it is easy to conceive how we should prefer patience before prosperity; faith in God before the favour of men; spiritual purity before temporal pleasures or preferments; humility before honour; the denial of ourselves before the approbation of others; the advancement of God's image before the advancement of our own names; an opportunity of exercising gracious dispositions before the exercising of any temporal power of secular authority; and, in a word, the displaying of the beauty, glory, and perfections of God, before health, wealth, liberty, livelihood, and life itself. We should certainly be more indifferent towards any condition, whether prosperous or adverse, and not be so fond of the one, nor weary of the other, if we did verily value them only by the tendency that they had to promote religion, and advance the life of Christ in our souls. This would certainly make men more sincerely studious to discover God's design in afflicting them, and less anxious to see the end of their afflictions.

And as for treacheries, plots, invasions, usurpations, rebellions, and that tumultuous zeal for relaxation, into which this impatience of oppression, and fondness of deliverance do so often grow up, I dare say there is nothing like religion, in the power of it, for effectually healing them. The true spirit of religion is not so weary of oppression, though it be by sinful men, as it is abhorrent from deliverance, if it be by sinful means. May I not be allowed to allude to the apostle and say, whereas there is amongst you this zeal, contention, and faction, *Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?* 1 Cor. iii. 3. Is not this the same which a mere natural man would do, strive and struggle, by right and by wrong, to redeem himself from whatsoever is grievous and galling to the interest of the flesh? Might it not be reasonably supposed, that if religion did but display itself aright in the powerful actings of faith, hope and humility, it

would quench this burning zeal, and calm these tempestuous motions of the soul, and make men rather content to be delivered up to the adversary, though the flesh should by him be destroyed, if the spirit might be saved, and the divine life advanced in the way of the Lord. O how dear and precious are the possession and practice of faith, patience, humility, and self-denial, to a godly soul, in comparison of all the joys and toys, treasures, pleasures, ease and honour of the world, the safety and liberty of the flesh! How much more then, when these must be accomplished by wicked means, and purchased at the price of God's displeasure? And because it is so often alleged, that the kingdom of Christ defends and patronizes these strange fervours and frenzies, let me here briefly record to all that shall read these lines, the way and method of Christ himself in propagating his own kingdom. It will not be denied, that Christ was infinitely studious to promote his own kingdom in the best and most proper sense: but I cannot find that he ever attempted it by force or fraud, by violent opposition or crafty insinuation. Nay, he reckoned that his kingdom was truly promoted when these tumultuous, impatient, imperious, proud lusts of men were mortified. Nothing could have been more easy with him, considering his miraculous power, infallible wisdom, and the mighty interest and party which he could by these have made for himself in the world, than to have raised his own kingdom upon the ruins of the Roman, and to have quite driven Cæsar from the world: but indeed nothing could be more impossible, considering the perfect innocency and infinite sacredness of his temper; nor any thing more contradictory, considering the proper notion of his kingdom; which he declares is not secular, and so not to be maintained by fighting: but if you would know in what sense he was a king, he himself seems to intimate it in his answer to Pilate, *Thou sayest that I am a king; to this end was I born, that I should bear witness unto the truth*, John xviii. 37. So then it seems wherever truth and holiness are predominant, there is Christ really enthroned, and actually triumphant. Where religion doth vitally form, animate, and actuate men's souls, it doth make them rightly to understand that the kingdom of Christ is not the thriving of parties, the strengthening of factions, the advancement of any particular interest, though it seem to be of ever so evangel-

ical a complexion ; no, nor yet the proselyting of the world to the profession of Christianity, or of the Christian world to the purer and more reformed profession of it, though these latter would be a great external honour to the person of Christ : but that it is most properly and happily propagated in the spirits of men ; and that wherever there are faith, patience, humility, self-denial, contempt of this world, and bright hopes of a better, pure obedience to God, and sincere benignity to men, there is the kingdom of God, there Christ reigns, and the gospel exists in the power and triumph of it. And may not these things be, even most conspicuously, in a persecuted condition of the church ? That certainly was an high instance of the mighty power of the divine life in our blessed Saviour, which the apostle Peter records of him, *when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not ; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously*, 1 Pet. ii. 23. The same divine principle dwelling richly in our souls, would instruct us to the same behaviour, according to the precept given by the same apostle, *Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing ; but contrariwise blessing, &c.* 1 Pet. iii. 1. How vainly do men dream that they serve the interest and advance the kingdom of Christ by fierce and raging endeavours to cast off every yoke that galls them, and kicking against every thorn that pricks them. When indeed they are serving the interest of the flesh, and do, as under a cloak, gratify the mere animal life, and sacrifice to self-love, which is as covetous of freedom from all retrenchments and confinements as religion itself can be. It is said, indeed, that when the churches had rest they were *edified and multiplied*, Acts ix. 31. but when they suffer *according to the will of God*, they are then glorified : for *the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them*, 1 Pet. iv. 14. as the apostle Paul professes of himself in that most noble and heroic passage to the Corinthians ; *Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me*, 2 Cor. xii. 9.

Secondly, Religion will not fail rightly to dispose the hearts of subjects towards one another ; and that, whether they be of the same way and judgment with themselves, or different. I dare not assert that it would make them all of the same way and mind ; neither do I believe it would : yet I am more confident it would do more towards this catholic union than all the laws and severities in the world

can do. Mutual forbearance and forgiveness, Christian kindness and discreet condescension, are the most warrantable and most effectual method for introducing uniformity, and unanimity too, which is much better, into the church of Christ. But, however, religion would certainly give a right disposition, and teach men a right behaviour respecting each other, whether they agree in sentiments, or not.

This principle would teach men to love their friends and companions only *in the Lord*, as his members, not as their own partizans. Are not they strangely devoted to self-interest that will vindicate any thing in a partizan, which they will declaim against in one who dissents from them? And yet how is the sacred name of Christian friendship reproached every where, by reason of this partiality! How much better did true religion instruct the great apostle, *to know no man after the flesh*, 2 Cor. v. 16. no, not Christ himself.

The same principle would not fail to cure the distempers of men respecting those that are of different sentiments from themselves; whether of protestants towards protestants, or protestants and papists one towards another. It would heal the distempered affections and behaviour of protestants towards protestants. Were men thoroughly imbued with the spirit of love and wisdom, which are so vividly portrayed by the apostles Paul and James, that one might well be enamoured of the very description: how certainly would all oppressions, law-suits, and disputations about unprofitable and indeterminable points, either be suppressed or sanctified; either not exist, or not be vexatious? Not to speak of the oppressions by overreaching, stealing, lying, false witness-bearing, slanderous detractions, envious suggestions, and malignant disseminations of doubtful suspicions, by which commonly poor men oppress the rich; all which true religion abhors. There is a great oppression that is uncontroled in the world; which is, the cruel engrossing of property, and covetous trading of richer men. What these intend I will not say; but that they are really as great oppressions as those inhuman depopulations, and squeezing exactions, which are so much inveighed against, I doubt not. But be they what they will, or be they excused how they will, I am confident that this divine principle that powerfully springs up into everlasting life, would mightily relieve the world in this re-

spect; in that it would moderate men's desire of corruptible riches; forbid them to seek the things of this world any more or any otherwise than in consistency with, and in subserviency to their primary and most diligent seeking of the kingdom of God; it would make men seek the wealth of others even as their own, and make private advantage yield to the public good. I do verily believe, that if there were none but good men in England, there would be no poor men there. Civil laws may provide for the maintenance of the poor; but the law of divine love, a principle of religion, if it were universally obeyed, would make men so nobly regardless of earthly accommodations, that there would soon be room enough for all men to increase into a sufficient stature; and then, being thus grown, they would covet no more.

In law-suits, if there were any, men would seek the advancement of truth, and not of their own cause and interest distinct from it.

And O how excellently would it still the noise of axes and hammers about the temple of God! It would abstract men from vain speculations and much eagerness about unnecessary opinions, by employing them in more substantial and important pursuits. The very existence of religion in the soul would indeed decide numerous controversies, which the schools of philosophers have long laboured in vain to determine. For these scholastic wars, justly called Polemics, like those civil dissensions spoken of by the apostle James, chap. iv. 1. do, for the most part, proceed from men's lusts that war in their members; such as pride, curiosity, wantonness of wit, disobedience, and unsubduedness of understanding, and the like. I have observed with great grief, how the spirits of many men, and even sects of men, are occupied wholly in disputes about ceremonies; about church government; about what is orthodox and what is heterodox; about the true and the false church; and about this, their zeal, their conversation, and their very prayers, are principally employed. What the church is, they commonly decide by something external, and separate from the essence of a true church. Who can doubt but that religion, in the power of it, would find men something else to do? Yea, and if it could not perfectly determine these points, it would much heal our dissensions about them, and bring tears to quench the strange and unnatural heats which are

amongst us, and which cause such dreadful inflammations in our souls.

But it may seem that there is such a fatal enmity and irreconcilable contest betwixt Papists and Protestants, that nothing, not religion itself, can heal it. And truly if we suppose that it is religion that engages both parties in this enmity, I think it will prove incurable: but God forbid that this pure offspring of Heaven should be so blasphemed! It is not religion, but the want of it, that begets this implacable animosity, whatever is pretended. Cruel religion, bloody religion, selfish religion, envious and revengeful religion! Who can but cry out against the blasphemy of this contradiction at the very first hearing? Nay, I dare affirm it without hesitation, that the more religious any Protestant or Papist is, the more abhorrent he is from brutish savageness, wicked revenge and diabolical hatred. The church of Rome judges the reformed heretics are not fit to live; and why? Not because they do not live well, but because they cannot think and believe as they themselves do. And is this the genuine product of true religion? Certainly not. For a desire of ruling men's consciences, and of subjecting the faith of others to themselves, is certainly compatible to a mere natural man; nay, to the devil himself, who is as cruel and imperious as any other being. The reformed churches, on the other hand, are, I doubt not, generally more offended at the Papists for their persecutions of the Protestants, than for their real persecuting and crucifying Christ afresh by their sins; and so, consequently, do rather write and contend against them, than either pity or pray for them. I hope there are as many well-spirited Christians in England, at least proportionably, as in any church upon earth; and yet I fear there are far more that could wish the Papists out of this world, than that earnestly desire that they might be fitted for, and so counted worthy of a better. And doth this spring from a religious principle, think ye, or a selfish? Doth it not agree well to the animal life, and natural self, to be tender of its own interests and concernments, to wish well to its own safety, and to defend itself from violence? May I not allude to the Saviour's words and say, *If ye hate them that hate you, how can that be accounted religious? Do not even the publicans the same?* Matt. v. 46. I suspect we know not sufficiently what spirit we are of. The power

of religion, prevailing in the soul, would mould us into another kind of temper; it would teach us as well to love, and pity, and pray for Papists, as to hate Popery. I know the prophecy indeed, that the beast and the false prophet shall be cast alive into the lake burning with brimstone, and the remnant shall be slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, *Rev. xix. 20.* but since that sword is said to proceed *out of his mouth*, *Rev. xix. 21.* I would gladly interpret it of *the word of God*, *Eph. vi. 17.* which kills men unto salvation. However, let the interpretation of that text, and others of the like import, be what it will, I consider it very unsafe to turn all the prophecies and threatenings of God into prayers, lest haply we should be found to contribute to the damning of men's souls. Yea, when all is said concerning the reprobating decrees of God, and his essential inflexible punitive justice, and all those texts that seem to speak of God's revenging himself with delight, are interpreted with the utmost harshness of meaning that the cruel heart of man can invent; yet it remains a sealed, and to me a sweet truth, *I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God, Ezek. xviii. 32.* and again, *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, Ezek. xxxiii, 11.*

Wherefore, waving all those dreadful representations (that do rather describe the bitter and revengeful temper of the man who makes them, than exhibit the pure and perfect nature of God, about whom they are made) let us attend to that beautiful character that is every where given of religion, (which is our highest concern,) in the person of Moses, of Paul, and of Christ Jesus himself, the author and exemplar of it. For he, by his incarnation, life, and death, abundantly demonstrated the infinite benignity and compassionate ardour of his soul towards us, when we were worse than Papists, being beyond the possibility of salvation without him; and *let that mind be in us, which was in him also*, *Phil. ii. 5.* Though it be not directly our Saviour's meaning in my text, yet I believe it may be inferred from it, that this pure and divine principle, religion, springs up into the everlasting life, not only of ourselves, but of others also. But, however religion is described, surely it is most unnatural to the soul that is regenerated into the true spirit of piety, pity, and universal charity, to be of a cruel, fierce, revengeful, condemn-

ing disposition. And therefore whatever are the raving and wrathful strains of some men's devotions, I beseech the reader to endeavour with me, that charity towards men's souls may go along in conjunction with zeal and piety towards God, when we present ourselves before the throne of his grace, and I am confident it will, if we pray sincerely after this manner, namely, "That God would cause the wickedness of the wicked to come to an end; that he would consume the Antichrist, but convert the Papist, and make the wonderers after the beast to become followers of the Lamb!" I suspect there are many that think they can never be too liberal in wishing ill to the Papists; nay, they deem it a strong argument of a good Protestant, I had almost said an evidence of grace, to rage and inveigh against them. Alas! how miserably do we manifest in so doing, that we are any thing rather than that to which we pretend by doing it. For are not we ourselves antichristian, in complaining of their cruelties, whilst our own souls, in the very act, are inflamed with revengeful and burning affections? If we do indeed abhor their cruelty, because it is contrary to the holy precepts of the gospel, and the true kingdom of Christ, we ought to be jealous at the same time lest any thing like it should be found in ourselves; otherwise, are we not carnal? For mere nature, as I have often said, will abhor any thing that is contrary to itself, and will not willingly suffer its dearest interests to be touched. The apostle tells us, that no man speaking by the *Spirit of Christ, calleth Christ accursed*, 1 Cor. xii. 3. but I suspect it is common to curse Antichrist by a spirit that is antichristian; I mean carnal, selfish, cruel, and uncharitable. For there is a spiritual Antichrist, or, if you will, in the apostle's phrase, a *spirit of Antichrist*, 1 John iv. 3. as well as a political Antichrist; and I doubt not but the former prevails most in the world, though it be the least discerned and execrated. Men do with Antichrist as they do with the devil; defy him in words, but entertain him in their hearts; run away from the appearance of him; and, in the mean time, can be well contented to be in reality all that which the devil and Antichrist is. All this is evidently for want of the true spirit of religion, which I recommend as a great healer, even of distempers.

Perhaps no Papist will be disposed to read this epistle written by a heretic; yet possibly some one or other may;

therefore I will adventure briefly to prescribe this same medicinal divinity to them also; though perhaps I might be excused upon other accounts; as all that which I have hitherto said to distempered Protestants is rightly enough, *Mutatis mutandis*, [the terms being changed which it was necessary to change,] applicable to them. Moreover, they value their church, and the truth and correctness of it, by its universality and prosperity; but the power of religion would make men value themselves and their adherents, only by the divine impressions of piety and purity, and account such only worthy of the glorious title of apostolic, and children of God, as are sincere followers of the apostles so far as they were followers of Christ, namely, in *true holiness and righteousness*. Are they industrious and zealous for proselyting the world, and spreading their cause far and near? And do not wicked men, yea, and the devil himself do the same? The fairest and most flourishing state of a church is nothing to God; and consequently nothing to a godly soul, in comparison with those excellent divine beauties with which religion adorneth the world. But as the greatest complaint, and the most dreadful charge which the Protestants bring against the Papists, is their barbarity and most unchristian cruelty, exercised against all whom they esteem heretics; and they, on the other hand, allege that the interest of religion, and the catholic faith doth require it, and that they do not so properly murder men, as sacrifice them to the honour of God: it will be proper to spend a little time, at least, to exculpate religion of this blame; that as wisdom is at all times justified of her children, so she may be sometimes justified by them, especially when the aspersions are so monstrously foul. And indeed she hath sufficiently instructed us how to justify her from all such imputations; having so fairly portrayed herself by the pen of the apostle James, both negatively and affirmatively. She is void of *strife, envyings, bitterness, and every evil work*; but she is *pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*, James iii. 14—17. This is the proper description of heavenly wisdom, or pure religion: and O that all Christians would estimate themselves wise only according to their consonancy and conformity thereunto! Then I could easily believe, that none would be Papists in practice, whatever they might be in opinion.

What, Sirs, is the God of the Christian become like a devil, that he should delight in cruelty, and drink the blood of men? Is butchering rational creatures the reasonable service which he requires? *Rom. xii. 1.* Is the living sacrifice of your own bodies to be turned into the dead sacrifice of other men's? It was wont to be said, *What communion hath Christ with Belial?* *2 Cor. vi. 15.* And is the *Prince of Peace* now become a real Satan; the author of enmity, malignity, confusion, and every evil work? Did he shed his blood for his enemies, to teach us that good lesson of shedding the blood of our enemies? Did he come *to seek and to save that which was lost*, *Luke xix. 10.* to set us an example that we might *seek to destroy*; and that, only to repair our own losses? Be it so; that the Protestant churches have apostatised from you: this, I hope, is not a greater crime than the apostasy of mankind from God; which he expiated, not with the blood of the apostates, but with his own. Religion was formerly a principle *springing up into eternal life*. How is the world changed, that it should now be a principle springing up into massacres, and temporal death? Or is religion now become a principle springing up into secular power, worldly dominion, temporal greatness, and all manner of accommodations agreeable to the natural heart? This was formerly the description of sensuality and heathenism, *for after all these things do the Gentiles seek*, *Matt. vi. 32.* Are these so many mighty engines in the gospel to engage the hearts of men to believe, profess, and obey it, and must they all now give place to fire and sword? Are these the only gospel methods of winning men to the Catholic faith? What! are we wiser than Christ, or more zealous than he himself was? Did he forbid fire from heaven, *Luke ix. 55.* and will you bring it even from hell to consume Dissenters? Did he sheathe the sword that was drawn in his own defence, and set a dreadful seal upon it too, *All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword*, *Matt. xxvi. 52.* and will you adventure to draw it, in a way of revenge and persecution, and count it meritorious too, as if you should therefore never perish because you take it? Is it not written in your Bibles, as well as ours, that *no murderers shall enter into the kingdom of God?* *Gal. v. 21.* And do you think by murders to propagate this kingdom upon earth, and have a more abundant entrance into it yourselves hereafter? Can hell dwell with heaven? Shall

bloody cruelty ever lodge in the bosom, or lie down in the sacred arms of eternal love? Be not deceived, Sirs, with a false heaven; but take this for an indubitable and self-evident truth, No soul of man hath any more of heaven, no nor ever shall have, than he hath of God, and of his pure, placable, patient, benign, and gracious nature. And this is that everlasting life into which a religious principle is always springing up; so that it hereby appears plainly, that religion, in the power of it, would heal these feverish distempers also, and so restore a most excellent constitution, both to persons and to the body politic.

It may possibly seem that I have laboured too much in these discoveries; and perhaps my pains may prove ungrateful to many: but if it please Almighty God that they should vindicate religion, or restore the sickly and lapsed ecclesiastical or political state; yea, or even prove medicinal and profitable to any single soul, I shall estimate it worth an age of pains. And if it should prove that by all this toil I have *caught nothing*, Luke v. 5. as the weary disciples complained of old; nevertheless being well assured that I have the word of God for my encouragement, I will *let down the net* once more, and so finish these epistolary exertions with an earnest hortatory address to all that shall peruse them.

Let nothing satisfy your souls, Christians, let nothing administer rest or ease to your hearts, that is common to the natural man, or compatible with the mere animal life. There are many high strains of zeal and seeming devotion, by which many men judge themselves to be something great, and concerning which they are ready to say, These things are the great power of God; which, if they be well examined, will be found to grow upon no better root than natural self, and to spring from no higher principle than this animal life. It is impossible for me to give an exact catalogue of all these; many of them I have occasionally recorded in the latter part of the ensuing treatise; to which yet many more might be added, if I had opportunity. But at present let me in general recommend to you this description of true religion, given by our Saviour, as the rule whereby I do earnestly entreat you faithfully to examine yourselves, your actions, affections, zeal, confidence, professions, performances. Let me speak freely: all pomp of worship, all speculative knowledge, how orthodox soever, is as dear to the animal life as to the divine:

and all external modes of devotion, submissive confessions, devout hymns, pathetic prayers, raptures of joy, much zeal to reform indecencies in worship or superstitions, a fierce raging against the political Antichrist, do as well agree to a natural man as to a spiritual; and may apparently be as fairly acted out, by a mere selfish carnal principle, as by that which is truly divine. When Diogenes trampled upon Plato's bed, saying, *calco Platonis fastum*, [I trample upon the pride of Plato,] it was answered him very sharply, *sed majore fastu*, [but with greater pride,] he was prouder in treading upon it, than Plato was in lying upon it. I doubt not but it may be applied too truly to a great deal of that cynical and scornful zeal, that is in the world at this day; men declaim against the pride and pomp, and grandeur of antichristian prelates, with a pride not in the least inferior to that of those whom they thus decry. However, it is plain, that those things which may be imitated by a sensual heart, and indeed performed by the mere magic of an exalted fancy, are not to be rested in by a sincere Christian. Read over therefore, I beseech you, the fruits of the Spirit, recorded by the apostle Paul and the apostle Peter, *Gal. v. 22. &c. 2 Pet. i. 5, 6.* and estimate yourselves by them: these things are utterly incompatible with the mere animal man. All the natural men and devils in the world cannot be humble, meek, self-denying, patient, charitable, lovers of God more than of themselves, or of their enemies as themselves.

Would you judge correctly of the soundness of any opinion? then value it by the tendency that is in it to advance the life of God in the soul: particularly thus judge of the Millenarian opinion, which begins to be so much embraced in the world: concerning which, I will only say thus much at present, that, in the common notion of it, as it promises a state of much ease, liberty, power, prosperity, and freedom from persecutions and oppressions, it is as grateful to the fleshly palate, and will be as gladly embraced by the mere animal man, as by the greatest saint upon earth. And therefore, supposing it to be true, I cannot but wonder how it administers so much satisfaction, and affords such a sweet relish to minds divinely principled, as many seem to taste in it. By this same tendency, to advance the divine life in your souls, judge also of all your enjoyments, riches, honours, liberties, friends, health, children, &c. and value them, if it be possible, only under this consideration. But

to hasten to an end, I will endeavour to enforce this general exhortation by two or three weighty considerations. First, It is utterly impossible that any speculation, opinion, profession, enjoyment, ornament, performance, or any other thing, but the transformation of the mind into the very image and nature of God, should ever be able to perfect our souls; because most of these things are exterior, and all of them inferior to it. They cannot commend a man to God, who loves us, and whom we so far know and love, as we partake of his nature, and resemble him; this is the love of God, this is the worship of God, and this is really the soul's acquaintance with him, and nothing but this is. Secondly, The advancement of the divine life is that which God primarily designs in the world. I need produce but two proofs. 1. The sending of his own Son into the world for this very end and purpose, *that he might take away our sins*, as says the apostle John, *1 John iii. 5, 8.* and, *that he might destroy the works of the devil*; and again, as says the apostle Paul, *That he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,* 'Tit. ii. 14. 2. It appears that this is the grand design of God in the world, since he doth not deliver his faithful servants out of their afflictions and tribulations: which he would not fail to do, did he not intend them a greater good thereby, and design to lead them on and raise them up to a higher life. Now what can more ennoble these souls of ours, than to conduct according to the same design as God himself does.

And now, reader, I commend thee to the blessing of God, in the perusal of this treatise, which I have composed, and publish, under a sense of that common obligation that lies upon every person to be active in his sphere for the interest of the name and honour of God, and to render his life as useful as possible; more particularly, under a sense of my own deficiency in several accomplishments, whereby others are better fitted to serve their generation: and especially, under a sense of the peculiar engagement that lieth upon me, to dedicate my life entirely to his service, from whom I have so lately, and that so signally, received the same afresh: in imitation of whom, I hope thou wilt be indulgent towards my infirmities: to whom I heartily commend thee, and to the precious influences of his eternal Spirit, and rest, *Thy servant, in his work, and for his sake,*

SAMUEL SHAW.

IMMANUEL:

OR,

A DISCOVERY OF TRUE RELIGION,

AS IT IMPORTS

A living Principle in the Minds of Men.

CHAP. I.

The occasion of the words of the text. The principal contents of it. The origin of true religion. All souls the offspring of God, and more especially a portrait of him; but godly souls yet more especially. God the author of religion from without, in several respects; God the author of it from within, enlightening the faculty. Religion something of God in the soul. A discovery of religious men by the affinity that they have to God. God alone to be acknowledged in all holy accomplishments. The original of sin from hence discovered.

JOHN IV. 14.

But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.

THIS chapter contains an excellent, profitable, familiar discourse of the blessed Saviour of the world; into whose lips grace was poured, *Ps.*

xlv. 2. and he ceased not to communicate it to others. That which is said of the wise, *Prov.* xv. 7. is fully verified of Wisdom itself, his lips dispersed knowledge. A poor woman of Samaria comes to draw water, and our Saviour takes occasion from the water to instruct her in the great and excellent doctrines of the kingdom of heaven. O the admirable zeal for God, and compassion for souls, which dwell in that divine breast! and O the wonderful unsearchable counsels of an all-wise God! He ordains Saul's seeking of asses to be the means of his finding a kingdom upon earth; and this poor woman's seeking of water, to be an occasion of her finding the way to the kingdom of heaven. She comes to the well of Jacob, and, behold, she meets the God of Jacob there. The occasion, circumstances, and events of this discourse, would each afford many good and profitable observations: but I think none would afford more than this verse that I have selected; in which the mystery of gospel-grace is perspicuously unfolded, and true religion is excellently described. For I understand our Saviour, not as speaking of faith, or knowledge, or any other particular grace; but of grace in general, of the Holy Spirit of God; that is, the gifts and graces of it; and of true godliness; or, if you will, of the christian religion; for that word I shall choose to retain throughout my discourse, as being most intelligible and comprehensive.

In the words of the text we find true christianity unfolded in its origin, nature, properties, consequent, and end. The origin of it is found in those words, *I shall give him*; the nature of it is

described by a *well of water*; the properties of it, by the phrase of *springing up*; the consequent of it, that the man that is endowed with it *shall never thirst*; the end or perfection of it, is *everlasting life*. Each of these, shall be discussed, in the following order:

First, the original of it, contained in the words, *The water that I shall give him*. And the proposition here laid down, is this, 'That the true christian religion is of divine origin.' All souls are indeed the offspring of God. Those noble faculties, the understanding and a will free from constraint, do more resemble the nature of God, than all the world besides. There is more of the glory, beauty, and brightness of God in a soul, than there is in the sun itself. The apostle allows it as a proper speech spoken in common of all men, *for we are also his offspring*. Acts xvii. 28. God hath impressed more lively characters of himself, and his divine essence, upon a rational soul, than he hath upon the rest of the creation: so that the soul of man, even as to its constitution, doth declare and discover more of the nature of God, than all the other things that he hath made, whereof the Apostle speaks, *Rom. i. 20*. He that rightly converseth with his own soul, will get more acquaintance with God, than they that gaze continually upon the material heavens, or that traverse the dark and distant corners of the earth, or go down unto the sea in ships: the serious consideration of the little world within a man will teach more of God than the great world could do: So that I hesitate not to take the apostle's words concerning the word of God, and ap-

ply them to the nature of God, Rom. x. 6. *Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring a discovery of God from thence? or, who shall descend into the deep, to fetch it up from thence?* The nature and essence of God is nigh thee, even in thine own soul, excellently displayed in its constitution and frame, its power and faculties: God hath not made any creature so capable of receiving and reflecting his image and glory, as angels and men: which hath made me often say, "That the vilest soul of man is much more beautiful and honourable than the most excellent body, than even the body of the sun at noon-day;" And this should render sin odious and loathsome; because it hath defiled the fairest piece of God's workmanship in the world, and hath blurred the clearest copy which he had drawn of himself in the whole creation.

But though all rational souls are the children of God, yet all of them do not imitate their Father; though their constitution expresses much of the essence of God, yet their disposition doth express the image of the devil. But godly souls, who are *followers of God*, are indeed his *dear children*, Eph. v. 1. Holy souls, who are endowed with a divine and God-like disposition, and do work the works of God, are most truly and properly his offspring, *Matt. v. 44, 45*. And in this respect, God's children are his *workmanship, created unto good works*, Eph. ii. 10. Religion is of divine origin: God is the author and father of it, both externally and internally.

1. God is the author of it externally. When man had fallen from God by sin, and so had lost

his way, and was become both unwilling and morally unable to return, God was pleased to set up that glorious light, his own Son, the Sun of Righteousness, in the world, that he might guide our feet into the way of peace. He is therefore called, *A light to lighten the Gentiles*, Luke ii. 32. and compared to a candle set upon a candlestick, *Mark. iv. 21.* God of his infinitely free grace, and over-flowing goodness, provided a Mediator, in and by whom these apostate souls might be reconciled, and re-united to himself; and *to as many as receive him, to them he giveth power to become the sons of God*, John i. 12.

Yet further, it pleased God in his infinite wisdom and mercy, to mark out the way of life and peace in the holy scriptures, and therein to disclose the secrets of salvation to succeeding generations. Herein he hath plainly laid down the terms of the covenant of peace, which was made in the Mediator, and hath given precepts and promises for the direction and encouragement of all who will enquire into the same. These are the sacred oracles, which give clear and certain answers to all that do consult them about their future state, *Rom. iii. 2.* Christ Jesus opened the way into the holiest of all; and the scriptures follow after and point it out unto us: he purchased life and immortality; and these bring it to light, *2 Tim. i. 10.*

And yet, that these might not be mistaken or perverted to men's destruction, which were ordained for their salvation, which sometimes doth come to pass, *2 Pet. iii. 16.* God hath been pleased to commit these records into the hands of his

church, and therein to his ministers, whom he hath appointed, called, qualified, instructed, for opening, explaining, interpreting, and applying them: so that they are called *scribes, instructed unto the kingdom of God, and stewards of the mysteries, stewards of the household of God, to give unto every one his portion.* These apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, God hath given *for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ,* Eph. iv. 11, 12.

These things hath God done for us, from without us; he hath set up a light, marked out our way, and appointed us guides. To which, I might add the many incitements and motives, which we call mercies or comforts of this life; and the many affrightments of judgments and afflictions which God hath added to the promises and threatenings of his word, to bring us into the way of life. But all these are too little, too inefficient of themselves to restore a wandering soul, or to produce a living principle of true religion in it. Therefore,

2. God is the author of religion from within. He doth not only reveal himself and his Son to the soul, but in it; he doth not only make discoveries to it, but lively impressions upon it; he doth not only appoint, and point out the way of life, but breathes into the soul the breath of life. He hath not only provided a Saviour, a Redeemer; but he also draws the soul unto him, *John vi. 44.* He hath not only appointed pastors and teachers, but he himself gives efficacy to their word, and clothes their doctrine with his own power, using their ministry as an instrument of

instruction; so that the children of God are said to be *all taught of God*, John vi. 45. Ministers can only discover, and, as it were, enlighten the object; but God enlightens the faculty; he gives the seeing eye, and does actually enable it to discern. Therefore the work of converting a soul is still ascribed to God in scripture; he begets us again, *1 Pet. i. 3.* he draws the soul, before it can run after him, *Cant. i. 4.* Christ apprehends the soul; lays powerful hold of it, *Phil. iii. 12.* God gives a heart of flesh, a new heart; he causes men to walk in his statutes, *Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.* He puts his law into their inward parts, and writes it in their hearts, *Jer. xxxi. 33.* To which I might add many more quotations of the same import.

But, methinks, we have not yet perfectly discovered that religion is the work of God in the minds of men. For it is God who enlighteneth the faculty as to the learning of all other things also; he teacheth the grammar and the rhetoric, as well as the divinity; he instructeth even the husbandman to discretion in his affairs of husbandry, and teaches him to plow, and sow, and thresh, &c. *Isa. xxviii. 26.* Not only the gift of divine knowledge, but indeed *every good gift cometh from the father of lights*, James i. 17. God doth from within give that capacity, illumination of the mind, whereby we comprehend the mysteries of nature, as well as of grace, *John i. 9.*

Therefore we may conceive that the origin of religion is more inward and spiritual still. It is not so much given of God, as itself is something of God in the soul; as the soul is not so

properly said to give life, as to be the life of man. As the conjunction of the soul with the body, constitutes the life of the body; so also the life of the soul consists in its connexion with God by a spiritual union of the will and affections. God doth not enlighten men's minds as the sun enlightens the world, by shining upon them, and round about them; but by shining into them; by enlightening the mind, as I said before; yea, which seems to be somewhat more, by shining in their hearts, as the apostle expresseth it, *2 Cor. iv. 6.* He sets up a candle, which is his own light within the soul; so that the soul sees God in his own light, and loves him with the love that he hath shed abroad in it; and religion is no other than a reflection of that divine image, life, and light, and love, which from God are stamped and imprinted upon the souls of true christians. God is said to enlighten the soul, but it is not as the sun enlightens; so he draws the soul too, but not from without only, as one man draweth another with a cord; as *Jupiter in Homer* draws men up to heaven by a chain; and *Mahomet* his disciples by a lock of hair; but he draws the soul, as the sun draws up earthly vapours by infusing its virtue and power into them; or, as the loadstone draws the iron, by the powerful attractions of his grace. God doth not so much communicate himself to the soul by way of discovery, as by way of impression, as I said before; and indeed not so much by impression neither, as by a mysterious and wonderful implantation. Religion is not so much something from God, as something of God in the minds of good men; for so the scripture allows

us to speak: it is therefore called his image, *Col. iii. 10.* and good men are said to *live according to God in the spirit. 1 Pet. iv. 6.* but, as if that were not noble enough, it is not only called his image, but even a participation of his divine nature, *2 Pet. i. 4.* something of Christ in the soul, an infant-Christ as one calls it, alluding to the apostle, *Gal. iv. 19.* where the saving knowledge of Christ is called Christ himself,—*until Christ be formed in you.* True religion is, as it were, God dwelling in the soul, and Christ dwelling in the soul, as the apostles St. John and St. Paul do express it; yea, God himself is pleased thus to express his relation to the godly soul, *Isa. lvii. 15. I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a humble spirit;* and again, *2 Cor. vi. 16. As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them.* Pure religion is a beam of the Father of lights, *lumin de lumine;* [a light from a light,] it is a drop of that eternal fountain of goodness and holiness, the breath of the power of God, a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty, the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness, more beautiful than the sun, and above all the orders of stars; being compared with the light, she is found before it, as the author of the book of *Wisdom* speaks, chap. vii. What is spoken of the eternal Son of God, *Heb. i. 3.* may, in a sense, be truly affirmed of religion in the heaven born soul, that it is “the effulgence or beaming forth of divine glory;” for there is more of the divine glory and beauty shining forth in one godly soul, than in all things in the world.

beside: the glorious light of the sun is but a dark shadow of the divine light, not to be compared with the beauty of holiness. An immortal soul doth more resemble the divine nature than any other created being doth; but religion in the soul is a thousand times more divine than the soul itself. The material world is indeed a faint representation of divine wisdom, power, and goodness; it is as it were the footsteps of God: the immaterial world of angels and spirits does represent him more clearly, and thus are the face of God: but holiness in the soul doth the most nearly resemble him of all created things; we may call it the beauty and glory of his face. Every creature partakers of God; he had no copy but himself and his own essence by which to frame the world; so that all these must necessarily bear some resemblance of their Maker. But no other creature is capable of receiving such communications from God as a rational immortal spirit is; and the highest that angel or spirit, or any created nature can be made capable of, is to be *holy as God is holy*. So then if the poet may call the soul, which St. Paul allows him to do, *Divinæ particula auræ*, [a particle of divine breath;] sure one may rather speak thus of religion, which is the highest perfection that the soul can attain to, either in the present or future world. One soul, the soul of any man, excels all the world beside in glory and dignity; but the lowest degree of true holiness, pure religion, conformity to the divine nature and will, is of more worth than a world of souls, and to be preferred before the essence of angels. I

have often admired three great mysteries and mercies, God revealed in the flesh, God revealed in the word, God revealed in the soul : this last is the mystery of godliness of which I am speaking, but which I cannot fathom: it is this that the apostle says transcends all that our eyes have seen, our ears heard, or our souls conceived, 1 Cor. ii. 9. *Eye hath not seen, &c.* Christ Jesus formed in the soul of man, is as great a miracle, and a greater mercy, than Christ formed in the womb of a virgin. There was once much glorying concerning Christ in the *Israel* ; but let us call to the powers of eternity, and the ages of the world to come, to help us to celebrate and magnify Christ in us *the hope of glory* ; or, if you will, Christ in us the first-fruits of glory. What has been said may,

First, Help us in our discovery of that precious pearl, Religion. There is nothing that men do generally seek more, or less find : no nation in the world but hath aimed at it in one way or another ; but alas, how few have obtained it ! At the present day, there are many claims to it, and all pretend they have a just title : the men of Judah cry, She is of kin to us ; the men of Israel say, We have ten parts in this queen ; we have more right in religion than ye ; as they formerly contended about King David, 2 Sam. xix. They say of Christ, in the same manner, though perhaps not in the same sense, as was foretold, Lo, here he is ; and, lo, there he is ; which hath made many say, he is not at all : or, to continue the same allusion, they live by the rule that there follows ; they will not go forth to seek him any where. Mighty strivings, yea, and wars there have been,

about the *Prince of Peace*, whose he should be : and at this day no question more debated, nor less decided, than which is the most correct religious party in the land. Would to God that men would dispute this controversy with works and not with words ; much less with blows ! Religion is of an eminent pedigree, of a noble descent ; you may find her name in the register of heaven ; where God is, there is she. She carries her name in her forehead ; her divine disposition, the divine works which she worketh, which no one else can work, do bear witness which is she. I am ready to say with the man that had been blind, *John ix. 3.* herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not who Religion is, and yet she is the mighty power of God, opening the eyes, changing the hearts, and, as it were, deifying the souls of men. Why do we not also go about enquiring which of those many stars in the firmament is the moon ? If ye ask about the best religious party, I will point you to the blessed and eternal God, and say, As he is, so are they, in their capacity, each one resembling the children of a king ; or I will point out the real Christian by the same token as Christ himself was designated to John the Baptist, *John i. 33.* *Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining, the same is he.* If ye enquire about the children of God, the apostle shall describe them for you, *Eph. v. 1.* the followers of God are his dear children.

Call that religion which is most nearly allied to the nature and life of God, under whatever disguises or reproaches it may go in the world.

Examine the world by no lower standard than that character that is given of David, 1 *Sam.* xiii. 14. and the man that doth appear to be after God's heart, namely, conformable to his image, compliant with his will, and studious of his glory, pitch upon; for that is the best man, under what name soever he goes; of what party or faction soever he is. And let no soul examine itself by any lower standard than this, "a participation of the divine nature; conformity to the divine image." Examine what alliance your soul hath to God; *whose is the image and superscription.* Religion is divine, proceeds from God, and may, by its affinity to heaven, be discerned from a child of hell and darkness. Therefore, Christians, if you will make a judgment of your state, apply your hearts and lives to the rule, the eternal goodness, the uncreated purity and holiness; and see whether you resemble that pattern; for conformity to the image and will of God, is Religion; and God will own that as his, when all counterfeits and shadows shall fly away, and disappear for ever. I fear it may be imputed as vanity and idle curiosity to many counterfeit, speculative Christians, that they are very inquisitive, prying into the hidden rolls of God's decree, the secrets of predestination, to find out the causes and method of their vocation and salvation; in the meantime they are not solicitous for, nor studious of the relation and resemblance that every religious soul bears unto God himself; of the heaven that is opened within the godly soul itself; and the whole plan and mystery of salvation transacted in the heart of a true Christian.

It is a vanity which I have observed in many pretenders to nobility and learning, that they seek to demonstrate the one by their coat of arms and the records of their family, and the other by a gown, or a title, or their names standing in the register of the university, rather than by the accomplishments and behaviour of gentlemen or scholars. A like vanity, I doubt not, may be observed in many pretenders to religion: some are searching God's decrees, to find their names written in the book of life; when they should be studying to find God's name written upon their hearts, *holiness to the Lord* engraven upon their souls: some are busy in examining themselves by notes and marks without them; when they should labour to find the marks and prints of God and his nature upon them: some have their religion in their books and authors, when it should be the law of God written in the tables of the heart; some glory in the greatness of their duties, and in the multitude of their pompous performances, and religious achievements, crying, with *Jehu*, *Come, see here my zeal for the Lord*; whereas, it were much more excellent, if one could see their likeness to the Lord, and the characters of divine beauty and holiness drawn upon their hearts and lives. But we, if we would judge rightly of our religious state, must view ourselves in God, who is the fountain of all goodness and holiness, and the rule of all perfection. Value yourselves by your souls, and not by your bodies, estates, friends, or any outward accomplishments, as most men do: but that is not enough; if men rest there, they make an idol of the fairest of God's crea-

tures, even of their own souls; therefore value your souls themselves by what they have of God in them.

To study the blessed and glorious God in his word, and to converse with him in his works, is indeed an excellent and honourable employment; but O, what a blessed study is it to view him in the communications of himself, and the impressions of his grace upon our own souls! All the thin and subtle speculations which the most exalted philosophers have of the essence and nature of God are a poor, low, and beggardly employment and attainment, in comparison of those blessed visions of God, which a godly soul hath in itself, when it finds itself partaker of a divine nature, and living a divine life. O labour to view God and his divine perfections in your own souls, in those copies and transcripts of them which his holy Spirit draws upon the hearts of all godly men. This is the most excellent discovery of God of which any soul is capable; it is better and more desirable than that glorious discovery that was made to Moses in the cleft of the rock, *Exod. xxxiii.* Nay, I should much rather see the real impression of a God-like nature upon my own soul; the crucifying of my own pride and self-will; the mortifying of the mere sensual life, and a divine life springing up in my soul instead of it; I would much rather see my soul glorified with the image and beauty of God put upon it, (which is indeed a pledge, yea, and a part of eternal glory,) than to have a vision from the Almighty, or hear a voice witnessing from heaven, and saying, *Thou art my beloved Son, in whom my soul is well pleas-*

ed. This of which I am speaking, is a true foundation of heaven itself in the soul, a real beginning of happiness; for happiness, heaven itself, is nothing but a perfect conformity, a cheerful and eternal compliance of all the powers of the soul with the will of God; so that as far as a godly soul is thus conformed to God, and filled with his fulness, so far is he glorified upon earth. *Sed heu quantum distamus ab illo!* [But, ah! how far are we from being like him!]

Secondly, Let wisdom then be justified of her children; let the children of God, those that are his genuine offspring, rise up and call him blessed, in imitation of their Lord and Saviour, that only Son of God, that *first-born amongst many brethren*, who rejoiced in spirit, and said, *I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast revealed these things*, Luke x. 21. or, according to the style of the apostle Peter, *1 Pet. i. 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again!* There is no greater contradiction, than that a man should pretend to religion, and yet ascribe it to himself; whereas pure religion is wholly of divine origin: besides, religion doth principally consist in the subduing of self-will, in conformity to, and compliance with the divine will in promoting God's glory in the world. Then, and not till then, may a soul be truly called religious, when God becomes its supreme object of desire, and the interest of God is so powerfully planted in it, that no other interest, no self-interest, no creature-love, no particular private end, can grow with it, any more than the magicians could stand

before Moses, when he came, in the power of God, to work wonders. So that what Solomon saith of self-seeking, Prov. xxv. 26. *For men to seek their own glory is not glory*, I may safely say, upon the principles I have laid down, selfish religion is not religion. How vainly and madly do men dream that their self-religion will carry them to heaven; when heaven itself is nothing but the perfection of self-denial, and God becoming all things to the saints, 1 Cor. xv. 28. Instead of advancing men towards heaven, there is nothing that doth more directly war against heaven, than that proud and petulant spirit of self-will that rules in the children of disobedience. So that when the Holy Ghost would describe David, one of the best of men, to the best advantage, he describes him as opposing self and self-will, 1 Sam. xiii. 14. *A man after God's own heart*; and, Acts xiii. 36. *He served the will of God in his generation*.

There were of old a great number of philosophical men, who being raised above contemplating their own souls, which is the logical life, unto a contemplation of a Deity, and being purified by a lower kind of virtue and moral goodness, from the pollutions that are in this world through lust, did yet ultimately settle into themselves, and their own self-love. They were full indeed, but it was not with *the fulness of God*, as the apostle speaks, but with a self-sufficiency; the leaven of self-love lying at the bottom did make them swell with pride and self-conceit. Now though these men were free from gross external enormities, yet they did not attain to a true

knowledge of God, nor to any true religion, because they set up themselves to be their own idols, and carried such an image of themselves continually before their eyes, that they had no clear and spiritual discernment of God. They did, as is related of one of the Persian Kings, enshrine themselves in a temple of their own. But why speak I of heathen philosophers? Is there not the same odious spirit of self-adoration to be found among many Christians, yea, and teachers of Christianity too? Witness that whole class of men, who, whilst they suspend the grace of God upon man's free-will, do utterly rob him of his glory. Some of these have impudently given a short, but unsavoury answer to the apostle's question, in 1 Cor. iv. 7. *Who maketh you to differ from another? Ego meipsum discerno*, "I make myself to differ!" These men, while they pretend to high attainments, do discover a low and most ignoble spirit. To fasten and feed upon any thing in the creature, is the part of a low and degenerate spirit; on the other hand, it is the greatest perfection of the creature, not to be its own, not to be any thing in itself; but to be wholly dependant on the blessed God, the father and fountain of light and grace. Holy Paul constantly exhibits a different spirit, as in 1 Cor. xv. 10. *I, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*. I have mentioned before the fair and honourable character the Holy Ghost hath given of holy David, *a man after God's own heart*: now you may also find a description of these men in Scripture, not much differing from the other in phrase, but very much in sense; it is the same

that is given of the proud prince of Tyrus, Ezek. xxviii. 2. *They set their heart as the heart of God.* But we, if we do indeed partake of the divine nature, shall not dare to claim any part of the divine glory; if we conform to God's image, we shall not set up our own. This self-glorying, in the predominancy of it, is as utterly inconsistent with true religion, as fire is with water: for religion is nothing else but the image of God upon the soul, the reflection of a beauty and glory which God hath put upon it. Give all therefore unto God; for whatever is kept back, is sacrilegiously purloined from him. Let us glory in the fulness of God alone; and in our own penury and nothingness. The whole of religion is of God. Do we see and discern the great things of God? It is by that light that God hath set up in us; according to the apostle, 1 Cor. ii. 11. *The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.* That love whereby we love him, he first shed abroad in our hearts. If our souls be beautiful, it is with his brightness, the beauty and glory of essential holiness, according to the apostle, Heb. xiii. 10. *Partakers of his holiness.* If we be really and truly full, we receive it of his fulness, according to the apostle, Eph. iii. 19. *Filled with all the fulness of God.* In a word, if we have any God-like disposition, it is by his spreading of his image in us, and over us. By all which it appears to be a thing not only wicked and unwarrantable, but utterly impossible for a godly soul to exalt himself against God; or for grace to advance itself against divine glory: for, grace is nothing else but a communication of divine glory;

and God is then glorified, when the soul, by holy and gracious dispositions, becomes like unto him. How is it possible that grace should be a shadow to obscure divine glory, when itself is nothing else, as it comes from God, but a beam of glory? And as it is found in the creature, may properly be called a reflection of that glory. To conclude then, be ye persuaded, that a man hath so much of God as he hath of humility, and self-denial, and self-nothingness, and no more; he is so far of God, as he loves him, honours him, imitates him, and lives to him, and no farther.

Thirdly, By this discovery of the origin of religion, we come to understand the origin of sin and wickedness. And here, according to the method in which I spoke of the origin of religion, I might shew that the origin of sin from without is of the devil; who first ushered it into the world, and ceased not to tempt men to it continually; so also I might shew that men are his instruments; and that sin does, in a sense, spring from many external sources. But these things are more improperly said to be the causes of sin. The inward cause is the corrupt heart of man; that unclean spirit, that unholy nature, which is indeed the worst and most pernicious devil in the world to man. It is an old saying, *Homo homini dæmon*; "one man is a devil to another;" and though it be in some sense true, yet it is more proper to say, *Homo sibi dæmon*, "man is a devil to himself;" taking the spirit and principle of apostacy, that rebellious nature, for the devil, which indeed doth best deserve that name. But yet, if we enquire more strictly into the origin and

nature of this monster, we shall best know what to say of it, and how to describe it, by what we have heard of religion. Sin then, to speak properly, is nothing else but a degeneration from a holy state, an apostacy from a holy God. Religion is a participation of God; and sin is a departure from him. Therefore it is usually defined by negatives; departing from God; forsaking him; living in the world without him, &c. The soul's deflection from God, describes the general nature of sin; but then, as it sinks into itself, or settles upon the world, and fastens upon the creature, or any thing therein; so it becomes specific, and is called pride, covetousness, ambition, and by many other names. All souls are the offspring of God, were originally formed in his image and likeness; and when they express the purity and holiness of the divine nature, by being perfect, as God is perfect, then are they called the children of God: but those impure spirits that do depart from God, may be said to implant themselves into another stock by their own low and earthly lives, and are no more owned as the children of God, but *are of their father the devil*, John x. 44. By which you may understand the low and base origin of sin: nothing can be so vile as that which, to speak properly, is nothing else but an entire falling off from glory itself. By this you may also discover the miserable condition of unholy souls. We need not call for fire and brimstone to portray the wretched state of sinful souls. Sin itself is hell and death, and misery to the soul, being a departure from goodness and from holiness itself; I mean

from God, in conjunction with whom the happiness, and blessedness, and heaven of a soul do consist. Avoid it therefore, as you would avoid being miserable.

CHAP. II.

True religion described, as to the nature of it, by water; a metaphor usual in the Scriptures,

1. *By reason of the cleansing virtues of it. The defiling nature of sin, and the beauty of holiness manifested.* 2. *By reason of the quenching virtue of it. This briefly touched upon, and the more full discussion of it, referred to its proper place. The nature of religion described by a well of water: that it is a principle in the souls of men, proved by much Scripture. An examination of religion by this test; by which examination are excluded all things that are merely external; external reformations and performances. A godly man hath neither the whole of his business, nor his motives lying without him. In the same examination many things internal found not to be religion: it is no sudden passion of the mind; no, not though the same amount to an ecstasy; nor any thing begotten and maintained by fancy, and the mere power of imagination.*

I SHALL now attempt to explain the nature of true religion, which is here described by our blessed Lord, by a well of water. *First, By water. Secondly, By a well of water. I shall speak*

something of both these, but more briefly of the former.

1. Pure religion, or gospel grace, is described by water. This is a comparison very familiar in the holy Scriptures, both of the Old Testament and the New. By this similitude gospel grace was typified in the ceremonial law; wherein both persons and things, ceremonially unclean, were commanded to be washed in water, as is abundantly to be seen in that administration. Under this notion the same grace is prayed for by the Psalmist, when he had defiled himself in the bed of a stranger, Ps. li. 7. *Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* He had drunk water out of a strange cistern, as his son Solomon describes that unclean act, *Prov. v. 15.* and now he prays for water from the fountain of grace, to cleanse him: he now cries for water from the fountain of grace, from the blessed Messiah, that sprung up into the world at Bethlehem; and that, with more earnestness than formerly, when he wished for the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate, *2 Sam. xxiii. 15.* In the same phrase the same grace is promised by the ministry of the prophets, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto us. Thus we read of the fair and flourishing state of the church, *Isa. lviii. 11. Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not;* and of the fruitful state of the gospel proselytes, *Joel iii. 18. All the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim.* That these promises are un-

derstood of the grace of sanctification, the prophet Ezekiel sheweth plainly, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you;* for ordinary, elementary water cannot cleanse men from idols. The prophet Isaiah also puts it out of doubt; whose prophesy, together with the interpretation of it, we find both in one verse, Isa. xlv. 3. *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring.* By the same ceremony the gospel dispensation represents the same mystery in the sacrament of baptism; and, by the same phrase our Saviour offers and promises the same grace, John vii. 37. *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink:* and his apostles after him, who, in allusion to water, call this grace the *washing of regeneration*, Tit. iii. 5. To which I might add 1 Pet. iii. 21. and many other texts if it needed.

Now, as the grace of God is compared to fire, because of its refining nature, and because of its consuming the dross and refuse of lust in the soul; and to other things, for other reasons: so it is compared to water, especially for those two properties, namely, cleansing and quenching: for observe this by the way, that it is a very injurious thing to the Holy Ghost, to press the metaphors which he useth in Scripture, further than they do naturally and freely serve. Neither are we to adhere to the letter of the metaphor, but to attend unto the scope of it. If we tenaciously adhere to the phraseology, cavillers

will be ready to quarrel with absurdities; and so unawares run into strange blasphemies: they will immediately exclaim, How can fire wash? when they read in the prophet, *Isa. iv. 4. The Lord will wash away the filth of the daughter of Zion, by the spirit of burning.* But who art thou, O man! that wilt teach him to speak who formed the tongue? The Spirit of God intends the virtue and property of things, when he names them; and to that we must chiefly attend.

1. Therefore, by the phrase water, is the cleansing nature of religion commended to us: it is the purifying of the soul, which sin and wickedness hath polluted: sin is often described in Scripture by filthiness, loathsomeness, abomination, uncleanness, a spot, blemish, stain, pollution; which indeed is a most proper description of it. The spots of leprosy, and the scurf of the foulest scurvy, are beautiful in comparison with it; Job upon the dunghill, covered with scabs and boils, was not half so loathsome as comely Absalom in whose body *there was no blemish from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head*; but whose soul was stained with the bloody spots of malice and revenge, and festered with the loathsome sores and swellings of ambition. Lazarus, lying at the gates, full of running sores, was a far more lovely object to the pure eyes of God, than Jezebel, looking out at the window, adorned with spots and paints. If the best that a godly man hath of his own, even his righteousness, be as a filthy rag, *Isa. lxiv. 6.* whence shall we borrow a phrase bad enough to describe the worst of a wicked man, even his wickedness? I need say

no more of it, I can say no worse of it, than to tell you it is something contrary to God, who is the eternal Father of light, who is beauty, and brightness, and glory itself; or, in the apostle's phrase, *Rom. iii. 23. A falling short of the glory of God.* Which hath made me many times wonder, and almost cry out with the prophet, *Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this!* when I have seen poor, ignorant, wicked, and profane wretches, passing by a person or a family visited with some loathsome disease, with a mixture of fear and disdain, stopping their nostrils, and hastening away; when their own souls have been more vile than any reptile upon the earth, spotted with ignorance and atheism, and puffed up with pride and self-will, and contempt of God and his holy image. This might well be matter of wonder to any man, till he considers with himself, that one part of the uncleanness of those men, is that very blindness which keeps them from discerning it; I speak principally of the defilement of the soul; though indeed the same pollutes the whole conversation: every action springing from such an unclean heart, thereby becomes filthy; even as the hand of Moses, put into his bosom, became leprous, *Exod. iv. 6.* or rather, as one that is unclean by a dead body, defileth all that he toucheth, *Hag. ii. 13.*

Now, religion subdues this unclean spirit and conversation: so that, though the soul were formerly as filthy and odious as Augeas' stable,*

* Augeas had immense herds, and the stable in which they were kept had never been cleansed, so that the task seemed impossible. Hercules, undertaking it, changed the course of a river; and by that means immediately cleansed it.

when once those living waters flow into it, and through it, from the pure fountain of grace and holiness, the Spirit of our God; one may say of it as the apostle said of the Corinthians, *1 Cor. vi. 11. Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, &c.* The soul that before was white as leprosy, is now white as wool, *Isa. i. 18.* The soul that before was like Moses' hand, leprous as snow, is now like Davids' heart, white as snow; yea, and whiter too, *Ps. li. 7.* O what a beauty and glory is put upon the soul, that shines with the image and brightness of God upon it! Solomon, in all his glory, was not beautiful like such a soul: nay, I dare say, the splendour of the sun, in its greatest strength and altitude, is a faint glimmering, if compared with the day-star of religion, which even in this life, arises in the heart; or, in the prophets' stile, *the sun of righteousness, which ariseth with healing in his wings,* upon them that fear the name of God. To speak without a metaphor, the godly soul, having received into itself the pure emanations of divine light and love, breathes after nothing more than to see with nearer vision, and love more ardently: its inclinations are pure and holy; its emotions spiritual and powerful; its delights high and heavenly; it may be said to rest in its love; and yet it may be said, that love will not suffer it to rest, but is still urging it forward to a more intimate union with its beloved object. What is said of the ointment of Christ's name, *Cant. i. 3.* is true of the water of his Spirit, it is *poured forth, therefore do the virgins love him.* Religion begets a pure and holy love in the soul towards that blessed God that

begat it; it bathes itself in the Fountain that produced it; and basks perpetually in the warm beams that first originated it. Religion proceeds from God himself, and is ever returning towards God alone, passionately breathing with the holy Psalmist, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? in earth there is none that I desire beside thee!* The soul that formerly may be said to have lain among the pots, by reason of its filthiness, is now as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold: the soul that formerly may be said to have sat down by the flesh-pots of Egypt, because of its sensual and earthly loves, being redeemed by the almighty grace of God, is upon its way to the holy land, hastening to a country not earthly but heavenly, *Heb. xi. 16.* This pure principle being put into the soul, excites holy studies, indites holy meditations, directs it to high and noble ends, and makes all its embraces to be pure and holy, labouring to be like God himself, though before it was impure and idolatrous, free for sin and self and the world, to lodge and rest in. In a word, this offspring of heaven, this King's daughter, the godly soul, is *all glorious within*; yea, and outwardly too, *she is clothed with wrought gold*, *Ps. xlv. 13.* Her faith is more precious than gold, *1 Pet. i. 7.* and her conversation is curiously made up of an embroidery of good works, some of piety, some of charity, some of sobriety, but all of purity, and shineth with more noble and excellent splendour, than the high priest's garments and breast-plate adorned with such variety of precious stones. This precious ointment, this holy unction, as the apostle calls

it, 1 John ii. 20. diffuses itself like that of Aaron, and ten thousand times more fragrant, though that was so much commended in *Ps.* cxxxiii. running down from his head upon his beard, and from thence upon the skirts of his garment. *Not my feet only, but my hands and my head, Lord,* said Peter, John xiii. 9. not well knowing what he said; but the soul that is truly sensible of the excellent purity which is caused by divine purifyings, desires to have the whole man, the whole life also, made partaker of it, and cries Lord, not my head only, not my heart only, but my hands and my feet also; make me wholly pure, as God is pure. In a word then, true religion is the cleansing of the soul, and all the powers of it; so that, whereas murderers sometimes lodged in it; now righteousness. The den of thieves, thievish lusts and pleasures, and interests and pursuits, which formerly stole away the soul from God, its right owner, is now become a temple fit for the great King to dwell, and live, and reign in; and the whole conversation is turned from its accustomed vanity, worldliness, and iniquity, and is continually employed about things that are *true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report,* Phil. iv. 8.

2. By the phrase *water*, the quenching nature of religion is commended to us. God hath endued the immortal soul with a restless appetite, and raging thirst after some chief good; which the heart of every man is continually groping after, and aiming at, though indeed few find it, because they seek it where it is not to be found. If we speak properly, it is not gold or silver, or popular applause, at which the covetous or ambitious

mind doth ultimately aim; but some chief good, happiness, sufficiency, and satisfaction in these things; in which they are more guilty of contempt than atheism: for it is clear, that they do not deny a supreme good; for that at which men do chiefly and ultimately aim, is their god, be it what it will; but they do verily contemn the true God, when they place their happiness where it is not to be found, and attribute that fulness and sufficiency to something else besides the living God. Sin hath not destroyed the nature and capacity of the rational soul, but hath diverted the mind from its adequate object, and hath sunk it into the creature; where it wanders to and fro, like a banished man, from one den and cave to another, but is secure no where. A wicked man, who is alienated from God by sin, and departed from the fountain of his life, flies low in his affections, and flutters perpetually about the earth, and earthly objects, but can find no more rest for the foot of his soul, than Noah's dove could find for the sole of her foot. Now, religion is the hand that restores this wandering bird to her own ark from whence she was departed; it settles the soul upon its proper object, and quenches its burning thirst after happiness. And for this reason it is called water in scripture, as appears from *Isa. lviii. 11. The Lord shall satisfy thy soul in drought; and Isa. xlv. 3. I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground;* compared with *John vii. 37. Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.* Religion is a taste of infinite goodness, which quenches the soul's thirst after

all created and finite good; even as that taste which honest Nathanael had of Christ's divinity, took him off from any expectation of the Messiah to come, and made him cry out presently, *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel*, John i. 49. And every religious soul hath such a taste of God, even in this life, which, though it do not perfectly fill him, yet doth perfectly assure him where all fulness dwells. But of this I shall discourse more largely, when I treat of the consequent of true religion.

I proceed, therefore, to the second phrase, whereby our Saviour describes the nature of true religion; it is a well, a fountain in the soul: *Shall be in him a well of water*. From which phrase, to wave particulars, I shall only observe, "That Religion is a principle in the souls of men."

The water that Christ infuses into the soul, is not like the water that he pours upon our streets, that washes them, and runs away; but it becomes a cleansing principle within the soul itself; every drop from God becomes a fountain in man; not as if man had a well in himself, or were the first spring of his own motions towards God: I find not any will in the natural man so divinely free. God hath indeed given this to his natural Son, his only begotten Son, to have *life in himself*, John v. 26, but not to any of his adopted ones. If you ask me concerning man in his natural capacity, I am so far from thinking that he hath a self-quickenning power, a principle of life in himself, that I must assert the contrary with the apostle, that he is *dead in trespasses and sins*,

Eph. ii. 1 and so far from thinking that he hath in himself a well of water, I must call him, with the prophet, *Isa. xlv. 3. thirsty and dry ground.* In regard to the regenerate man, I will not enter into that deep controversy concerning the co-operation of man's will with the Spirit of God, and its subordination to that in all gracious acts; or how far this renewed will of man may be safely called the cause of them; only, I will affirm, that repenting and believing are properly man's acts, and yet they are performed by God's power. Christ must give this water, ere it can be a well of water in the soul; which is enough, I suppose to clear me from siding with either of those parties, either with those that ascribe to God that which he cannot do, or, with those that ascribe to free-will that which God alone can do. But I fear nothing from these controversies; for that way wherein I shall discourse of this matter, will not at all border upon them.

This, then, I affirm, that religion is a living principle in the souls of good men. I cannot better describe the nature of religion, than to say it is a nature; for so does the apostle speak, or at least allows us to speak, when he calls it a participation of a divine nature, *2 Pet. i. 4.* Nothing but a nature can partake of a nature; a man's friend may partake of his goodness and kindness, but his child only partakes of his nature; he that begets, begets a nature; and so doth he that begets again. The sun enlightens the world outwardly, but it does not give a nature like its own to the things so enlightened; and the rain doth moisten the earth, and refresh it inwardly, but it does not beget the nature of water in the earth:

But this water that I give, says our Saviour, becometh a well of water in the soul. Religion is not any thing external to a man, hanging upon him, or annexed to him; neither is it every thing that is in a man, as we shall soon see; but it is a divine principle forming and actuating the souls of good men; a living and lively principle, an inward and spiritual principle. I must not speak of all these separately in this place, for it would interfere with my discourse.

When I say religion is a principle, a vital form actuating the soul, and all the powers of it, an inward nature, &c. saith not the scripture the same here: a well or fountain of water? And elsewhere, a *new man, the hidden man of the heart, the inward man*, Eph. iv. 24. 1 Pet. iii. 4. As the soul is called an inward man, in respect to the body, 2 Cor. iv. 16. so religion is called an inward man in respect to the soul itself, Rom. vii. 22. It is a man within a man.—The man that is truly alive to God, hath not only inward parts, (for so a dead man hath,) but an inward man, an inward nature and principle. Again, it is called a root, Job. xix. 28. or, if not there, yet plainly, in Mark iv. 17. where temporary professors are said to have no root in themselves. And this is by the same propriety of speech, as that by which a wicked principle is called *a root of bitterness*, Heb. xii. 15. Again, it is called a seed, *the seed of God*, 1 John iii. 9. where this seed of God is called an abiding or remaining principle. In the first creation, God made the trees of the earth, having their seed in themselves, Gen. i. 11. and in the new creation, these trees of righteousness of

God's planting, are also made with seed in themselves, though not of themselves: it is said to be the seed of God indeed, but remaining in the godly soul. Again, it is called a treasure, in opposition to an alms or annuity, that lasteth but for a day or a year; as a well of water, in opposition to a draught of water; and a treasure of the heart, in opposition to all outward and earthly treasures, *Matt. xii. 35.*—It is a treasure affording continual supplies, not exhausted, but increased by expending; wherein it exceeds all treasures in the world. By the same propriety of speech, sin is called a treasure too, but it is an evil treasure, as our Saviour says in that same place. Do you not see what a stock of wickedness sinful men have within themselves, and although they have spent upon it ever since they were born, yet it is not impaired, nay, it is much augmented thereby; and shall not the second Adam bestow something as certain and permanent upon his offspring, as the first Adam conveyed to his posterity? Though men have something without them, to guide them in the way of life, yet it is a living principle within them, that denominates them living men. The Scripture will abundantly inform you which is the true circumcision, *Col. ii. 11.* the true sacrifice to God, *Ps. li. 17.* And indeed the law itself is not so much to be considered as it was engraven in tables of stone, as, *being written in the heart, Jer. xxxi.* The Jews needed not to have taken up their rest in the law, considered as an outward rule or precept; for they knew, or might have known, that God requireth *truth in the inward parts,* as one

of themselves, a prophet and king of their own, acknowledgeth, *Ps. li. 6.* I doubt not but many christians are also sick with the same disease, whilst they view the gospel as a history, and an external dispensation; whereas the apostle, when he opposeth it to the law, seems altogether to make it an internal thing, a vital form and principle seated in the minds and spirits of men, *2 Cor. iii. 3.*

The law was an external rule or dispensation that could not give life, though it shewed the way to it, *Gal. iii. 21.* but the gospel, in the most proper notion of it, seems to be an internal impression from God, a living principle, whereby the soul is enabled to express a real conformity to God himself. If we consider the gospel as a history only, and as a human composition, it is as weak and impotent a thing as the law was; and men may be as remiss and formal in the possession of this as they were of that; which we see by daily experience. But if we consider the gospel as an emanation of life and power from God himself upon the soul, producing life wherever it comes, then we have a clear distinction between the law and the gospel; to which the apostle seems to refer, when he calls the *Corinthians the epistle of Christ, not written with ink, nor in tables of stone, but with the spirit of the living God, in fleshly tables of the heart, 2 Cor. iii. 3.* According to which notion of the law and gospel, I think we may, with a learned man of our own, understand that text, *Jer. xxxi. 33.* quoted by the apostle, *Heb. x. 16.* *This is the covenant that I will make, I will put my law into their minds &c.* The

gospel doth not so much consist in words as in virtue; a divine principle of religion in the soul, is the best gospel; and so Abraham and Moses under the law, were truly possessed of the gospel, and, on the other hand, all carnal christians that converse with the gospel only as a thing without them, are as truly legal, and as far short of the righteousness of God, as any of the Jews were. Thus we see that religion is a principle in the souls of good men,—*shall be in him a well of water.*

We shall now notice the difference between true religion, and all counterfeits. Religion is that pearl of great price, of which few men are possessed, though all pretend to it, Laodicean-like, saying, *they are rich and need nothing*, when indeed *they are poor and have nothing*. This, then, shall be the test by which, at present, we will try the counterfeit pearls. True religion is an inward nature, an inward and abiding principle in the minds of good men, *a well of water.*

1. Then we must exclude all things that are merely external; these are not religion. Religion is not something annexed to the soul, externally, but a new nature put into it. And here we shall glance at two things:

1st, A godly soul does not find the whole of his business lying without him. Religion does not consist in external reformations, though ever so many and precious. A false and slight religion serves to tie mens hands, and reduce their outward actions to a fair appearance in the eyes of men; but true religion's chief domain and power is over the soul, and its business lies mostly in

reforming and purging the heart, with all the affections and motions thereof. It is not an engine working outwardly, and serving to beat down the out-works of open and visible enormities of life; but it enters with a secret and sweet power into the soul itself, and reduces it from a rebellious temper, and persuades it willingly to surrender itself, and all that is in it. Sin may be beaten out of the outward conduct, and yet retire and hide itself in the secret places of the soul, and there bear rule as perfectly by wicked instigations, as it ever did by profane and notorious practices. A man's hands may be restrained from open revenge, by some external cords cast upon them, and yet murders may lodge in the temple of his heart, as murderers lodged in the temple of old. Men's tongues may be tied up from the foul sin of uttering fair words concerning themselves; shame itself may restrain them from proud boastings, and self-exaltings, when, in the mean time, they are puffed up with self-conceit, and are not afraid to bear a sinful love towards their own perfections, and adore an image of self set up in their hearts. What a fair outside the Pharisee had, he himself will best describe, for indeed it is one of his properties to describe himself, *Luke xviii. 11. God I thank thee that I am not, &c.* But if you will have a delineation of his inside, you may best take it from our Saviour, *Matt. xxiii. 23.* Neither doth religion consist in external performances, though ever so many, and seemingly spiritual. Many professors of christianity, I suspect, sink all their religion into a constant course of duties, and a round of performances, being mere strangers to

the life, and strength, and sweetness of true religion. Those things are needful, useful, and helpful, yea, and honourable, because they have a relation and some tendency to God; but they are apt to become snares and idols to superstitious minds, who conceive that God is some way gratified by these; and so they take up their rest in them. That religion, that only varnishes and beautifies the outside; tunes the tongue to prayer and conference; guides and extends the hands to diligence and alms deeds; that awes the conduct into some external righteousness or devotion, is here excluded, as also by the apostle, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 1. Much less can that pass for religion, that spends itself about forms, opinions, parties, and many disputable points of which we have seen so much in our own generation. The religion that rests in modes, and turns upon interests, as a door turns upon its hinges, is a contracted thing, and may be easily viewed through its whole extent, at a single glance. Men may be as far from the kingdom of heaven in their more spiritual forms, and orthodox opinions, as they were in their more carnal and erroneous, if they take up their rest in them: neither is it the pursuing of any interest that will denominate them religious, except the grand interest of their souls.

2dly, A godly soul in its more inward and spiritual acts, hath not its motive external to it: for a man may be somewhat more inward in his actions, and yet as outward in his motives as the former. Religious acts, and gracious motions, are not originally and primarily caused by some weights suspended to the soul, either by God or

men; neither by the worldly blessings which God gives, nor the heavy afflictions which he sends. The wings, by which the godly soul flies towards God, are not cemented to it, as the poets feign Icarus's to have been; but they grow out of itself, as the wings of an eagle that flies swiftly towards heaven: on the other side, a soul may be pressed down unto humiliation under the heavy weight of God's judgments, though it has no mind to stoop, no self-denying or self-abasing disposition in it. Thus you may see Jehu flying upon the wings of ambition and revenge, borne up by success in his government; and Ahab his predecessor bowing down mournfully under a heavy sentence. The laws and penalties, encouragements and injunctions of men, sometimes put a weight upon the soul too; but they produce a more sluggish, uneven, and unsteady motion in it. You may expect, that under this head I should say something of heaven and hell; and so I may very pertinently, for they belong to this place. If you take heaven properly, for a full and glorious union to God, and fruition of him; and hell for an eternal separation and wandering from the divinity; and suppose, that the love of God, and the fear of living without him, be fully imbibed by the soul; then verily these are pure and religious principles. But if we view them as things merely without us, and reserved for us, and under those common carnal notions of pleasure and pain; they are no higher nor better motives to us, than the carnal Jews had in the wilderness, when they turned their backs upon Egypt, where they had been in bondage; and set their faces towards

Canaan, where they hoped to find milk and honey, peace, plenty, and liberty. A soul is not carried to heaven, as a body is carried to the grave, upon men's shoulders; it is not borne up by props, whether human or divine; nor carried to God in a chariot, as a man is carried to see his friend; the holy fire of ardent love, wherein the soul of Elijah had been carried up towards God, was something more excellent, and indeed more desirable, than the fiery chariot by which his body and soul were translated together. Religion is a spring of motion, which God hath put into the soul itself.

And as all things that are external, whether actions or motives, are excluded in our examination of religion; so neither,

2. Must we allow every thing that is internal to be religion. And therefore,

1st, It is not a mere animal excitement, or a sudden passion of the mind, caused by the power and strength of some present conviction in the soul; which, in its warmth, will needs seek after God in all haste. This may well be compared to the rash and rude motion of the host of Israel, who being reprov'd for their slothfulness the night preceding, rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, *Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised, for we have sinned*, Numb. xiv. 40. And indeed it fares with these men oftentimes as it did with those, both as to the undertaking, and as to the success; their motion is as sinful as their station; and their success is answerable; they are driven back and discomfited

in their enterprize. Nay, though this passion might rise to an ecstasy or a rapture, yet it deserves not the name of religion: "For religion is," as one speaks elegantly, "like the natural heat that is generated in the hearts of living creatures, which hath the dominion of the whole body and sends forth warm blood and spirit, and vital nourishment into every part and member; it regulates and orders the motions of it in a due and even manner." But though these ecstatic souls may blaze like a comet, and swell like a torrent or flood for a time, and shoot forth fresh and high for a little season, they are soon extinguished, emptied, and dried up, because they have not a principle, a stock to spend upon; or, as our Saviour speaks, *no root in themselves*. These men's motions and actions are no more religion, than a land-flood that swells high, and runs swiftly, but only during the rain; or, in the scripture phrase, than a morning dew that soon passes away, *Hosea vi. 4.* is like a well or fountain of water.

2dly, If religion be a principle, a new nature in the soul, then it is not a mere piece of mechanism, a work of art. Art imitates nature: nothing more ordinary, I suspect, than for religion itself, though a new nature, to become an art. I need not describe how all the external acts and emanations of religion, may be counterfeited and imitated by art, and be acted over by a hypocritical Pharisee, who finds nothing at all of the gentle and mighty heat, nor the divine and noble life of it in his own soul, whereby he may fairly deceive the credulous world. But it is possible,

I wish it was not common, for men who are more convinced, enlightened, and affected, to imitate the very power and spirit of religion, and to deceive themselves too, by thinking they possess some true living principle. In this they exceed the most exquisite painters. Now, this may be done by the power of a quick and refined fancy; men hearing such glorious things spoken of heaven, the city of the great King, the new Jerusalem, may be induced by the power of self-love, to wish themselves there, being mightily pleased with their idea of the place. But how shall they attain it? Why, they have read in books, and heard in discourses, of certain signs of grace, and evidences of salvation; and now they set their imagination to work, to find or make such things in themselves. The imagination is well acquainted with the several affections of love, fear, joy, and grief, which are in the soul; and having a great command over the animal spirits, it can send them forth to raise up these affections, at almost any time; and when it hath raised them, then by merely adding a few thoughts of God and heaven, they have apparently a fine delineation of true religion drawn in the soul; which they presently view, and fall in love with, and think they do even taste of the powers of the world to come, when indeed it is nothing but a self-fulness and sufficiency upon which they feed. Now, you may know this artificial religion by this; these men can vary it, alter it, enlarge it, abridge it, and new-mould it at pleasure, according to what they see in others, or according to what they themselves like best; at one time imitating the joy and confidence of some Christians; the humili-

ation and broken-heartedness of others. But this fanciful religion, proceeding from nothing but low and inadequate conceptions of God and heaven, is of a fleeting and vanishing nature. But true Christians are gently, yet powerfully moved by the natural force of true goodness, and the beauty of God; and they move on steadily and constantly in their way to him, and in pursuit of him. The spirit of regeneration in good men spreads itself upon the understanding, and sweetly diffuses itself through the will and affections; which makes true religion to be a consistent and thriving principle in the soul, not actuated by the imagination, but by the highest powers of the soul itself; and it may be discerned by the evenness of its movements and the immortality of its nature. For though a good man cannot go on always with like speed and cheerfulness in his way, yet he is not willing at any time to be quite out of the way.

By this same nature of true religion you may try all those spurious and counterfeit religions, that spring from a natural belief of a deity; from convictions, observations, fleshly and low apprehensions of heaven from human learning, and the precepts of men, as the prophet calls them; and the rest, which are seated in the fancy, and swim in the brain; whose effect is but to gild the outward man; or, at best, but to move the soul by an external force, in an unnatural, inconstant, and transient manner. In a word, all these pretenders to religion may seem to have water, but no well; as there are others, who are deep men, principled indeed with learning, policy, ingenuity,

&c. but not with true goodness, whom the apostle calls *wells*, but *without water*, 2 Pet. ii. 17. But the truly godly, and God-like soul, hath in itself a principle of pure religion. *The water that I shall give him, shall be a well of water, springing up unto eternal life.*

CHAP. III.

Containing the first property mentioned of true Religion, viz. The freeness and unconstrainedness of it: this discovered in several outward acts of morality and worship; as also in the more inward acts of the soul. This freedom considered as to its author; in which is considered how far the command of God may be said to act unto a godly soul. Secondly, Considered as an object. Two cautionary concessions; 1st, That some things without the soul may be said to be motives; how far afflictions and temporal prosperity may be said to be so. 2dly, That there is a constraint lying upon the godly soul; which yet takes not away its freedom. An inquiry into forced devotion, and first into the causes of it. viz. Men themselves, and that upon a threefold account, other men, or the providences of God. 3dly, Into the properties of it, proving that it is for the most part dry and spiritless, needy and penurious, uneven, and not permanent.

I PROCEED now, from the nature of religion, to explain such properties of it, as are couched un-

der the phrase, *springing up into everlasting life*. Not to press the phrase any farther than it will naturally afford discourse, I shall only take notice of these three properties of true religion, contained in the word, *springing up*, viz. the freeness, activity, and permanency, or perseverance of it.

The first property of it, couched under this phrase, is, that it is free and unconstrained. Religion is a principle, and it flows and acts freely in the soul, after the manner of a fountain; and, in the day of its mighty power, makes the people a willing people, *Ps. cx. 3.* and the soul, in whom it is truly seated, to become a free-will offering unto God. Alexander the Great subdued the world by force of arms, and made men rather his tributaries and servants, than his lovers and friends: but the great God, the King of souls, obtains an amicable conquest over the hearts of his elect, and overpowers them in such a manner, that they love to be his servants, and do willingly and readily obey him without dissimulation or constraint, without being mercenary or covetous: in which they are unlike to the subjects of the kingdoms of this world, who are kept in their duties by fear and force, not from a pure kindness and benevolence of mind, to whom "the present yoke is always grievous." Hence it is that the increase of this people is called their flowing unto the Lord, *Isa. ii. 2.* *The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established, and all nations shall flow unto it;* and again, *Jer. xxxi. 12.* *They shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord.* And the dis-

position of this people is described to be a hearty and willing frame, *Eph.* vi. 6. 7. and elsewhere often to the same purpose. Now, this willingness or freeness of godly souls might be explained and confirmed by the consideration both of their outward and inward acts.

1. As to the outward acts of service which the true Christian doth perform, he is freely carried out towards them, without any constraint or force. If he keep himself from the evils of the place, and age, and company, wherein he lives and converses, it is not by a restraint which is upon him merely from without him, but by a principle of holy temperance planted in his soul; it is the seed of God abiding in him that preserves him from the commission of sin, *1 John* iii. 9. He is not kept back from sin as a horse by a bridle, but by an inward and spiritual change made in his nature. On the other hand, if he employ himself in any external acts of moral or instituted duty, he does it freely, not as of necessity, or by constraint. If you speak of acts of charity, the godly man gives from a principle of love to God, and kindness to his brother, and so cheerfully, not grudgingly, or of necessity, *2 Cor.* ix. 7. An alms may be wrung out of a miser, but it proceeds from the liberal soul as a stream from its fountain: therefore he is called a deviser of liberal things, and one that standeth upon liberalities, as those last words of *Isa.* xxxii. 8. are rendered by the Dutch translators. If you speak of righteousness or temperance, he is not over-ruled by power, or compelled by laws, but indeed actuated by the

power of that law which is written or engraven upon his mind. If you speak of acts of worship, whether moral or instituted, in all these he is also free as to any constraint.

Prayer is not a task, or a penance, but it is the natural cry of the new-born soul; neither does he take it up as a piece of policy, to bribe God's justice, engage men's charity, to purchase favour with God or man, or his own clamorous conscience: but he prays, because he wants, and loves, and believes; he wants the fuller presence of that God whom he loves; he loves the presence which he wants; he believes, that he that loves him will not suffer him to want any good thing that he prays for. And therefore he does not bind himself severely, and limit himself penuriously to a morning and evening sacrifice and solemnity, as unto certain rent-seasons, wherein to pay a homage of dry devotion; but his loving and longing soul, disdaining to be confined within stated hours, is frequently soaring in some heavenly rapture or other, and sallying forth in holy ejaculations. He is not content with some weak essays towards heaven, in set and formal prayer, once or twice a-day; but labours also to be all the day long imbibing in those divine influences, and streams of grace, by the mouth of faith, which he begged in the morning by the tongue of prayer; which hath made me sometimes think it as proper to say, the faith of prayer, as the prayer of faith; for believing, and hanging upon divine grace, doth really drink in what prayer opens its mouth for; and is, in effect, a powerful kind of praying in silence: by believing, we pray: as well as in praying we do believe.

A truly godly man hath not his hands tied up merely by the force of a national law; no, nor yet by the authority of the fourth commandment, to keep one in seven a day of rest; as he is not content with mere resting upon the sabbath; knowing that neither working, nor ceasing from work, doth of itself, commend a soul to God, but doth press after intimacy with God in the duties of his worship; so neither can he be content with one sabbath in a week, nor think himself absolved from holy and heavenly meditations any day in the week; but labours to make every day a sabbath, as to the keeping of his heart with God in a holy frame; and to find every day to be a sabbath, as to the communications of God unto his soul. Though the necessities of his body will not allow him, it may be, (though indeed God hath granted this to some men) to keep every day as a sabbath of rest; yet the necessities of his soul do call upon him to make every day, as far as may be, a sabbath of communion with the blessed God. If you speak of fasting, he keeps not fasts merely by virtue of a civil, no, nor of a divine institution; but, from a principle of godly sorrow afflicts his soul for sin, and daily endeavours more and more to be emptied of himself; which is the most excellent fasting in the world. If you speak of thanksgiving, he does not give thanks by laws and ordinances; but having in himself a law of thankfulness, and an ordinance of love engraven upon, and deeply radicated in his soul, delights to live unto God, and to make his heart and life a living comment upon the goodness and love of God; which is the most divine

way of thank-offering in the world ; it is the hallelujah which the angels sing continually. In a word, wherever God hath a tongue to command, true godliness will find a hand to perform : whatever yoke Christ Jesus shall put upon the soul, religion will enable it to bear, yea, and to count easy too ; the mouth of Christ hath pronounced it easy, *Matt. xi. 30.* and the Spirit of Christ makes it easy. Let the commandment be what it will, it will not be grievous, *1 John v. 3.* The same spirit doth, in some measure, dwell in every Christian, which without measure, dwelt in Christ, who counted it his meat and drink to do the will of his Father, *John iv. 34.*

2. And more especially, the true Christian is free from any constraint as to the inward acts which he performeth. Holy love to God is one principal act of the gracious soul, whereby it is carried out freely, and with an ardent love towards the object that is truly and infinitely lovely and satisfactory, and to the enjoyment of it. I know, indeed, that this springs from self-indigence, and is commanded by the sovereignty of the supreme good, the object that the soul seeks : but it is properly free from any constraint.—Love is an affection that cannot be extorted as fear is ; nor forced by any external power, nor indeed, by any internal power : the revenues of the king of Persia, or the treasures of Egypt, cannot purchase it, *Heb. xi. 26.* neither indeed can the soul itself create and destroy this spirit at pleasure ; which made the poet complain of himself, as if he were not sole emperor at home,

Non amo te, Sabidi ; nec possum dicere quare, &c.*

[Sabidius, I do not love thee ; neither can I give a reason why, &c.]

Though the outward bodily acts of religion are ordinarily forced, yet this pure, chaste, virgin affection cannot be compelled ; it seems to be a kind of peculiarity in the soul, though under the jurisdiction of the understanding. By this property of it, it is elegantly described by the Spirit of God, Cant. viii. 7. *If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.* It cannot be bought with money, or any price ; cannot be purchased with gifts or arts ; and if any should offer to bribe it, it would give him a sharp and scornful check in the language of Peter to Simon, *Thy money perish with thee ;* love is no hireling, no base-born mercenary affection ; but noble, free, and generous. Neither is it low-spirited and slavish, as fear is ; therefore, when it comes to full age, it will not suffer this son of the bond-woman to divide the inheritance, the dominions of the soul with it ; when it comes to be *perfect, it casteth out fear,* says the apostle, *1 John iv. 18.* Neither indeed is it directly under the authority of any law, whether human or divine ; it is not begotten by the influence of a divine law, as a law, but as holy, just, and good, as we shall presently show : *Quis legem dat amantibus ? ipse est sibi lex amor :* [Who makes laws for lovers ?—Love itself is a sufficient law to them.] The law of love ; or, in the apostle's phrase, *the spirit of love, and of power,* in opposi-

* Mart. cp. I. 30.

tion to the spirit of fear, 2 *Tim.* i. 7. doth more influence the godly man in his pursuit of God than any law without him: this is as a wing to the soul; whereas outward commandments are but as guides in his way; or, at most, but as spurs in his sides.

The same I may say of holy delight in God, which is indeed the flower of love, or love grown up to its full age and stature; which hath no torment in it, and consequently no force upon it. Like unto which are holy confidence, faith, and hope, ingenuous and natural acts of the religious soul, whereby it hastens into the divine embraces, *as the eagle hasteneth to the prey*, swiftly and speedily; and not by force and constraint, *as a fool to the correction of the stocks*, or as a bear to the stake. These are all genuine offsprings of holy religion in the soul; and they are utterly incapable of being forced; violence is contrary to the nature of them; for to use the apostle's words, with the change of one word, *Hope that is forced, is not hope.*

Now to explain this excellent property of true religion a little farther, let us consider the Author, and the object of it.

The Author of this noble and free principle is God himself, who hath made it a partaker of his own nature. He is the free agent; himself is the fountain of his own acts. The uncreated Life and Liberty hath given this privilege to the religious soul, in some sense, to have life and liberty in itself, and a dominion over its own acts. I do not know that any created being in the world hath more of divinity in it than the soul of man,

Qua nihil homini dedit Deus ipse divinius, [God himself hath given to man nothing more divine,] as Tully speaks it. Nor do I know any thing in the soul that doth more resemble the divine essence, than the noble freedom that the soul hath in itself; which freedom is never so divine and generous, as when it has God himself for its object. This excellent freedom is something of God in the soul of man, and therefore may justly claim the free Spirit for its author, *Ps. li. 12. 2 Cor. iii. 17.* or the Son of God for its original, according to that in *John viii. 36. If the Son shall make you free, then shall ye be free indeed.*

But here it may be demanded, whether the command of God doth not actuate the godly soul, and set it upon its holy motions? I confess indeed that the command of God is much revered by a godly man, and is of great weight with him, and does in some sense lay a constraint upon him; but yet I think that the authority of the law does not so much prevail with him, as the reasonableness and goodness of it. The religious soul does not so much regard the law under the notion of a command, as under the notion of holy, just and good, as the apostle speaks; and so embraces it, chooses it, and longs to be perfectly conformable to it. I do not think it so proper to say that a good man loves God and all righteousness and holiness, and religious duties, by virtue of a command to do so, as by virtue of a new nature that God hath put into him, which doth instruct and prompt him so to do. A religious soul being reconciled to the nature of God, does embrace all his laws by virtue of the equitableness and

perfection that he sees in them; not because they are commanded, but because they are in themselves to be desired, as David speaks, *Ps.* xix. 10. In which psalm the holy man gives us a full account why he did so love and esteem the laws and commandments of God, namely, because they are perfect, right, pure, clean, true, sweet, and lovely, as you will find *ver.* 7—10. To love the Lord our God with all our heart, and strength, and mind, is not only a duty, by virtue of that first and great commandment that doth require it; but indeed the highest privilege, honour, and happiness of the soul. To this purpose may that profession of the psalmist's be applied, *Ps.* cxix. 173. *I have chosen thy precepts;* and *ver.* 30. *I have chosen the way of truth.* Choosing is an act of judgment and understanding, and respects the quality of the thing, more than the authority of the command.—David did not stumble into the way of truth accidentally, by virtue of his education, or acquaintance, or the like circumstance; nor was he lashed or driven into it by the mere severity of a law without him; but he chose the way of truth as that which was indeed most eligible, pleasant, and desirable. What our blessed Saviour says concerning himself, is also true of every true Christian in his measure; he makes it his meat and drink to do the will of God. Now, we know that men do not eat and drink because physicians prescribe it as a means to preserve life; but the sensual appetite is carried out towards food, because it is good, sweet, and suitable; and so the spiritual appetite is carried out towards spiritual food, not so much by

the force of an external precept, as by the attractive power of that higher good which it finds suitable and sufficient for it. As for the object of this free and generous spirit of religion, it is no other than God himself principally and ultimately; and other things, only as they are subservient to the enjoyment of him. God, as the supreme good, able to fill, and perfectly satisfy all the wants and indigencies of the soul, and so to make it wholly and eternally happy; is the proper object of the soul's most free and cheerful motions. The soul views God as the perfect and absolute good, and God in Christ as an attainable good, and so finds every way enough in this object, to encourage it to pursue after him, and throw itself upon him. Religion fixes upon God, as upon its own centre, as upon its proper and adequate object; it views God as the infinite and absolute good, and so is drawn to him without any external force. The godly soul is overpowered indeed, but it is only with the infinite goodness of God, which exercises its sovereignty over all the faculties of the soul; which overpowering is so far from straitening or contracting it, that it makes it truly free and generous in its motions. Religion wings the soul, and makes it take a flight freely and swiftly towards God and eternal life: it is of God, and by a sympathy that it hath with him, it carries the soul out after him, and into conjunction with him. In a word, the godly soul being loosed from self-love, emptied of self-fulness, beaten out of all self-satisfaction, and delivered from all self-confining lusts, wills, interests, and ends, and being mightily overcome with a sense

of a higher and more excellent good, goes after that freely, centres upon it firmly, grasps after it continually, and had rather be that than what it-self is, since the nature of that supreme good is infinitely more excellent and desirable than its own.

Thus have I briefly explained and confirmed the freeness of this principle in the truly godly soul: I would now make some little improvement of it; but it seems needful that I should here introduce some cautionary concessions.

1st, It must be granted, that some things without the soul may be motives, and encouragements to the soul to quicken, and hasten, and strengthen it in its religious acts. Though grace be an internal principle and free from any constraint, yet it may be excited, or stirred up, as the apostle speaks, *2 Tim. i. 6.* by such means as God hath appointed hereunto, as prayer, meditation, reading, as the apostle intimates in the body of that fore-quoted epistle. But perhaps there will a question arise concerning some other things, which seem to lay a constraint upon the spirits of men. I deny not but that the seemingly religious motions of many men are merely violent, and their devotion is purely forced, as we shall presently see: but I affirm, and I think have confirmed it, that true and sincere religion is perfectly free and unconstrained.—This being premised, now, if you ask me, what I think of afflictions: I confess God doth ordinarily use them as means to make good men better; and it may be, sometimes to make bad men good; these may be as weights to hasten and speed the soul's motions

towards God, but they do not principally beget such motions. If you ask me of temporal prosperity, commonly called mercies and blessings, of promises and rewards proposed; I confess they may be as oil to the wheels, and ought to quicken and encourage the study of true and powerful godliness; but they are not the spring of the soul's motion; they ought to be unto us, as dew to the grass, to refresh and fructify the soul; but it is the root which properly gives life and growth.

2d, It may be granted, that there is a kind of constraint and necessity lying upon the godly soul in its holy and most excellent motions; according to that of the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 14. *The love of Christ constraineth us*; and again, 1 Cor. ix. 16. *Necessity is laid upon me to preach the gospel*. But yet it holds good, that grace is a most free principle in the soul; and that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. For the constraint that the apostle speaks of is not opposed to freedom of soul, but to not acting; now, although the soul, so principled and spirited, cannot but act, yet it acts freely. Those things that are according to nature, though they be done necessarily, yet they are done with the greatest freedom imaginable. The water flows, and the fire burns necessarily, yet freely. Religion is a new nature in the soul; and the religious soul being touched effectually with the sense, and impressed with the influences of divine goodness, fulness, and perfection, is carried indeed necessarily towards God, as its proper centre, and yet its motions are pure, free, generous and with the greatest delight and pleasure conceivable.—The

necessity that lay upon Paul to preach the gospel is not to be understood of any external violence that was done to him, much less of bodily necessity; by reason of which many men serve their own appetites in that great function, more than the Lord Jesus; for though he preached the gospel necessarily, yet did he preach freely and willingly, as he often professeth. The godly man cannot but love God as his chief good; yet he delights in this necessity under which he lieth, and is exceedingly glad that he finds his heart framed and enlarged to love him. I say enlarged, because God is an object, which does not contract and pinch and straiten the soul, as all created objects do, but ennobles, applies, and enlarges it. The more the sinful soul exerts and spends itself upon the creature, the more it is straitened and contracted, and the native freedom of it is enslaved, debased, and destroyed: but grace does establish and ennoble the freedom of the soul, and restore it to its primitive perfection; so that a godly soul is never more at large, more at rest, more at liberty, than when it finds itself delivered from all self-confining creature-loves and lusts, and under the most powerful influences and constraint of infinite love and goodness.

By this that hath been said of the free and generous spirit of true religion, we may learn what to think of the forced devotion of many reluctant soldiers of Christ in his church militant; that there is a vast difference and distance between the reluctant and voluntary Christian. Though indeed the freedom of the will cannot be destroyed; yet, in opposition to a principle,

many men's devotion may be said to be wrung out of them, and their obedience may be said to be constrained. I shall explain it briefly in two or three particulars.

1. Men force themselves, many times, to some things in religion that are foreign to, yea, and against their nature and genius. I need not allude to their slight conformity to the letter of the law, and some external duties which they force themselves to perform, such as hearing, praying, giving alms, or the like: in all which the violent and unnatural obedience of a Pharisee may be more popular and specious than the true and genuine obedience of a free-born disciple of Jesus Christ. If going on hunting, and procuring venison might denominate a good and dutiful son, Esau may indeed be as acceptable to his father as Jacob; but God is not such a father as Isaac, whose affections were bribed with delicious food; he feeds not upon the pains of his children, nor drinks the sweat of their brows. I doubt not but that an unprincipled Christian, that hath the heart of a slave, may force himself to imitate the more spiritual part of religion; and, as it were, to act over the very temper and disposition of a son of God. Therefore we read of a semblance of joy and zeal which was found in some, whom yet our Saviour reckons no better than *stony ground*, Mark iv. 16. and of great ecstasies in some, whom yet the apostle supposes may come to nothing, *Heb. vi. 5.* and what appearance of the most excellent and divine graces of patience and contempt of the world, many of the morose sort of monastic Papists, and our

modern kind of Papists, the Friends, do make at this day, all men know: nay, some of these last sort do seem to themselves, I believe, to act over the temper and experience of the chiefest apostles, rejoicing with Peter, and the rest, that they are *counted worthy to suffer shame*, Acts v. 41. and keeping a catalogue of their stripes with Paul, 2 Cor. xi. 24. and in these things I am confident, to use the apostle's words, that they think themselves *not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles*: nay, they are not ashamed to lay claim to that grace of graces, self-denial, which they have forced themselves to act over so artificially, that even a wise man might almost be deceived into a favourable opinion of them, did we not know that whilst they profess it they destroy it; for it is contrary to the nature of self-denial, to magnify and boast itself; and indeed it is very evident to a wise observer, that these men, by a pretence of voluntary humility, and counterfeit self-denial, do, in truth, endeavour most of all to establish their own righteousness, and erect an idol of self-supremacy in themselves, and do really fall in love with self-sufficiency, instead of the infinite fulness of God.

Now there seem to be three things in a formal hypocrite that do especially force a kind of devotion and shew of religion from him, namely, conscience of guilt, power of self-love, and false apprehensions of God. 1st, There is in all men a natural conscience of guilt, arising from that imperfect and glimmering light they have of God, and of their duty towards him; which, though it be in some men more quick and pungent, in

others more remiss and languid, yet, I think, is not so utterly extinguished and choked, even in the worst and most dissolute men, but that it doth sometimes beget a bitter sadness in the midst of their sweetest merriments; and doth disturb their most supine and secure rest by fastening its stings in their very souls at some time or other, and filling them with agonies and anguish, and haunting them with dreadful apparitions, which they cannot be perfectly rid of, no more than they can run away from themselves. This foundation of hell is laid in the bowels of sin itself, as a preface to eternal horror. Now although some more profligate and desperate wretches do furiously bluster through these briers, yet others are so caught in them that they cannot escape pangs and sorrow, except they make a composition, and enter into terms to live more honestly, or at least, less scandalously. In which undertaking they are carried on, in the second place, by the power of self-love or a natural desire of self-preservation: for the worst of men hath so much reason left him, that he could wish that himself were happy, though he have not so much light as to discover, nor so much true freedom of will as to choose the right way to happiness. When conscience discovers the certain reward and wages of sin, self-love will easily prompt men to do something or other to escape it. But now, what shall they do? Why, religion is the only expedient that can be found out; and therefore they begin to think how they may become friends with God; they will up and be doing. But how is it that they

run into so great a mistake about religion? Why, their false and gross apprehensions of God, in the third place, do drive them from him, into the way of superstition and hypocrisy, instead of leading them into the way of sincere love, and resignation to him. Self being the great Diana of every natural man, and the only standard by which he measures all things, he knows not how to judge of God himself, but by this; and so he fancies God as in a dreadful manner, an austere, passionate, surly, revengeful majesty, and so something must be done to appease him: but yet he fancies this angry deity to be of an impotent, mercenary temper like himself, and not hard to be appeased; and so imagines that some cheap services, specious oblations, external courtesies, will engage him, and make him a friend. A sheep, or a goat, or a bullock, under the Old Testament; a prayer, or, a sacrament, or an alms, under the New, is sufficient: for it is reconciliation to an angry God that he aims at, not union with a good God; he seeks to be reconciled to God, not united to him; though indeed these two can never be divided. Thus we see how a man void of the life and spirit of religion, forces himself to do God a kind of worship, and pay him a kind of homage.

2dly, Sometimes men may be said, in a sense to be forced by other men, to put on an appearance of holiness, a dress of religion. And this constraint men may lay upon others by their tongues, hands, or eyes. By their tongues in the business of education; often and ardent exhortation and inculcation of things divine and heav-

only: and thus an unjust man, like the unjust judge in the gospel, though he fear not God sincerely, yet may be overcome by the importunity of his father, friend, minister, tutor, to do some righteous acts. This seems to have been the case of Joash king of Judah, the source of whose religion was no higher than the instructions of his tutor and guardian Jehoiada the high priest, *2 Kings* xii. 2. By their hand, that is, either by the enacting and executing of penal laws upon them, or by the holy example which they continually set before them, *exempla trahunt*, [examples influence.] By their eyes, that is, by continually observing and watching their behaviour; when many eyes are upon men, they must do something to satisfy the expectations of others and purchase a reputation to themselves. It may be said, that sometimes God doth lay an external force upon men; as particularly by his severe judgments, or threatenings of judgments, awakening them, humbling them, and constraining them to some kind of worship and religion. Such a forced devotion as this was the humiliation of Ahab, *1 Kings* xxi. 27. and the supplication of Saul, *1 Sam.* xiii. 11, 12. For God himself acting upon men, only from without them, is far from producing a living principle of free and noble religion in the soul.

Now, the better to discern this forced and violent religion, I will briefly describe it by some of its properties, with which I will close this branch of my subject.

1. This forced religion is, for the most part, dry and spiritless. I know, indeed, that fancy

may be strained up to a high pitch of joy and transport, so as to raise the mind into a kind of rapture, as I have formerly hinted in my discourse upon these words. A merely artificial and counterfeit Christian may be so strongly actuated by imagination, and the power of self-love, that he may seem to himself to be more full of God than the sober and constant soul. You may see how the hypocritical Pharisees, swollen with self-conceit, gloried over the poor man that had been blind, but now saw more than all they, John ix. 34. *Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?* and indeed over the whole people, John vii. 49. *This people that knoweth not the law is cursed.* A counterfeit Christian may rise high as a meteor, and blaze much as a comet, which is yet drawn up by mere force from the surface of the earth or water. And as to the external and visible acts and duties of religion, which depend much upon the temper and constitution of the body, it may easily be conceived and accounted for, how the mimical and mechanical Christian may rise higher in these, and be more zealous, watchful, and cheerful, than many truly religious and godly men, by having greater power and quickness of fancy, and a greater flow of animal spirits; upon which the motions and actions of the body do mainly depend. The animal spirits may so nimbly serve the soul in the corporeal acts, that the whole transaction may be a fair imitation of the motions of the divine Spirit, and one would verily think there was a gracious principle in the soul itself. This seems to be notably exemplified in Jehu, whose religious actions, as he

would fain have them to be esteemed, 2 *Kings* x. 16. were indeed rather fury than zeal, and proceeded more from his own fiery spirits, than from the spirits of fire, or spirit of burning, which is of God, *Is.* iv. 4. But commonly this forced devotion is jejune and dry, void of zeal and warmth, and drives on heavily in pursuit of the God of Israel, as Pharaoh did in pursuit of the Israel of God, when his chariot-wheels were taken off, *Exod.* xiv. 25. When God draws the soul from within by a principle of love, he doth indeed cause that soul to run after him, *Cant.* i. 4. but the motion of those things that are drawn by external force is commonly heavy, slow, and languid.

2. This forced religion is penurious and needy. Something the slavish Christian must do to appease an angry God, or to allay a storming conscience, as I hinted before; but it shall be as little as may be. He is ready to grudge that much of his time and strength are spent in God's service, and to find fault that sabbaths come so thick, and last so long, and that duties are to be performed so often: so he is described by the prophet, *Amos* viii. 5. *When will the sabbath be past, and the new moon gone?* But yet I will not deny, but that this kind of religion may be very liberal and expensive too, and extend much into the branches of external duties, as is the manner of many trees that bear no fruit; for so did the base spirit of the Pharisees, whose frequent fasting and long prayers are recorded by our Saviour in the gospel, but not with approbation. Therefore these are not the things by which you must take

measure, and make an estimate of your religion. But in the great things of the law, in the grand duties of mortification, self-denial, and resignation, this forced religion is always wanting and penurious. In the duties that do nearly touch upon their beloved lusts, they will be as strict with God as may comport with their pleasures; they will break over duty to him for a small matter: God must have no more than his due, as they blasphemously phrase it in their hearts; with the slothful servant in the gospel, *Lo, there thou hast that is thine*; self and the world surely may be allowed the rest. They will not part with all for Christ, *Matt. xix. 22.* Is it not a little one? Let me escape thither, and take up my abode there, said Lot, *Gen. xix. 20.* They will not give up themselves entirely unto God: *the Lord pardon me in this one thing*, cries *Naaman*; so they say in this or that, let God hold me excused. The slavish Christian is never more contracted into himself, than when he is to converse with God indeed: but the godly soul is never more free, large, or glad, than when he doth most intimately and familiarly converse with God. The soul that is free as to liberty, is free also as to liberality and expenses; and that not only in external, but internal and spiritual obedience, and compliance with the will of God: he gives himself wholly to God; knows no interest of his own; keeps no reserve for himself, or for the creature.

3. This forced religion is uneven, depending upon inconstant causes. As land-floods, that have no spring within themselves, vary their motions,

are swift and slow, high and low, according as they are supplied with rain; even so these men's motions in religion, depending upon fancy for the most part, (than which nothing is more fickle and flitting,) have no constancy nor consistency in them. —I know indeed, that the spirits of the best men cannot always keep one pace, nor their lives be always of one piece; but yet they are never willingly quite out of the call or compass of religion. But this I also touched upon formerly. Therefore,

4. This forced religion is not permanent. The meteors will fall to the ground, and be choked in the earth whence they arose. Take away the weight, and the motion ceases; take away Jehoiada, and Joash stands still, yea runs backward. But this I shall speak more unto, when I come to speak of the last property of religion, viz. its perseverance.



CHAP. IV.

The active and vigorous nature of true religion proved, by many scriptural phrases, of the most powerful importance: more particularly explained in three things; 1st, In the soul's continual care and study to be good. 2dly, In its care to do good. 3dly, In its powerful and incessant longings after the most full enjoyment of God. In all which the causes and reasons of the same are either more obscurely intimated, or openly assigned.

I COME NOW to the second property of true religion, which is to be found in this phrase, *springing up*, or leaping up; wherein the activity and vigourousness of it is described. Religion, though it be compared to water, yet is no standing pool of water, but *a well of water* springing up. And here the proposition that I shall go upon, is, "That true religion is active and vigourous." It is no lazy and languid thing, but full of life and power: so I find it every where described in Scripture, by things that are most active, lively, vigourous, operative, spreading, powerful, and sometimes even by motion itself. As sin is, in Scripture, described by death and darkness, which are a cessation and privation of life, and light, and motion; so religion is described by life, which is active and vigourous; by an angelical life, which is spiritual and powerful; yea, a divine life, *Eph. iv. 13.* which is, as I may say, most lively and vivacious. *Christ liveth in me, Gal. ii. 20.* and the production of this new nature in the soul is called a quickening, *Eph. ii. 1.* and the reception of it *a passing from death unto life, John v. 24.* Again, as sin and wickedness are described by flesh, which is sluggish and inactive, so this holy principle in the soul is called Spirit, *Gal. v. 17. The Spirit lusteth against the flesh;* yea, the *Spirit of power, 2 Tim. i. 7.* and the *Spirit of life, Rom. viii. 2. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.* How can the power and activity of any principle be more commended, than by saying it is life, and the *Spirit of life*, and the *law of the Spirit of life* in the soul? which hath made

me sometimes to apply those words of the prophet, as a description of every godly soul, *Micah* iii. 8. *I am full of power and might by the Spirit of the Lord.*

Yea, further, the holy apostle seems to describe a godly principle in the soul by activity and motion itself, *Phil.* iii. 12, 13, 14. where he gives this excellent character of himself, and this lively description of his religious disposition, as if it were nothing else but activity and fervour; I follow after, that I may apprehend; I forget those things that are behind, and reach forth unto those things that are before; I press towards the mark, &c. It is needless to comment upon those phrases of like importance, *labouring, seeking, striving, fighting, running, wrestling, panting, longing, hungering, thirsting, watching*, and many others, which the Holy Ghost makes use of throughout the Scriptures, to express the active, industrious, vigorous, diligent, and powerful nature of this divine principle, which God hath put into the souls of his elect. The streams of divine grace, which flow forth from the throne of God, and of the Lamb, into the souls of men, do not cleanse them, and then pass away, like some violent land flood, that washes the fields and meadows, and so leaves them to contract as much filth as ever; but the same become a *well of water*, continually springing up, boiling, and bubbling, and working in the soul, and sending out fresh rivers, as our Saviour calls them, *John* vii. 38. *Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

But more particularly, to unfold the active nature of this divine principle in the soul, we shall

consider it in these three particulars, *viz.* as it is still conforming to God, doing for him, and longing after him.

1. The active and sprightly nature of true godliness, or religion planted by God in the soul, appears and shews itself in a continued care and study to be good, to conform more and more to the nature of the blessed God, the glorious pattern of all perfection. The nature of God being infinitely and absolutely perfect, is the only rule of perfection to the creature. If we speak of goodness, our Saviour tells us, that God alone is good, *Luke xviii. 19.* of wisdom, the apostle tells us, that God only is wise, *1 Tim. i. 17.* of power, he is omnipotent, *Rev. xix. 6.* of mercy and kindness, he is love itself, *1 John iv. 8.* Men are only good by participation from God, and assimilation to him; so that, though good men may be imitated, and followed, yet it must be with this limitation, as far only as they are followers of God: the great apostle durst not press his example any further, *1 Cor. xi. 1.* *Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ.* But the nature of God being infinitely and absolutely perfect, is to be eyed and imitated singly, entirely, universally, in all things wherein the creature is capable of following him, and becoming like unto him. So Christians are required to look up unto the Father of lights, the fountain of perfections, and to take from him the pattern of their dispositions, and conversations, to regard him continually, and regarding him, to receive an image of him, not into their eye, as we do by sensible objects, but into their souls, to polish and frame them into the most clear and live-

ly resemblances of him; that is, in the language of the Scripture, to be *perfect, as their heavenly Father is perfect*, Matt. v. 44, 45—48. to be *holy as God is holy*, 1 Pet. i. 16. And thus the genuine children of God are described by the Holy Ghost, *Eph. v. 1. they are followers of God*. This is the shortest, but the surest, and clearest mark that can be given of a good man, *a follower of God*: they are not all owned for the children of God, who are created by him; nor are they who have a speculative knowledge of him, who profess him, or exhibit some external worship, and service to him in the world; but they that imitate him are his children; the true children of Abraham were not those that were descended from him, or boasted of him, but they that did the works of Abraham, *John viii. 39.* even so are they only the offspring of heaven, the true and dear children of the living God, who are followers of him: *be ye followers of God, as dear children.*

A godly soul, having its eyes opened to behold the infinite beauty, purity, and perfection, of that good God whose nature is the very fountain, and must needs then be the rule of all goodness, presently comes to undervalue all created excellencies, both in itself and all the world besides, as to any satisfaction that is to be had in them, or any perfection that can be acquired by them; and it cannot endure to take up with any lower good, or live by any lower rule than God himself. A godly man, having the unclean and rebellious spirit cast out, and being once reconciled to the nature of God, is daily labouring to be more intimately united thereunto, and to be all that which

God is, as far as he is capable, the nature of God being infinitely more pure and perfect, and more desirable than his own. Religion is a participation of life from him who is life itself; and so must needs be an active principle spreading itself in the soul, and causing the soul to spread itself in God; and therefore the kingdom of heaven, which in many places of the gospel I take to be nothing else but this divine principle in the soul, which is both the truest heaven, and most properly a kingdom, (for thereby God doth most powerfully reign and exercise his sovereignty, and most excellently display and manifest his glory in the world,) is compared to *seed sown in the ground*, which both springeth up into a blade, and bringeth forth fruit; to mustard-seed, which spreadeth itself, and groweth great, so that the birds of the air may lodge in the branches thereof; to leaven, spreading itself through the whole quantity of meal, and leavening the whole and all the parts of it, *Matt. xiii. 23—31—33.*

By a like similitude, the path of the just is compared to a shining light, whose glory and lustre increase continually, *shining more and more until the perfect day*, *Prov. iv. 18.* which continued growing up of the holy soul into God, is excellently described by the apostle in an elegant metaphor, *2 Cor. iii. 18. We all, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory;* that is, from one resemblance of divine glory to another. The gracious soul not being content with its present attainments, and having in view a perfect and absolute good, forgets that which is behind, and labours, prays, strives and studies,

to get the perfections of God more clearly enstamped upon itself, and itself as much as may be, absorbed in the divinity. It covets earnestly these best things; to be perfected in grace and holiness, to have divine characters more fair and legible, divine impressions more deep and lively, divine life more strong and powerful, and the communicable image of the blessed God spread quite over it, and through it.

A godly soul is not content to receive of Christ's fulness, but labours to be filled with the fulness, with all the fulness of God; he rejoices indeed that he hath received of Christ grace for grace, as a child hath limb for limb with his father; but this his joy is not fulfilled, except he find himself adding daily something to his stature; nor indeed then neither; nor can it be, until he come to the measure of the stature of his Lord, and be grown up into him in all things who is the head, even Christ, *Eph. iv. 15*. He delights and glories in God, beholding his spices growing in his soul; but that does not satisfy him, except he may see them flowing out also, *Cant. iv. 16*. He is neither barren nor unfruitful, as the apostle Peter speaks; but that is not enough, he desires to be fat and fruitful also, as a watered garden, as the prophet phrased it, even as the garden of God. The spirit lusteth against the flesh, and struggles with it in the same soul, as Jacob with Esau, until he had cast him out, *Gen. xxv. 22*. The seed of God warreth continually against the seed of the serpent, raging and restless, like Jehu, shooting, and stabbing, and strangling all he meets with, till none at all remain of the family of that Ahab who had formerly been his master.

O how does the godly and devout soul long to have Christ's victory carried on in itself; to have Christ going on in him conquering and to conquer, till at length the very last enemy be subdued, that the Prince of Peace may ride triumphantly through all the coasts and regions of his heart and life, and not so much as a dog move his tongue against him! This holy principle, which is of God in the soul, is actually industrious too; it doth not fold the arms together, hide its hand in its bosom, faintly wishing to obtain a final conquest over its enemies; but advance with a noble courage against lusts and passions, even as the sun glorieth against the darkness of the night, until it have chased it all away. The godly soul puts itself under the banner of Christ; fights under the conduct of the Angel of God's presence; and so marches undauntedly against the children of Anak, those earthly loves, lusts, sensual affections, which are indeed taller and stronger than all other enemies that do encounter it in this wilderness state: and the gracious God does not desert it in its endeavours; he, remembering his promise, helpeth his servants, even that promise, Isa. xl. 31. that *they that wait upon the Lord shall renew strength.* A true Israelitish soul, endued with this noble and heroic principle, is not like those slothful Israelites, that were content with what they had got of the holy land, and either could not, or would not enlarge their border, *Judges i.* But he makes war upon the remainder of the Canaanites, and is never at rest till he has, with Sarah, cast out the bond woman and her son too. You may see an emblem of

such a soul in Moses holding up his hands all the day long, till Amalek was quite discomfited, *Exod. xvii. 12.* As often as the floods of temptation, springing from the devil, the world, or the flesh, come in upon him, he opposeth them in the strength of Christ; or, in the prophet's phrase, *Isa. lix. 19. The Spirit of the Lord lifteth up a standard against them;* so that he is not carried down by them; or, at least, not overwhelmed with them. In the beginning of my discourse upon this head, I hinted the reason why the godly soul continually studies conformity to God; even because he is the perfect and absolute good, and the soul reckons that its happiness consists only in being like unto him, in partaking of a divine nature. But I might also here take occasion to speak of three things, which I will but briefly name, and then proceed.

1st, A godly man considers that conformity to the image and nature of God, is the most proper conversing with God in the world. The great, and indeed only employment of an immortal soul, is to converse with its Creator; for this end it was made, and made capacious as we see it: now, to partake of a divine nature, to be endued with a god-like disposition, is most properly to converse with God; this is a real, powerful, practical, and feeling converse with him, infinitely to be preferred before all notions, professions, performances, or speculations.

2dly, A godly man reckons that the image of God is the glory and ornament of the soul; it is the lustre, and brightness, and beauty of the soul, as the soul is of the body. Holiness is not only the

duty, but the highest honour and dignity that any created nature is capable of: and therefore the godly soul, who hath his senses exercised to discern good and evil, pursues after it, as after his full and proper perfection.

3dly, A godly man reckons, that conformity to the divine image, a participation of the divine nature, is the surest and most comfortable evidence of divine love; which is a matter of so great inquiry in the world. By growing up daily in Christ Jesus, we are infallibly assured of our implantation into him. The spirit of God descending upon the soul in the impressions of meekness, kindness, uprightness, which is a dove-like disposition, is a better, and more desirable evidence of our sonship, and of God's favour towards us, than if we had the Spirit descending upon our heads in a dove-like shape, as it did upon our blessed Saviour.—These things may pass for a reason, why the religious Christian, above all things, labours to become god-like; to be formed more and more into a resemblance of the supreme Good, and to drink in divine perfections into the very inmost of his soul.

2. The active and industrious nature of true godliness, or religion, manifests itself in a good man's continual care, and study to do good, to serve the interest of the holy and blessed God in the world. A good man being overpowered with the sense of the infinite goodness of God, and the great end of life, cannot think it worth while to spend himself for any inferior good, or bestow his time and strength for any lower end than that is; and therefore, as it is the main hap-

piness of his life to enjoy God, so he makes it the main business of this life to serve him, to be doing for him, to exert himself for him, and to display, and propagate his glory in the world. And as he is ravished with the apprehensions of the supreme goodness, which doth infinitely deserve, and may justly demand all that he can do or expend for him, so he doth indeed really partake of the active and communicative nature of that blessed Being, and himself becomes active and communicative too. To say a godly soul is sluggish and inactive, is like saying, a godly soul altogether unlike to God; a complete contradiction. I cannot dwell upon any of those particular designs of serving the interest of God's glory, which a good man is still pursuing in the world: only this, in general, whether he pray, or preach, or read, or celebrate Sabbaths, or administer private reproof or instruction, or indeed, plough or sow, eat or drink, he constantly lives not to himself, but serves a higher interest than that of the flesh, and a higher good than himself, or any created being. True Christian activity doth not only appear in those things which we call duties of worship, or religious performances; but in the whole frame of the heart, by its contriving, and the conversation, by its expressing and unfolding the glory of God.

A holy, serious, heavenly, humble, sober, righteous, and self-denying course of life, does most excellently express the divine glory by imitating the nature of God; and most effectually allures all men to the imitation of it; according as our Saviour hath plainly stated in the case, *John xv.*

8. *Hereby is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit*: by which fruit are not to be understood only preaching, praying, and conference, which are indeed high and excellent duties; but also righteousness, temperance, and self-denial, which things are pure reflections of the divine image, and a real glorifying of God's name and perfections. A good Christian cannot be content to be happy alone; to be still drawing down heaven into his own soul; but he endeavours also by prayer, counsel, and holy example, to draw up the souls of other men heaven-ward. This God witnesseth of Abraham, Gen. xviii. 19. *I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord*: And this Moses doth excellently witness of himself in that holy rapture of his, Numb. xi. 29. *Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!* By such examples as these, a good man desires to live, yea, by higher precedents than even Abraham or Moses, even by the example of the Father and of the Son: he admires and strives to imitate that character which is given of God himself, Ps. cxix. 68. *Thou art good, and doest good*: and that which is given of Christ Jesus, the Lord of life, Acts x. 38. *who went about doing good*: who also witnessed elsewhere concerning himself, that he came not into the world to do his own will, nor seek his own glory, but the will and glory of him that sent him: and again, Luke ii. 49. *Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?* O how happy would the godly soul count itself, if it could,

but live and converse in the world at the same rate, and with the same devout, fervent, exalted spirit, as Christ Jesus did, whose meat and drink it was still to be doing the will, and advancing the glory of his Father! But, alas! the poor soul finds itself ensnared by passions, and selfish affections from within, clogged with an unwieldy body, and distracted with secular affairs from without, that it cannot rise so nimbly, run so swiftly, nor serve the infinite and glorious God so cheerfully, nor liberally, as it would; and therefore the poor prisoner sighs within itself, and wishes that it might escape: but finding a certain time determined for it in the body, which it must be contented to live out, it looks up, and is ready to envy the angels of God, because it cannot live as they do; for they are always doing God's will; and it much regrets that itself is not a ministering spirit, serving the pure and perfect will of the supreme Good, without grudging or ceasing. The godly soul, under these powerful apprehensions of the nature of God, the example of Christ, and the honourable office of the holy angels, is ready to grudge the body that attendance that it requires, and those offices which it is forced to perform for it; judging them impertinent to its main happiness, and most excellent employment; it is ready to envy that more cheerful and willing service, which it receives from the heavy and drossy body with which it is united; and to cry out, O that I were that to my God, which my body, my eyes, hands, and feet are to me; for I say to one of these, *Go,* and he goeth; and to another, *Do this,* and he

doeth it. In a word, a good man being feelingly acquainted with the highest good; regarding diligently the great end of his coming into the world, and his short time of being in it, serves the eternal and blessed God, lives upon eternal designs, and by consecrating all his actions unto God, gives a kind of immortality to things which are in themselves flattering and transient: he counts it a reproach to any man, much more to a godly man, to do any thing insignificantly, much more to live to no good purpose, and he reckons all things that have not a tendency to the highest good, and a subserviency to the great and last end, to be impertinencies, yea, and absurdities in an immortal soul, which should continually be *springing up into everlasting life.*

3. The active and vigorous nature of true religion manifests itself in those powerful and incessant longings after God, with which it fills that soul in which it is implanted. This I superadd to the two former, because the godly man, though he be formed into some likeness to God, yet desires to be more like him; and though he be somewhat serviceable to him, yet desires to be more instrumental to his will: though he be good, yet he desires to be better; and though he do good, yet he desires to do better, or at least to do more. And, indeed, I conclude that these sincere and holy hungerings after God, of which I shall speak presently, are some of the best signs of spiritual health that I know in the world, and the best mark of a true Christian: for, in this low and corrupt state, we are better acquainted with loving and languishing, than with fruition

or satisfaction: and the best enjoyment that we have of God in this world is very limited, indeed is only a kind of longing to enjoy him. Love is certainly a high and noble affection; but, alas! our love, whilst we are here in the body, is in its infancy, in its weak and sickly state; rather a longing than a loving; much unlike to what it will be when it shall be grown up unto its perfect stature in glory. But this sickly kind of languishing affection is a certain symptom of a healthful constitution; or, as the apostle calls it, *of the spirit of a sound mind*. Godly souls are thirsty souls, always panting after the living springs of divine grace, even as the parched desert openeth its mouth for the dew of heaven, the early and the latter rain. We might wonder what kind of magic there was in Elijah's mantle, that the very casting of it upon Elisha should make him leave oxen and plough; yea, father and mother, and all to run after a stranger: Elijah himself seems to wonder at it, Kings xix. 20. *What have I done to thee?* O what a mighty charm is there in divine love! which when once shed abroad in the soul, makes the soul spread itself in it and to it, as the heliotrope* attending the motions of the sun, and turning itself every way towards it, welcoming its warm and refreshing beams. Elijah passing by Elisha as he was at the plough, and catching him with his mantle, is but a faint resemblance of the blessed God passing by a carnal mind, and wrapping it in the mantle of his love, and thereby causing it to run, yea,

* Commonly called *Sun Flower*.

to fly swiftly after him. If divine grace do but once touch the soul, the soul is presently attracted to it, as the needle to the loadstone. They that heard Christ Jesus chiding the winds and the waves, cried out, *What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!* But if one had been present when he called James and John from their nets, Matthew from the custom-house, and Zaccheus from the tree; and by calling made them willing to come, he would have cried out, surely, *What manner of God is this!* that, by his bare word makes poor men leave their trades and livelihood, and rich men their gainful exactions, usuries, and oppressions, to follow him, and shews them no reason why. What a mighty virtue is there in the ointment of Christ's name, that as soon as it is poured out, the virgins fall in love with him? *Cant. i. 3.* Micah cried out, when he was in pursuit of his gods; and, need they ask him what ailed him? And will ye wonder that a holy soul, in pursuit of the holy God, should be in earnest; that he should run, and cry as he runs? as I have seen a fond child whom the father or mother has endeavoured to leave behind them. When God breathes into the soul, he makes the soul breathe after him, and in a mixture of holy disdain and anger, to thrust away from itself all distracting companions, occasions, and concernments, saying with Ephraim to his idols, *Get ye hence.* The soul thus inspired is so far from yielding itself to any earthly, sensual, selfish lusts, and pleasures, that it cannot brook any thing that would weaken it in the prosecution of the highest good; it is impatient of every

thing that would either stop or slacken its motions after God.

The godly man desires still to be doing something for God; but if it so happen that he cannot spend his life for God as he desires, yet he will be spending his soul upon him: though he cannot perpetually abide upon the knee of prayer, yet he would be continually upon the wing of faith and love: when his tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth, that he cannot speak for God, yet his soul shall cleave unto him, and complain because it can speak no longer: for faith and love are knitting graces, and do long to make the soul as much one with their object, as is possible for the creature to be with its Creator. Religion puts a restless appetite in the soul after a higher good, and makes it throw itself into his arms, and wind itself into his embraces, longing to be in a more intimate conjunction with him, or rather entirely wrapped up in him: itself is an insatiable and covetous principle in the soul, much like to the daughter of the horseleech, crying continually, *Give, give.* What the prophet speaks rhetorically of hell, *Isa. v. 14.* is also true concerning this offspring of heaven in the soul, *it enlargeth itself and openeth its mouth without measure.* The spirit of true godliness seems to be altogether such that it cannot rest in any measures of grace, or be fully contented with any of its attainments in this life; but ardently longs to receive the more plentiful communications of love, the more deep and legible impressions of grace, the more clear and ample experiences of divine assistance, the more sensible evidences of divine

favour, the more powerful and ravishing illapses and infusions of divine consolation into itself; *let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth*, Cant. i. 2. Such is the spirit of true godliness, that the weakest that is endowed with it, longs to be as David, and the Davids to be as God, as the angel of the Lord, according to that promise, *Zech. xii. 8*. The godly soul, that is in his right senses under the powerful apprehensions of the loveliness of God, and the beauty of holiness, cannot be contented to live by any lower standard than that of David, whose soul even broke for the longing that it had unto the Lord, *Ps. cxix. 20*. or that of the spouse who was even *sick of love*, Cant. ii. 5. You have read of the mother of Sisera looking out at the window, waiting for his coming, and crying through the lattice, *Why is his chariot so long in coming; why tarry the wheels of his chariot?* But this is not to be compared to the earnest expectation of the creature, waiting for the manifestation of God; which the apostle elegantly expresseth and yet seems to labour for words, as if he could not sufficiently express it, *Rom. viii. 19*. You have read of the Israelites marching up towards the promised land, and murmuring that they were held so long in the wilderness: but the true Israelitish soul makes more haste with less discontent, marches as under the conduct of an angel of God's presence, and longs to arrive at its rest; but, alas! it is held in the wilderness too; and therefore cannot be fully quiet in itself, but sends forth spies to view the land, the pioneers of faith and hope, like Caleb and Joshua, those men of another spirit;

and these go and walk through the holy land, and return home to the soul, and come back, not as Noah's dove with an olive leaf in her mouth, but with some clusters in their hands; they bring the soul a taste of the good things of the kingdom, of the glories of her eternal state; yea, the soul itself marches up to possess the land, goes out, with the spouse in the Canticles, to meet the Lord, to seek him whom her soul loveth. Religion is a sacred fire kept burning in the temple of the soul continually; which being once kindled from heaven, never goes out, but burns up heaven-wards, as the nature of fire is: this fire is kept alive in the soul to all eternity, though sometimes, through the ashes of earthly cares and concerns cast into it, or the sun of earthly prosperity shining upon it, it may sometimes burn more dimly, and seem almost as if it were quite smothered: this fire is for sacrifice too, though sacrifice be not always offered upon it; the same fire of faith and love which offered up the morning sacrifice is kept alive all the day long, and is ready to kindle the evening sacrifice too, when the appointed time of it shall come. In this chariot of fire it is, that the soul is continually carried out towards God, and accomplisheth a kind of glorification daily; and when it finds itself firmly seated and swiftly carried herein, it no longer envies the translation of Elijah. The spirit of sanctification is in the soul as a burning fire shut up in the bones, which makes the soul weary with forbearing, and so powerful in longings that it cannot stay; as the spirit of prophecy is described, *Jer. xx.* It is more true of the Spir-

it of God than of the spirit of Elihu, that the spirit within constraineth, and even presseth the soul, so that it is ready to swoon and faint away for very vehemence of longing. See the loving spouse falling into one of these faintings, *Cant. ii. 5.* and crying out earnestly for some cordial from heaven to keep up her sinking spirits, *Stay me with flaggons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love.* O what a beautiful and blessed sight is a soul working towards God, panting, and longing, and labouring after its proper happiness and perfection! Well, the sinking soul is relieved; Christ Jesus reacheth forth his left hand to her head, and his right hand embraceth her; and now she recovers; her hanging hands lift up themselves, and the beauties of her fading complexion are restored; now she sits down *under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto her taste.* See here the fairest sight on this side heaven; a soul resting, and glorying, and spreading itself in the arms of God, growing great in him, growing full in his fulness, and perfectly ravished with his pure love! O my soul, be not contented to live by any lower standard! *Did not our hearts burn within us,* said the two disciples one to the other, *whilst he talked with us?* But the soul in which the sacred fire of love is powerfully kindled, doth not only burn towards God, whilst he is more familiarly present with it, and, as it were, blows upon it; but if he seems to withdraw from it, it burns after him still; *My beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone; I sought him; I called him,* *Cant. v. 6.* And if the fire begin to languish, and seems as if it

would go out, the holy soul is startled presently, and labours, as the apostle speaks, *2 Tim. i. 6.* to revive it, and blow it up again, and call upon itself to awake, to arise and pursue, to mend its pace, and to speed its heavy and sluggish motions. This divine active principle in the soul maintains a continual striving, a holy struggling and stretching forth of the soul towards God, a bold and ardent contention after the supreme good; religion hath the strength of the divinity in it; its motions towards its object are quick and potent. That elegant description which the prophet makes of the wicked heart, with some change may be happily brought to express this excellent temper of the godly soul; it is like the working sea which cannot rest: and although its waters do not cast up mire and dirt, yet in a holy impatience, they rise and swell, and work and mount towards heaven. In a word, that I may comprise many things in few expressions, no man is so ambitious as the humble; none so covetous as the heavenly-minded; none so voluptuous as the self-denying: religion gives a largeness and wideness to the soul, which sin, and self, and the world, had straitened and confined. But a saint's ambition is only to be great in God; his covetousness is only to be filled with the fulness of God; and his voluptuousness is only to drink of the rivers of his pure pleasures: he desires to taste the God whom he sees, and to be satisfied with the God whom he tastes. O, how are all the faculties of the soul awakened to attendance upon the Lord of life! It hearkens for the sound of his feet coming, the noise of his hands knock-

ing at the door; it stands upon its watch-tower waiting for his appearing; waiting more earnestly than they that watch for the morning, and rejoices to meet him at his coming; and having met him, embraces him, holds him, and will not let him go; but brings him into the house, and entertains him in the guest-chamber; the soul complains that itself is not large enough; that there is not room enough to entertain so glorious a guest; no, not though it have given him all the room that it hath: it entertains him with the widest arms, and the sweetest smiles; and if he depart and withdraw, fetches him again with the deepest groans, Return, return, O Prince of Peace, and make me an everlasting habitation of righteousness unto thyself!

It will not be amiss here briefly to touch upon the reason why the godly soul so ardently pants after God. And I might shew first, negatively, that it springs not from any worldly ambition of being better and higher than others; not from any carnal hope of impunity and safety; nor merely from the bitter sense of pressing and tormenting afflictions in this life. But I shall rather insist upon it affirmatively. These earnest breathings after God spring from the feeling apprehensions of self-indigence and insufficiency, and the powerful sense of divine goodness and fulness: they are begotten of the divine bounty and self-sufficiency, manifesting itself to the spirits of men, and conceived and brought forth by a deep sense of self-poverty. One might almost apply the apostle's words to this purpose, 2 Cor. i. 9. *We receive the sentence of death in ourselves, that we*

should not trust in ourselves, but in him. I shall not discourse upon these two heads separately, but frame them into one; and you may understand it thus, these holy longings of the godly soul after God, arise from the sense of its distance from God, who is life and love itself, and the proper and full happiness of the soul. This distance is grievous to the soul that is rightly affected towards him: and hence it is, that the soul cannot be at rest, but still longs to be more intimately joined to him, and more perfectly filled with him: and the clearer the soul's apprehensions are of its object, and the deeper its sense is of its own unlikeness to him, and distance from him, the more strong and impatient are its breathings; insomuch that not only fear, as the apostle speaks, but even love itself sometimes seems to itself to have a kind of agony and torment in itself; which made the spouse cry that she was sick of love, that is, sick of every thing that kept her from her love; sick of that distance at which she stood from her beloved Lord. The godly soul being ravished with the infinite sweetness and goodness of God, longs to be that rather than what itself is, and beholding how it is estranged from him, by many sensual loves, selfish passions, corporeal clogs, and distractions, bewails its distance, and cries out within itself, *O when shall I come and appear before God!* O when will God come and appear gloriously to me and in me! *Who will deliver me from this body of death!* O that mortality were swallowed up of life! David's soul did wait for God as earnestly, and more properly than they that watch for the morn-

ing; for they may be said rather to be weary of the long, and cold, and troublesome night, than properly desirous of the day; but he, out of a pure and spiritual sense of his estrangement from God, longs to appear before him, and be observed in him. Heal the godly man of all his afflictions, grievances, and adversities in the world, that he may have nothing to trouble him, nor put him to pain, yet he is not quiet, he is in pain because of the distance at which he stands from God. Give him the whole world, and all the glory of it, yet he has not enough; he still cries, and requests, *Give, give*, because he is not entirely swallowed up in God. He openeth his mouth wide, as the Psalmist speaks, and all the silver, and gold, peace, health, liberty, preferment, that you cast into it, cannot fill it; because they are not God; he cannot look upon them as his chief good. In a word, a godly man doth not so much say, under a sense either of sin or affliction, *O that one would give me the wings of a dove, that I might fly away, and be at rest!* as, under the sense of his dissimilitude to, and distance from God, *O that one would give me the wings of an eagle, that I might fly away towards heaven!*

CHAP. V.

An expostulation with Christians concerning their remiss and sluggish temper: an essay to convince them of it by some considerations; which are,

1. *The activity of worldly men.*
2. *The restless appetites of the body.*
3. *The strong propensities of every creature towards its own centre.*

An inquiry into the slothfulness and inactivity of Christian souls: two things premised, and an answer is given to the inquiry in five particulars. The grace of faith is vindicated from the slander of being merely passive. A short essay to awaken Christians unto a greater vigour and activity.

WE have seen in what respects religion is an active principle in the soul where it is seated: give me leave to enlarge a little here for conviction or reprehension. By this property of true religion we shall be able to discover much that is false and counterfeit in the world. If religion be no lazy, languid, sluggish, passive thing; but life, love, the spirit of power and freedom, a fire burning, a well of water springing up, as we have sufficiently seen; what shall we say then of that heavy, sluggish, spiritless kind of religion that most men take up with? Shall we call it a spirit of life, with the apostle; and yet allow of a religion that is cold and dead? Shall we call it a spirit of love and power, with the same apostle; and yet allow of it, though it be indifferent, low, and impotent? Or will such pass current with the wise and holy God, even if we pass a favourable

sentence upon it? And why should it ever pass with men, if it will not forever pass with God? But, indeed, how can this inactivity and sluggishness pass for religion amongst men? Who can think you are in pursuit of the infinite and supreme good, that sees you so slow in your motions towards it? Who can think that your treasure is in heaven, that sees your heart so far from thence? The more any thing partakes of God, and the nearer it resembles him who is the fountain of life, and power, and virtue, the more active, powerful, and lively will it be. We read of an atheistical generation in *Zeph. i. 12.* who fancied to themselves an idle and slothful God, that minded not the affairs of the world at all, saying, *The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil;* which was also the false and gross conceit of many of the heathen, as Cicero confesses of some of the Philosophers themselves, *Qui Deum nihil habere negotii dicunt et nihil exhibere alteri:* [Who say, that God takes no care of any one, nor shews him any favour.] And indeed, though it be not so blasphemous, yet it is almost as absurd, to fancy an idle saint, as an idle deity. Sure I am, if it be not altogether impossible, yet it is altogether a shameful and deformed sight, to see a holy soul in a lethargy, a godly soul that is not in pursuit of God. Moses indeed bids *Israel stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord;* but there is no such divinity in the holy Scriptures as this, stand still and see the salvation of the soul, though some have violently pressed those words, *Exod. xiv. 13.* to serve under their slothful standard: No, no, the scripture speaks to us at another rate, *Phil.*

ii. 12. *work out your own salvation*: and indeed the Spirit of God doth every where describe religion by the activity, industry, vigour, and quickness of it, as I hinted in the very beginning of this discourse; and could abundantly confirm and explain if there were need of it.

But that I may more powerfully convince and awaken the lazy and heavy spirit and temper of many professors, I will briefly touch upon a few particulars, and propose them to their serious consideration.

1. The children of this world, earthly and sensual men, are not slothful, lazy, or indifferent in the pursuit of earthly and sensual objects. You say you have laid up your treasure in heaven; we know, they have laid up their treasure in the earth: now, who is it that behaves himself most suitably and wisely towards his treasure? you or they? You say you have a treasure in heaven, and are contented to be able to say so; but make no haste to be fully and feelingly possessed of it; to enjoy the benefit and sweetness of it. But they *rise up early and sit up late*, and either starve themselves, or eat the bread of sorrow, to obtain an earthly and perishing inheritance; they traverse the world, travel far, sell all to purchase that part which is of so great price with them: and when they have accomplished it, O how do they set their heart upon it; bind up their very souls in the same bags with their money, and seal up their affections together with it: yea, and after they have acquired great wealth, they are not at rest, but find a gnawing hunger upon their hearts after more still, to add house to house,

and land to land, and one bag to another; the covetous miser is ready to sit down and wring his hands, because he hath no more hands to scrape with; the voluptuous epicure is angry that he hath not the neck of a crane the better to reach his dainties; and ambitious Alexander, when he domineers over the known world, is ready to sit down and weep, because there are no more worlds to conquer. What Christian can but be ashamed of himself, when he reads the description which Plautus the comedian gives of a covetous worldling, under the character of Euclio; who hid his pot of gold, heeded it, watched it, visited it almost every hour; would not go from it by day; could not sleep on account of it by night; suspected every body that so much as looked towards it; and by all means kept it even as his life? For where is the like eager and ardent disposition to be found in a Christian towards God himself? Tell me, is it possible for a man that vehemently loves an object, to be content all his life to have it at a distance, and not care whether ever he do actually enjoy it or not? Or will not such an one necessarily seek by all means to obtain the object of his wishes? Let us now confess the truth, and every one judge himself.

2. This dull and earthly body is not so little concerned about meat and drink, and rest, and the things that do serve its necessities, and gratify its temper. Hunger will break down stone walls, and thirst will give away a kingdom for a cup of water; sickness will not be eased by good words, nor will drowsiness be bribed by any entertainments of company or recreation; no, no,

the necessities of the body must and will be relieved with food, and physic, and sleep; the restless and raging appetite will never cease calling and crying to the soul for supplies till it arise and give them. Behold, O my soul! consider the mighty and incessant appetites and tendencies of the body after sensual objects, after its suitable good and proper perfection, and be ashamed of thy more remiss and sluggish inclination towards the highest good, a god-like perfection!

3. No creature in the whole world is so languid, slow, and indifferent in its motions towards its proper rest and centre. How easy is it to call heaven and earth to witness the free, pleasant, cheerful, eager approximation of every creature, according to its kind, towards its own centre and happiness? The sun in the firmament rejoices to run its race, and will not stand still a moment, except it be miraculously overpowered by the command of God himself; the rivers seem to be in pain, till by a continued flowing they have accomplished to themselves a kind of perfection, and be swallowed up in the bosom of the ocean, except they be benumbed with cold, or otherwise overpowered and retarded by external violence; I need not adduce instances of sensitives and vegetatives; all which you know with a natural vigour and activity grow up daily towards a perfect state and stature. Would it not be a strange and monstrous sight to see a stone resting in the air, and not working towards the earth? Such a spectacle is a godly soul settling upon earth, and not endeavouring to obtain a

nearer and more intimate union with its God. Wherefore, Christians, either cease to pretend that you have chosen God for your portion, centre, happiness; or else arise, and cease not to pursue and accomplish the closest union and the most familiar conjunction with him that your souls are capable of: otherwise I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day: and the day is coming, when you will be put to shame by the whole creation. Doth every one, even the meanest creature of God, pursue its end and perfection, and proper happiness, with ardent and vehement longings; and shall a soul, the noblest of all creatures, stand folding up itself in itself, or choking up its large and divine capacity with dust and dirt? Shall a godly soul, the noblest of all souls, drop the wing, and suspend its motions towards the supreme good, or so much as once appear to faint and languish in its enterprises for eternal life? Tell it not at Athens, publish it not at Rome, lest the heathen philosophers deride and hiss us out of the world.

But you will ask me, When a Christian may be said to be sluggish and inactive? And who these lazy souls are? I will presume two things, and then give you a brief account of them. 1st, When I speak of a sluggish and spiritless religion, I do not speak as the rash Anabaptists or Chiliasts, who being themselves actuated by a strange fervour of mind, miscalled zeal, are wont to declaim against all men as cold and benumbed in their spirits, who do not call for fire from heaven to consume all dissenters from them, as Antichristian; who are not afraid to reproach the

divine, holy, gentle, yet generous spirit of religion; calling it weak, effeminate, cowardly, low, cold, and the like. These men, I believe, so far as I can conjecture their motives, if they had lived in the days of our Saviour, and had beheld that gentle, meek, humble, peaceable, and quiet spirit, which did infinitely shine forth in him, would almost have reproved him for not carrying on his own kingdom with sufficient vigour and activity, if not have judged Christ himself to be much Antichristian. I hope you see nothing in all my explanations of the active spirit of religion that savours of such a spirit as this is. *2dly*, When I do so highly commend the active spirit of true religion, and the vigourous temper of truly religious souls, I would not be understood as if I thought all such souls were alike swift, or that any such soul did always move with the like swiftness, and keep a like pace towards God. I know that there are different sizes of active souls; yea, and different degrees of activity in the same soul, as may be seen, *Cant. v. 3.* compared with the sixth verse of the same chapter; and in many other places of Scripture.

But yet, that none may flatter and deceive themselves with an opinion of their being what indeed they are not, I will briefly point out the sluggishness and inactivity of Christians in a few particulars. Take it not ill, though the greatest part of Christians be found guilty; for that is no other than what Christ himself hath prophesied.

1. The active spirit of religion in the soul will not suffer men to take up their rest in a constant course of external performances; and they are

but slothful souls, that place their religion in any thing external. By external performances I mean not only open, and public, and solemn services; but even the most private and secret performances that are in and by the body, and, *ab extra*, [from without,] to the soul. It is not possible that a soul should be happy in any thing that is extrinsick to itself, no not in God himself, if we consider him as something without the soul: the devil himself knows and sees much of God externally; but having no communications of a divine nature or life, and being perfectly estrang'd from the life of God, he remains perfectly miserable. I suspect it is a common deceit in the world; that men toil and labour in bodily acts of worship and religion in a slavish and mercenary manner; and think, with those labourers in the parable, that at the end they must needs receive great wages, and much thanks, because they have borne the heat and burden of the day. Alas, that ever men should so grossly mistake the nature of religion, as to sink it into a few bodily acts and services, and to think it is nothing else but running a round of duties and ordinances, and keeping up a constant set and course of actions! I know indeed that men will be loth to confess that they place their religion in any thing without them; but, I pray, consider seriously wherein you excel other men, except in praying or hearing now and then, or some other outward acts; and judge yourselves by your nature, and not by your actions.

2. the active spirit of religion, where it is in the soul, will not suffer men to take up their rest

in a mere pardon of sin; and they are but slothful souls that could be so satisfied. Blessed is the man indeed whose iniquities are pardoned, *Ps.* xxxii. 1, 2. But if we could suppose a soul to be acquitted of the guilt of all sin, and yet to lie bound under the dominion of lusts and passions, and to live without God in the world, it would be still far from true blessedness. A real hell and misery will arise out of the bowels of sin and wickedness, though there should be no reserve of fire and brimstone in the world to come. It is utterly impossible that a soul should be happy out of God, though it had the greatest security imaginable that it should never suffer any thing from him. The highest care and ambition indeed of a slavish and mercenary spirit is to be secured from the wrath and vengeance of God; but the breathings of the ingenuous and holy soul are after a divine life, and godlike perfections. This right gracious temper you may see in David, *Ps.* li. 9, 10, 11, 12. which is also the temper of every truly religious soul.

3. The active spirit of religion, where it is in the soul, will not suffer men to take up their rest in mere innocency, and freedom from sin; and they are slothful souls that could count it happiness enough to be harmless. Men are much mistaken about holiness; it is something more than mere innocency, or freedom from the guilt or power of sin; it is not a negative thing; there is something active, noble, divine, and powerful, in true religion. A soul that well understands its own penury and self-sufficiency, and the emptiness and meanness of all creature-good, cannot

possibly take up its rest, or place its happiness in any thing but in a real participation of God himself; and therefore is continually pressing on towards that God from whom it came, and is labouring to unite itself more and more unto him. Let a low-spirited, fleshly-minded Pharisee take up with a negative holiness and happiness, as he doth, *Luke, xviii. 11. God, I thank thee that I am not so*: a noble and high spirited Christian cannot take up his rest in any negation or freedom from sin. Every godly soul is not so learned, indeed, as to be able to describe the nature and proper perfection of a soul, and to tell you how the happiness of a soul consists, not *in quietness*, but *in action and vigour*; not in cessation and rest, as the happiness of a stone doth, but in life, and power, and vigour, as the happiness of God himself doth; but yet the spirit of true religion is so excellent and powerful in every godly soul, that it is still carrying it to the fuller enjoyment of a higher good: and the soul doth find and feel within itself, though it cannot discourse philosophically of these things, that, though it were free from all disturbance of sin and affliction in the world, yet still it wants some supreme and possible good to make it completely happy, and therefore it bends all its powers thitherward. This is the description which you will every where find made in Scripture of the true spirit of holiness, which hath always something positive and divine in it, as *Isa. i. 16, 17. Cease to do evil, learn to do well*; and *Eph. iv. 22—24. Put off the old man, put on that new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*. And accordingly a

truly godly person, to use the apostle's words, though he know nothing by himself, yet doth not thereby count himself happy.

4. The active spirit of true religion, where it is in the soul, will not suffer men to take up their rest in some measures of grace received; and so far as the soul doth so, it is sluggish and less active than it ought to be. This, indeed, oftentimes comes to pass when the soul is under some distemper of proud selfishness, earthly-mindedness, or the like, or is less apprehensive of its object and happiness; as it seems to have been the case of the spouse, *Cant.* v. 3. Some such fainting fits, languishings, surfeitings, insensibleness, must be allowed to be in the godly soul during its imprisoned and imperfect state: but we must not judge ourselves by any present distempers, or infirmities. The nature of religion, when it actuates the soul right and powerfully, produces a more lively resemblance of God; which is the most proper and excellent enjoyment of him. A mind properly and actually sound, is most sick of love; and the nature of the love is, not to know when it is near enough to its object, but still to long after the most complete conjunction with it. This well of water, if it be not violently obstructed, is ever springing up till it is swallowed up in the ocean of divine love and grace. The soul that is really acquainted with itself and its God, sees something still wanting in itself, and to be enjoyed in him, which makes it impossible for it to rest, but is still springing up into him, till it come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of its Lord. In this holy loving, longing, striving,

active temper, we find the great apostle, *Phil.* iii. 12, 13, 14. And by how much the more of divine grace any soul hath drunk in, the more thirsty is it after more.

5. The active spirit of true religion, where it is powerfully seated in the minds of men, will not suffer them to settle into a love of this animal life, nor indeed suffer them to be content to live for ever in such a kind of body as this; and that soul is in a degree lazy and slothful, that doth not desire to depart and be with his Lord. The godly soul viewing God as its perfect and full happiness, and finding that its being in the body doth separate it from God, keep it in a poor and imperfect state, and hinder its blissful communion with the highest good, groans within itself that mortality might be swallowed up of life, with the apostle, *2 Cor.* v. 4. I know not how much, but I think he hath not very much of God, neither any sight of him, nor love of him, that could be content to abide for ever in this imperfect, mixed, earthly state, and never be perfected in the full enjoyment of him. And it seems that they in whom the love of God is truly predominant, potent, and flourishing, do also look earnestly *for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*, *Jude* 21. without doubt they ought to do so. *2 Pet.* iii. 12. *What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?* Let this suffice by way of general reprehension.

2. More particularly, the consideration of the active nature of true religion may well serve to

correct a mistake about that noble grace of faith. How dishonourably do some speak of this excellent and powerful grace, when they make it to be a slothful, passive thing, an idle kind of waiting, or a melancholy sitting still; while, indeed and in truth, it is life and power. Be not mistaken in so high and eminent a grace: true faith doth not only accept the imputed righteousness of Christ for justification, but, by a lively dependence upon God, drinks in divine influences, and eagerly imbibes grace, and virtue, and life, from the fountain of grace, for its more perfect sanctification: and for this cause, I think, a purifying virtue is ascribed to it, *Acts xv. 9*. Faith is not a lazy, languid thing, content to wait for salvation till the world to come; but it is even now panting after it, and obtaining it too, in a way of mortification, self-denial, and growing up in God: it is not contented to be a candidate, waiting for life and happiness, but is actually drawing down heaven into the heart, attracting God to itself, and participating of the divine grace and image in the soul: its motto is that of the famous painter, *Nulla dies sine linea*; [No day without a line;] it longs to find some divine lineament, some line of God's image drawn upon the soul daily. Faith is a giving grace, as well as receiving; it gives up the whole soul to God, and is troubled that it can give him no more: it binds over the soul afresh to God every day, and is troubled that it can bind it no faster nor closer to him. The believing soul is wearied because of murderers, murdering loves, lusts, cares, earthly pleasures, and calls mightily to Christ to come and take

vengeance upon them: it is wearied because of those robbers that are daily stealing away precious time and affections from God, which are due unto him; and calls upon Christ to come and scourge these thieves, these buyers and sellers, out of his own temple. In a word, the godly soul is active, and faith is the very life and action of the soul itself.

Lastly, Let me exhort all Christians from hence, to be zealous, to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, and longing after him; *stir up the grace of God that is in you; quench not, i. e. blow up, inflame the Spirit of God in you.* Awake, Christian soul, out of thy lethargy, and rejoice, as the sun, to run the race that is set before thee, and, as a mighty man refreshed with wine, to fight thy spiritual battles against the armies of uncircumcised, profane, and earthly concupiscences, loves, and passions. Regard God as your centre, the enjoyment of him as the happiness, and full conformity to him as the perfection of your souls; and then say, Awake, arise, O my soul, and hide not thy hand in thy bosom, but throw thyself into the very heart and bosom of God; lay hold upon eternal life. Again, observe how all things in the world pursue their several perfections with unwearied and impatient longings; and say, come, my soul, and do thou likewise. converse not with God so much under the notion of a Law-giver, but as with love itself; nor with his commands, as having authority in them, but as having goodness, and life, and sweetness in them. Again, consider your poverty, as creatures, and how utterly impossible it is for you to be happy in yourselves; and say, arise,

O my soul, from this weak and tottering foundation, and build thyself in God: cease pinching thyself within the straits of self-sufficiencies, and come stretch thyself upon infinite goodness and fulness. Again, pore not over your attainments; do not sit brooding upon your present accomplishments; but forget the things that are behind, and say, awake, O my soul, there is yet infinitely much more in God; pursue after him for it, till thou have gotten as much as a created being is capable of receiving of the divine nature. In a word, take heed, that you live not by the lowest examples, (which thing keeps many in a dwindling state all their days) but by the highest: read over the temper of the spouse, sick of love; David's temper, waiting for God more than they that watch for the morning, breaking in heart for the longing that he had to the Lord; and say, Arise, O my soul, and live as high as the highest. It is no fault to desire to be as good, as holy, as happy as an angel of God; and thus, O my soul, open thy mouth wide, and God hath promised to fill thee!

CHAP. VI.

That religion is a lasting and persevering principle in the souls of men, proved by several Scriptures. The grounds of this perseverance assigned; first, negatively, it doth not arise from the absolutely un-failing nature of grace in the creature, nor from the strength of man's free-will.—Secondly, affirmatively, the grace of election cannot fail. The grace of justification is neither suspended nor violated; the covenant of grace is everlasting; the Mediator of this covenant lives for ever; the promises of it immutable. An objection answered concerning a regenerate man's willing his own apostacy. An objection answered, drawn from the falls of saints in Scripture; as also from those Scriptures that seem to imply a man's falling away. A discovery of counterfeit religion, and the shameful apostacy of false professors. An encouragement to all holy diligence, from the consideration of this doctrine; the rather that we may stop the mouths of those that falsely affirm that the same is prejudicial to true godliness.

THE third property of true religion contained in the words of the text is, the *perseverance* of it.—And the foundation of my following discourse shall be this proposition: “True religion is a lasting and persevering principle in the souls of good men.”

It is said of the hypocritical Jews, that their goodness was as the *early dew that soon passes away*, Hosea vi. 4. But that principle of goodness

which God gives to the souls of his people is compared to a *well of water*, ever sending forth fresh streams, and incessantly springing up towards God himself. Our Saviour compares hypocritical professors to *seed sown upon stony ground*, that springs up indeed but soon withers away, *Mark* iv. 5, 6. but this well of water, which is in the sincere godly soul, springs up into everlasting life; it springs and is never dried up; *it is a spring of water, whose waters fail not, or lie not*, as it is expressed by the prophet *Isa.* lviii. 11. or if you look upon it under the metaphor of oil, as it is sometimes expressed in Scripture, then it is truly that oil that faileth not, whereof the widow of Sarepta's cruise of oil was but a faint resemblance. Amongst other texts which the learned Dr. Arrowsmith brings to prove the infallibility of the perseverance of saints, this speech of our Saviour's, which is the subject of my whole discourse, is one; who also quoteth Theophylact for the same mind, viz. the perseverance of this principle, yea, and somewhat more, even the growth and multiplication of it. To the same purpose the same excellent author quoteth *John* x. 27, 28. *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.* In which words our Saviour strongly asserts the certain glorification of his elect, by using a verb of the present tense, *I give unto them eternal life*; he will as certainly give it them, as if they had it already, unless the words do imply that they have it already, viz. the beginning of it, even in this

life : and if so, then the words do yet more strongly assert the doctrine of perseverance ; for how can that life be called eternal, which may end ? In the same words he seemeth purposely to prevent fears, and beforehand to answer objections, by securing them both from internal and external enemies ; they shall never perish, viz. of their own accord, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand ; for the word in the original is such as doth secure them from the power of devils as well as men ; and what is said of the church in general, is also certain concerning every true member of it in particular ; *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* Christ hath not only chosen and ordained his people that they should be holy, but also that they should persevere in holiness ; not only that they should bring forth good fruits, but that their *fruits should remain*, John xv. 15, 16.—Hence they are said to be born again of incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth *for ever*, 1 Pet. i. 23. And he that is born of God, is said to have the seed of God in him, and remaining in him ; and in such a manner remaining in him that he shall never again commit sin ; that is, shall not become any more ungodly, 1 John iii. 9. To all which may be added that strong and strengthening text, Rom. viii. 38, 39. *I am persuaded 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 us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord ;* which one text doth excellently assert both those precious and comfortable doctrines of assurance

and perseverance; and they are worthily to be honoured in the church of God, who have vindicated it from the corrupt glosses and cavils of the papists, who have endeavoured to deprive Christians of the sweetness which may be extracted from that full honey-comb. In a word, let the holy Psalmist's experience of the supporting virtue of this doctrine close the proof of it at present; who found himself wonderfully comforted by it after all his fears and defeats, *Ps. lxxiii. 24.* where he sings of the loving kindness of the Lord in time past; *Thou hast holden me by my right hand*; and, at present, *I am continually with thee*; that is, thou art continually with me; and, with the like courage and confidence, he speaks of all time to come, *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.* Now, although the doctrine of the perseverance of saints be thus fully and clearly laid down in Scripture, yet it is easy to err in giving an account of it, and of the grounds of it. And therefore I shall proceed to the grounds of it, which I will briefly explain, negatively and affirmatively. First, negatively.

1. The certain perseverance of the saints in a state of grace doth not arise from the absolute impossibility that grace in the creature can be lost: it is one thing to affirm, that grace shall not be lost, and another thing to affirm, that it absolutely cannot be lost. God hath told us, that the world shall no more be drowned, but who will say, notwithstanding, that it is not in itself capable of drowning? Whilst we think to honour God by asserting the permanency of grace,

we must take heed lest we make grace a god, and so dishonour him. Grace, as it exists in God, in the fountain, which divines sometimes call active grace, is eternal and unchangeable, not subject to any defect or alteration. There is no time, or place, or circumstances, wherein the love and goodness of God fail towards his elect. This love and goodness are one and the same in God towards his people, even when they are under the greatest desertions, and have no sense at all of them. We must not say the sun is grown dark, as often as a dark cloud interposeth between it and our sight. Yea, however certain it is that the pure and holy God hateth sin even in his elect, yet it is also certain that the good and gracious God loveth the persons of his saints, even when they sin: "For the love of God towards the regenerate," saith Davenant, "is not bottomed upon their perfect purity and holiness, but upon Christ Jesus the Mediator, who hath transferred their sins upon himself, and hath redeemed them from the wrath of God." The love and kindness of God towards his people is absolutely unchangeable and everlasting. But grace in the creature, being itself a creature, is not simply and absolutely unchangeable or impossible to be lost: there is a possibility of losing inherent grace, if it be considered in itself; yea, and it would actually be lost and perish, if God did not uphold his people with one hand, whilst he exerciseth them with the other. Though with all my might I desire to maintain the perseverance of the saints; yet I dare not, as some do, ground it upon the firmness and fixedness of faith in man; but upon

the goodness and faithfulness of God ; which are such towards his elect, that he will keep them by his mighty power *through faith unto salvation*, as the apostle expresseth it, *1 Pet. i. 5.*

2. It doth not arise from the strength of man's free-will, as if he were of himself able to keep himself forever in a state of grace, when God had once put him into it. The saints indeed shall forever will their own perseverance, as we shall presently shew ; but it is God that worketh in them even this will. *Phil. ii. 13.* Man's own free-will, or self-sufficiency, is so far from being the ground of his perseverance in grace and holiness, that I do believe nothing in the world is more directly contrary to grace, than habitual and predominant self-confidence ; and, even in the saints themselves, there is nothing that doth strike a greater stroke towards their apostacy, than this self-conceit and confidence of their own strength, as something distinct from God, though the same be not habitual and predominant ; for they themselves are many times sadly weakened and set back by that means, and suffer many lamentable spiritual decays. This seems to have sometimes been the case of Hezekiah and of David too, and was nearly the case of Paul, when he had so much abounded in revelations, *2 Cor. xii. 7.* Sure it is, that nothing doth more estrange the hearts of God's people from him, nor more withhold the influences of divine grace and favour from them, than this security, confidence in the strength of their own wills, and vain opinion of self-sufficiency ; which thing the sad experience of holy Christians doth attest. Not only the apostles James

and Peter, but indeed all the true disciples of Christ in the world do agree to that proverb, *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.* In a word, though *to do justly, and to love mercy,* have indeed much of religion in them; yet to persevere, it is also required that a man deny himself and the sufficiency of his own free-will; and, in the prophet's expression, *Walk humbly with his God.* You know that Peter boasted, *Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended;* and again, *Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee;* and what the lamentable consequence of this self-confidence was, you know likewise: wherefore *let him that standeth by his own strength, take heed lest he fall.*

I proceed now to speak affirmatively concerning the grounds of the saints' perseverance in a state of grace. I have already shewed, that active grace is absolutely of an immutable nature: and although passive grace be not so, yet it shall not be lost totally and finally. For,

1. The grace of election cannot fail. When I think of that uncertain, conditional, mutable decree of saving men, which some ascribe to God, who is infinite and eternal wisdom and of one mind, methinks I may, with great reason, apply the apostle's words concerning himself and say, when God is thus graciously minded to elect his people to eternal life, *Doth he use lightness, or the things that he purposeth, doth he purpose according to the flesh,* after the manner of men, who are unsteady and wavering in their determinations? Is there with him yea, yea, and nay, nay? What

doth the apostle mean by these words, 2 Tim. ii. 19. *The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his?* The apostle, in the foregoing verse, having related the apostacy of Hymeneus and Philetus, and the overthrow of some men's faith by their means, immediately subjoins this comfortable doctrine of the stedfastness and firmness of God's decree of election, to prevent the offence which the saints might take at the falls of others, and to relieve them against the fears that they might possibly entertain concerning their own perseverance. The import of what he said is this, let no one be offended, as if the salvation of the elect rested on uncertainties; it appears that these men were none of God's elect, because they are seduced, and the faith that they had is overthrown; and as for you who are elected, fear not lest ye also should apostatise; it is not possible to deceive the elect in the necessary and fundamental truths of the gospel, *Matt. xxiv. 24.* Fear not lest ye also should be drawn away by the error of the wicked unto perdition, *for the foundation of God standeth sure, &c.* In which sentence, says Dr. Arrowsmith, almost every word breathes firmness and performance; nothing is more firm in a building than the foundation; that you may doubt of that, it is also sure, or steady; this sure foundation is said to stand, that is, say the Dutch Annotators, abideth stedfast and certain; for it is the foundation not of man's laying, but of God's; with whom there is *no variableness nor shadow of change.* Yea, farther, this foundation is said to be sealed: now, what is accounted more firm and

sure than those things which are sealed with a seal? especially such a seal as this, *The Lord knoweth who are his.* Though the wisest of men are often deceived in their opinions, yet the knowledge of God is infinitely infallible; according to St. Austin, "If any of the elect perish, God is deceived; but God is not deceived, therefore none of the elect can perish, for the Lord knoweth who are his." When Samuel went to separate one of the sons of Jesse from the rest of his brethren to be king over Israel, he first pitched upon Eliab, and afterwards rejected him, 1 *Sam.* xvi. but God is guilty of no such inconstancy in that eternal election which he makes of men to be kings and priests unto himself. Though the several acts of divine grace mentioned *Rom.* viii. 29, 30. are many links, yet they run one into another, and all from first to last make but one chain; concerning which divine and mysterious concatenation one may boldly use that peremptory prohibition which our Lord useth concerning a less indissoluble connexion, *Matt.* xix. 6. *What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.*

2. The grace of justification is neither suspended nor violated; it admits neither of interruption nor end neither of pause nor period. There is nothing between justification and glorification in the apostle's sentence, but the copulative *and*, *Rom.* viii. 30. There is nothing between a justified soul and glory, but a mere passage into it. We may be allowed to triumph with the holy apostle in the chapter, just quoted, Who will bring an accusation against God's elect? *It is God that justifieth.* But what though you be at present

justified, may some say, is there not a possibility of losing your justification? May not the righteousness of the righteous be taken from him? may you not be condemned hereafter? But *who is he that shall condemn us? it is Christ that died*: As if the apostle had said, the love of God towards his justified ones, is not grounded upon their purity, loveliness, or perfection; but it is founded in their Redeemer; which Redeemer hath done enough, both to bring them into a justified state, and to keep them in it forever; it is Christ that died to free them from sin, it is Christ that is risen again for their justification; *that is at the right hand of God*, to deliver them from all their enemies, that maketh intercession for them, for their perseverance. God loves nothing but the communications of himself: so far as any thing partakes of the divine image, so far it partakes of divine favour and complacency; so that whilst a good man bears a resemblance unto God, so long he shall be accepted of him, and embraced in the arms of his love; and that shall continue forever, as we shall see under the head. Until you have blotted out all the image and superscription of God from a godly soul, until you have erased all the stamps and impressions of goodness; in a word until you have rendered him wicked and ungodly, you cannot drive him from the embraces of God; which thing men and devils shall never be able to do, as I have partly shewed already, and shall yet shew more at large.

It is true indeed that Adam fell from a just state, though not from a justified state; for that supposes sin formerly committed. But this is no

great wonder; for he had his righteousness in himself, and his happiness in his own keeping: but the condition of believers is now more safe and firm, depending not upon any created power or will, but upon the infinite and effectual help and strength of a Mediator, which will never fail.

3. The covenant of grace is everlasting. It hath pleased God to enter into a covenant of grace and peace with every believing soul; which I need not take pains to prove, as all Christians acknowledge it, though they do not all agree in their ideas of it. Now this covenant, wherein God engages himself to be their God, (for that is the sum of it on his part,) is expressly called by the apostle, *the everlasting covenant*, Heb. xiii. 20. And again, Jer. xxxii. 40. *I will make an everlasting covenant with them*: which covenant, and the everlastingness of it, are fully explained in the following words, *I will not turn away from them to do them good*: the inviolable nature of this covenant is also expressly asserted in that remarkable passage, Jer. xxxi. 31, 32. *I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, which my covenant they broke*: as if he had said, “I will make a covenant that shall not be subject to breaches. In the former covenant with their fathers I gave them laws to keep, which they keep not; but, in the new covenant, I will give them also a heart to keep my laws:” it is not possible that covenant should be broken, one principal part of which is, a heart both able and willing to keep it. The similitudes which God useth in the 35th, 36th, and 37th verses of that

same chapter, do also further confirm and illustrate this doctrine of the everlastingness of this covenant of grace.

Under this head let me notice three things:

1. The Mediator of this covenant lives for ever, and lives to make intercession for believers, *Heb. vii. 25.* and from this the apostle argues, that they shall be saved to the uttermost, or evermore, as the margin reads it. From this also the apostle argues the unchangeable state of believers, as we observed before from *Rom. viii. 34.* Christ Jesus is always heard and accepted of the Father in all the requests that he maketh to him, according to that in *John xi. 41, 42.* *Jesus lift up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me, and I know that thou hearest me always.* If these things be so, then the perseverance of the saints is built upon a most certain foundation, is secured against the very gates of hell; for Christ hath prayed for them that they may be where he is, *John xvii. 24.* and in the mean time, that they may be kept *from the evil,* ver. 15. and that their faith *fail not,* *Luke xxii. 32.*

2. The promises of this covenant are immutable, *they are in Christ Jesus yea and amen,* *2 Cor. i. 20.* as if one should say in Latin, *Certo certiora,* perfectly sure and certain. God, who is truth itself, will not, cannot be, unto his people as a liar, or *as waters that fail,* as the prophet expresseth it. The infinite fountain of grace and truth cannot possibly become like one of the brooks of which Job speaks, which seem to be full of water, and are so at a certain winter season; but when the poor parched Arabian comes to look

for water thence in summer, he goes away ashamed, because they are now vanished; they are consumed out of their place, *Job. vi. 19, 20.* Now the promise is concerning not only grace, but the final perseverance of it: if he promise pardoning grace, it is in these full and satisfying expressions, *I will remember their sin* (any one of their sins) *no more,* *Jer. xxxi. 34.* If he promise purging and purifying grace, it is with the like amplitude of expression, *that they may fear me forever;* and again, *they shall not depart from me,* *Jer. xxxii. 39, 40.* with many other places of like import.

3. God is said, *2 Cor. vi. 16.* to dwell in the souls of his people, in opposition to a way-faring man, *who turneth in to tarry for a night,* *Jer. xiv. 8.* God indeed hath promised that it shall be said to them that were not his people, *Ye are the sons of the living God,* *Hos. i. 10.* but never the contrary; he hath no where threatened them that are the sons of the living God that it shall at any time be said to them, *Ye are not my people.* True indeed, as to external profession, church-membership, mere covenant holiness, and outward communion, God doth many times disinherit and reject them that were so his people; but as to true godliness, participation of the divine image, internal and spiritual communion, we may confidently say with the apostle to the Corinthians, *1 Cor. i. 9. God is faithful, by whom we were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;* or, with the same apostle to the Thessalonians, *1 Thess. v. 24. Faithful is he that calleth you who will also do it: Do what? why, that which he was speaking of and praying for in ver. 23. viz.*

Preserve spirit, soul, and body, blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I conclude then, that grace in the creature is a participation of him who is essential and perfect grace and goodness, a communication made by him of his holy nature, which becomes a living principle in the souls of men, a fountain sending forth a continued stream of holy dispositions and affections without intercession or cessation: though these streams run sometimes higher, sometimes lower, sometimes swifter, sometimes slower, yet they are never wholly dried up as the brook of Tema was. For, where God hath once opened a fountain in the soul, he feeds it with fresh supplies from himself; as a fountain itself would dry up, if it were not nourished by the supplies of subterraneous waters. The perseverance of grace depends purely upon the supports and supplies of uncreated essential life and goodness. But how do we know that God will certainly afford these supplies? we build upon his goodness and love in Christ towards his elect, which is infinite and unspeakable; and upon his faithfulness in accomplishing his promise, *viz.* that he will never leave nor forsake them, *Heb. xiii. 5.* that he will keep them by his power unto salvation, *1 Pet. i. 5.* They that are of the number of God's holy and chosen ones shall, no doubt, continue of that number according to that passage in *1 John ii. 19.* They that are truly in Christ shall abide in him, *John ii. 27.* The seed of God remaineth in the godly, and they cannot sin, because they are born of God, *1 John iii. 9.* *He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and*

that wicked one toucheth him not, 1 John v. 18. What can be more express and ample than that consolatory promise of our Lord made to his poor frail sheep, John x. 28. I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand.

But some one may say perhaps, What if man will apostatise? What if the saints themselves will forsake God? Will he not then say of them, as the apostle of the unbelieving husband, *If they will depart, let them depart?* Will not God forsake them that forsake him?

Ans. Yes, God will forsake them that forsake him; but they never forsake him: they being really renewed after the image of God, and perfectly overpowered by his grace, shall never will any such departure: *I will betroth thee unto me forever, Hosea ii. 19.* "It is certain," saith Dr. Arrowsmith, "that God will condemn all impenitent sinners; but it is as certain that all justified and regenerate sinners shall repent; *semper fit, procurante Spiritu;*" [The Spirit always causes it.] It seems unreasonable to ask, What if man himself will apostatise? seeing he is, by the grace of God, so renewed in his will, and put into such a condition, that he cannot will any such thing. "God doth not give unto his saints, saith Austin, only such help without which they could not persevere if they would (which was that which he gave Adam;) but he also worketh in them the will; that because they shall not persevere except they both can and will, his bountiful grace bestoweth upon them both the ability and the willingness; for their will is so assisted

by the spirit of God, that they therefore can, because they so will ; they therefore so will, because God worketh in them to will." Neither is it any disparagement or injury to the freedom of man's will, that it should be overpowered by divine grace, and determined only to that which is good. The indifferency and fluctuation of the will of man is indeed the imperfection of it ; and the more God reveals himself to the soul, as the chief good, the more this indifferency of the will is destroyed, and the faculty is determined ; not by being constrained, but indeed perfected. O happy liberty, for a soul to be indifferently affected towards its own happiness, and to be free to choose its own misery ! The noblest freedom in the world is, when a soul being delivered from its hesitations, and healed of its indifferences, is carried like a ship with spread sails and powerful winds by a most speedy, cheerful, and steady course into its own harbour, into the arms and embraces of its own object. The grace of God doth never so overpower the will of man, as to reduce it to a condition of slavery, so that man should not have a proper dominion over his own acts ; but I think we generally conclude that, in the world to come, in the future state, the wills of all glorified saints shall be so advanced and perfected in freedom, as not in the least to verge towards any thing that is evil, but shall in the most gladsome and steady manner be eternally carried towards their full and glorious object, which the glorified understanding shall then represent in a most true, clear, and ample manner ; and this we conclude is the soul's truest liberty in the highest elevation

of it. Now although it be not altogether thus with us in this present world, (for by reason of the weakness and darkness of our understandings, which do here represent God unto us so faintly and disadvantageously, it comes to pass that the will cannot so freely and fervently, with so ardent and generous motions, pursue its excellent object, as it shall do hereafter,) yet I believe that the more God reveals himself to any soul, the more its fluctuations are healed, and a true liberty of will increased; and that he doth so far reveal himself to every truly godly soul, as to establish this noble freedom in it, in such a degree as will keep it from willing a final departure from him, and carry it certainly (how remissly and faintly soever) towards the supreme and sovereign Good, till it come to be perfectly swallowed up in it. A will thus truly and divinely free, though it be not the proper efficient cause, yet certainly is an inseparable concomitant of final perseverance. So then the more God communicateth himself to any soul, the more powerfully it willet a nearer connexion with him; and no soul, I conceive, to whom God communicateth himself savingly, can at any time will an utter separation from him.

As for the foulest falls of saints that are any where recorded in Scripture, I know not what more can rationally be inferred from them, than that grace in the creature admits of ebbs and flows; is subject to augmentation and diminution; which no sober person denies. But I think the history of their lapses, if we take it altogether, hath a very favourable bearing upon the doctrine of perseverance; yea, for aught I know,

one great design of God in having those relations recorded, might be to confirm this very doctrine, by giving us so express and ample account of their repentance and recovery, that we are indeed to believe they were strengthened by their falls; so far were their falls from proving mortal to them. One would think, that if ever the habits of grace could be utterly suffocated and extinguished, if ever they could languish even unto death, it would be under the power of such heinous acts as David and Peter committed; and especially Solomon, whose acts, I conceive, were as foul, and as often repeated; which conduct is very destructive to gracious habits. I know there are instances given of Joash, Hymeneus, Alexander, and Demas, who utterly fell from that gracious state, wherein they once had been. But it did never yet appear to me beyond contradiction, that they were any of them in such a state. Joash is put amongst the number of hypocrites by some that have examined his story: and for aught that can evidently appear to the contrary, Demas might be no better. More is pleaded in favour of Hymeneus and Alexander; who put away a good conscience, and made shipwreck of faith, 1 *Tim.* i. 20. But it does not yet appear that the faith of which they made shipwreck, was any other than the profession or doctrine of the true faith; yea, rather it doth appear that it was no more. Neither does it at all appear, that they ever had that good conscience, which they are said, in our translation, to have put away, which may as properly be rendered, rejected; *arceo, prohibeo, resis-*

to, renitor, repello, to reject, repel, or thrust away from one. I am not confident that their apostacy was total neither, supposing it to be an apostacy: for however their faith was shipwrecked, possibly some plank or other of it might be left. And who dare say that it was final? The apostle doth not, that I perceive, give them up for lost, but executes discipline upon them, as it seems, for their recovery; of which one might think, by the following words, that he had some hopes,—*that they may learn not to blaspheme*. In short then, as to these two men, I conceive, that the good conscience which they put away, they never had; and the faith which they had, was not that good faith. And as to the other two that were named, and indeed as to all other instances of the like nature, I suppose we may give this general answer, that either they did not really stand, or they did not really fall; the former perhaps was the case of Joash, and the latter of Demas.—Whenever you observe therefore the backslidings of any seeming Christians, take heed of concluding rashly against the perseverance of saints, but rather infer with the holy apostle, 1 John ii. 19. *They went out from us, but they were not of us: had they been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us*: which words, if they be meant only of a communion in doctrine and profession, so as to conclude against the separation of such as are indeed in such a communion; then we may argue the more strongly, *a minore ad majus*, [from the less to the greater,] against the final apostacy of any that are in a higher and more excellent communion.

As for those texts of Scripture that seem to suppose a man can fall from grace, and turn from righteousness, I conceive a fair answer may be given unto them, by distinguishing this kind of righteousness: it may be granted, that many men have turned away from, and utterly made shipwreck of their legal righteousness, consisting of an external conformity to the letter of the precepts of the law, but void of the supernatural and divine principle; it is indeed the common lot of these men that spring up thus fairly, and yet have no root, to *wither away*, Matt. xiii. 6. Luke viii. 6. And yet on the other hand, it abides an everlasting truth that, *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* 1 John iii. 9. If there be any texts that seem to speak of apostatising from an evangelical righteousness, a righteousness of faith, and so cannot well be solved by this distinction, as that in *Heb. x. 38.* and some others, it must be considered that suppositions are made of things impossible as well as possible, yea, and that even in the Scriptures themselves, as some have observed from *Gal. i. 8.* 1 *Cor. xv. 14.* which texts do not at all imply what they suppose. I know indeed that eternal salvation is ordinarily annexed to perseverance, and so is promised to us in Scripture, as it were conditionally, John viii. 31. *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.* Col. i. 21, 22, 23. *You hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unproveable in his sight, if we continue in the faith, and be not moved away from the hope of the*

gospel, &c. To the same purpose are those words, *He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved*; and *Rev. ii. 26. He that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give, &c.* All which do strongly imply that there is no salvation but in a way of perseverance; and the words being laid down thus conditionally, especially the words first quoted, are given as a caution and quickening to the dull and sluggish minds of men, but do not necessarily imply any uncertainty or doubtfulness in the thing itself, any more than those words of the apostle Peter, *1 Pet. i. 10.* compared with the latter end of the 12th verse, where he doth affirm them to be *established in the truth*, and yet at the same time doth speak to them by way of caution and encouragement. There are many texts that seem to assert the apostacy of men from a state of regeneration, but not one that doth really assert it, that ever I could yet find; but they are almost without number, that, to my apprehension, do more than seem to assert the contrary, *viz.* their final perseverance: of which perseverance we have also, through the goodness of God, thousands of instances; but no man could ever yet produce one instance of the contrary, but by mere conjectures; and let them that make these conjectures see that they be neither too charitable towards men, nor uncharitable towards God.

Wherefore do I conclude that what is said concerning heaven and hell in the parable, as to one branch of it, is true of grace and wickedness; a gulf is fixed, and they that would pass from God to sin and the devil cannot: not that there

shall ever be in any a real and predominant desire so to pass, as I suppose I have already proved; but it denotes the impossibility of the thing. It is equally impossible that a godly soul should fall from God, and become a hater of him, fall from his love and image, and take upon him the image of the devil, as it was for Lazarus to quit Abraham's bosom for the flames of hell: the case seems to be the same, the former being the most real heaven, and the latter the truest hell. True religion is that holy fire which, being once kindled in the soul from heaven, never goes out; whereof the fire of the altar was but a faint and imperfect resemblance: it is as true in this respect of good men, as it is of wicked men in another, *their fire never goes out.*

And here we are presented with another great difference between true and counterfeit religion. All counterfeit religion will fade in time, though ever so specious and flourishing; all dew will pass away, though some lie much longer than other; all land-floods will fail; yea, the flood of Noah at length dried up, though it was of many months duration. But this well of water, of which our Saviour here speaks, will never utterly fail; cold adversity cannot freeze it; scorching prosperity cannot dry it up; the upper springs of uncreated grace and goodness will evermore feed those lower springs of grace and holiness in the creature. Though heaven and earth pass away, yet shall the seed of God remain; *He that hath begun a good work will certainly perform it, Phil. i. 6.* Where the grace of God hath begotten a divine principle and spirit of true religion in a

soul, there is the central force of heaven itself still attracting and carrying the soul in its motions thitherward, until it have lodged it in the very bosom and heart of God. If any principle lower than true religion actuate a man, it will certainly waste and be exhausted; though it may carry him swiftly in a rapid motion, yet not in a steady one; though it may carry him high, yet not quite to heaven. A meteor that is exhaled from the earth by a foreign force, may mount high in appearance, and glitter in a blaze, enough to be envied by the poor twinkling stars, and to be admired by ordinary spectators, yet its fate is to fall down, and shamefully confess its base origin. That religion which men assume only for a cloak, will wear out and drop into rags, if it be not presently thrown by as a garment out of fashion. You have read of the seeming righteousness of Jehu, founded in ambition and cruelty; the piety and devotion of Joash, grounded upon a good and virtuous education; the zeal of Saul for the worship of God, and his fat sacrifices, proceeding from superstition, as Samuel, that man of God, interprets it, *1 Sam. xv. 22.* and you have seen the shameful end of all these dissemblers; and the offensive snuff in which all this candle-light religion ended, very much unlike that lustre of true and genuine goodness, *which shineth more and more unto the perfect day*; according to that elegant description which the Spirit of God makes of it in the writings of Solomon, whose pen hath as much adorned this great truth, as his life hath blotted it, *Prov. iv. 18.* To this purpose I might fairly allege the frequent testi-

monies which the Holy Ghost in Scripture gives concerning such hypocritical and unprincipled professors; that, having no root, they wither away in a scorching season; that they are again entangled in the pollutions of the world and overcome; that, like dogs, they turn to their own vomit, and like sows wallow in the mire from which they had been washed, *2 Pet. ii. 20, 22.* together with many others of the same nature; as also the prophecies that are made concerning them; that what they seemed to have, shall be taken away from them, *Luke viii. 18.* that they shall proceed no further; *for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, 2 Tim. iii. 9.* that evil men and seducers, and of those, self-seducers are the worst, *shall wax worse and worse, 2 Tim. iii. 13.* with other places of the like nature. It were easy to record many histories of men, especially of great men, who have speedily, I had almost said disdainfully, thrown off all semblance of humility, meekness, self-denial, justice, and faithfulness, which they had put on for a mask during their probation for preferment, the better to accomplish their selfish designs, and to be possessed of some base ends of their own. But yet I will not deny, but that a hypocrite may maintain a fair conformity to, and correspondence with the letter of the law of God; he may continue fair and specious to the very end of his life; yea, perhaps may go to his grave undiscovered either to himself, or any in the world besides.

I believe many men have lived and died Pharisees; have never apostatised from that righteousness which they professed, but have per

vered in their formality and hypocrisy to the last. But, although that counterfeit righteousness and religion may possibly not fade away, yet, nevertheless, being of an earthly and selfish constitution it is transitory and fading; and if it were soundly assaulted and tried with persecutions and temptations, no doubt would actually vanish and disappear; on the other hand, the promise of God is rich and precious, Isa. xl. 31. *They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall walk and not faint.*

Take encouragement from hence, all ye that love the Lord; go on in the strength of God; be the more lively, by how much the more you are assured that this well of water shall spring up in you into everlasting life. Make this good use of this comfortable doctrine: will God indeed work in you *both to will and to do*? why, then, so much rather *work out your own salvation*, according to the apostle, *Phil. ii. 12.* Will the Lord God *be with you*? Will he *not fail you nor forsake you till you have finished all your work*? Why, then, *be strong and of good courage*, and do as good David infers and argues, *1 Chron. xxviii. 20.* Have you this hope, this firm ground of hope in the promise and goodness of God? Why, then, *purify yourselves as God is pure*, according to the apostle, *1 John iii. 3.* Stop the mouths of those men that say the doctrine of perseverance is prejudicial to godliness: let them see, and be forced to acknowledge it, that the more a godly soul is assured of the infinite and unchangeable love and care of God towards him, the more he is winged with love and zeal, with speed mounting up thither

daily, where he longs to arrive. They that understand the doctrine of perseverance, do also understand that they must accomplish it in a way of dutiful diligence and watchful willingness; and if any grow profane and licentious, and apostatise from the way of righteousness which they have known, it is an evidence to them that they are not saints; and then what will the doctrine of the perseverance of saints avail them?

CHAP. VII.

Religion considered in the consequence of not thirsting: the phrase explained two ways, both resulting in the same general truth, viz. That divine grace gives a solid satisfaction to the soul. This aphorism confirmed by some scriptures, and largely explained in six propositions. The first, That there is a raging thirst in every soul of man after some ultimate and satisfactory good. The second, That every natural man thirsteth principally after happiness in the creature. The third, That no man can find that full satisfaction in any creature-enjoyment which every natural man principally seeketh therein; this prosecuted in two particulars. The fourth, That grace takes not away the soul's thirst after happiness, but much increases it; the reason assigned. The fifth, That the godly soul thirsteth no more after rest in any worldly thing, but in God alone; this prosecuted in both the branches of it; in the former more largely, where inquiry is made how far a godly man may be said to thirst after the creature, and

answered in four particulars ; the latter briefly touched upon. The sixth, That in the enjoyment of God the soul is at rest ; and this in a double sense, viz. so as that it is perfectly suited with its object ; two things noted to explain this. Secondly, so satisfied as to have joy and pleasure in in him ; a double account given of that joy. The chapter closes with a lamentation over the levity and earthliness of Christian minds.

HITHERTO we have taken a view of true religion, as it is described in this prolific text, by its origin, nature, and properties ; we are now to consider it in the certain and genuine consequent of it ; and that is, in one word, affirmatively, *satisfaction* ; or, negatively, *not thirsting* : for so it is, in our Saviour's phrase, *Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst.*

Whilst I attempt the application of this phrase, I need not exactly and methodically describe with scholastic gravity, first what is not, and then what is meant by it : for I presume no body will dream that a corporeal or gross kind of thirsting is meant. Grace doth no more quench the thirst of the body, than water can relieve the panting of the soul. Nay, he himself was subject to this gross kind of thirst, who gave to others the water whereof, if they drank, they should never thirst more. If it be understood of a spiritual thirst, yet I suppose I need not to tell you, that then it must not be understood absolutely : for it cannot possibly be, that the thirst of a soul should be perfectly allayed till all its faculties be filled up to the brim of their respective capacities, which will

never be until it be swallowed up in the infinite and unbounded ocean of the supreme good.

But I conceive we may fairly come at the meaning of this phrase, *never thirst*, either by adding, or distinguishing.

1. Then let us supply the sentence thus, *Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst after any other water.* There is no worldly liquor that can be so accommodated or attempered to the palate, as to give it an universal satisfaction, so as that a man should be perfectly mortified to all variety: but this heavenly water, which our Saviour treats of here, is so fitted to the palate of spirits, and brings such satisfaction along with it, that the soul that is made to drink of it does supersede its chase of all other delights; counts all other waters but filthy and unsavoury; thirsts no more after any other thing, neither through necessity nor for variety. The more the soul drinks of this water indeed, the more it thirsteth after greater measures and larger portions of the same; and does not only drink in divine virtue and influences, but even longs to be itself absorbed in the divinity; as we shall see further in the procedure of this discourse; but its thirst after all created good, all the waters of the cistern, is hereby extinguished, or at least mastered and mortified. Or,

2. By distinguishing the thirst, the sense of the phrase will be clearly this, *Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never be at a loss more, never need to seek any more, never be uncertain or unsatisfied as to his main happiness or supreme object; he shall not rove and range*

hither and thither in an unfixedness and suspense any more; shall not run to and fro to seek satisfaction and rest any more. From an internal unsatisfiedness of the body spring violent and restless motions and agitations, by which thirst is contracted; so that, by metonymy, thirst comes to be used for unsatisfiedness, which is the remote cause of it; and, by a metaphor, the same phrase comes to be applied to the soul. I suppose I am warranted, by the sacred style, thus to interpret, especially by the use and explication of the phrase in *Jer. ii. 25.* where the prophet intimates, that by thirst is to be meant a restless and discontented running up and down to seek satisfaction; *Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst;* which two phrases are of the same import, and signify no more than cease from hastening after your idols; and that this is the meaning of that thirsting appears by the answer that the wilful and desperate people make in the sequel of the verse: for instead of saying, No, but we will thirst; they cry, *No, but after them will I go.* Thirst then is in an unsatisfiedness and spiritual disquiet to range up and down seeking something wherein ultimately to acquiesce. And, in this sense, it is most true what our Lord here pronounceth, that *Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst.* Of which thirst that notable proclamation of our Saviour is to be understood, *John vii. 37. If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink;* in which place also, we must necessarily understand what is here expressed, that then he shall never thirst more.

It matters not much by which of these two ways we explain the phrase of *not thirsting;* for,

according to either of them, it will result in this theological maxim, viz. that "Divine grace, or true Christian religion, gives a real and solid satisfaction to the soul that is principled with it."

This will appear plain though we adduce in proof of it but one text out of each Testament of the holy Scriptures. I think it cannot reasonably be doubted, but that the prophecy and promise made in *Isa. xlix. 10.* is to be performed unto believers in this present life; for so must the foregoing verses necessarily be understood; and there we have the doctrine expressly asserted, *They shall not hunger nor thirst, &c. for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.* To which those words of our Saviour are parallel, *John vi. 35. He that believeth on me shall never thirst:* which doctrine of his is yet amplified and enlarged in *John vii. 38. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.* What greater security from thirst can be desired, than that one should be led by springs of water? Yes, one may be led by the springs of water, and yet not be suffered to drink of them: well therefore, to put an end to all fear, the godly soul shall contain within himself a spring of water; he shall have rivers of living waters in himself; and for his great security, these rivers shall be forever flowing. It shall suffice at present, thus briefly to have established this conclusion. And now, having expressed the meaning of the words in this short position, I shall endeavour to explain it in the six following propositions:

1st, "There is a raging thirst in every soul of man after some ultimate and satisfactory good." The God of nature hath implanted in every created being a secret but powerful tendency towards a centre of good; whose dictates, arising out of the very constitution of it, it cannot disobey until it cease to be such, and utterly apostatise from the state of its creation. And the nobler any being is, the more excellent is the object assigned to it, and the more strong and potent, and uncontrollable are its rapidity and motions thereunto. Wherefore the soul of man must also have its own proper centre; which must be something superior to, and more excellent than itself, able to satisfy all its wants, to fill all its capacities, to overcome all its cravings, and give a plenary and perfect satisfaction: which therefore can be no other than uncreated goodness, even God himself. It was not possible that God should make man of such faculties, and those so capacious as we see them, and appoint any thing below himself to be his ultimate happiness. Now, although it be sadly true, that the faculties of the soul are miserably maimed, depraved, benighted and distorted; yet I do not see that the soul is so deprived utterly of its nature by sin, as that any other thing should be obtruded upon it for its centre and happiness, than the same infinite good that was from the beginning such; or so as that its main and cardinal motions should be ultimately directed to any other than its natural and primitive object. The natural understanding hath not indeed any clear or distinct sight of this blessed object; but yet it retains an indistinct and

general apprehension of him, and may be said, even in all its pursuits of other things, to be still groping in the dark after him: neither is it without some secret and latent sense of God, that the will of man chooses or embraces any thing for good.

The apostle hesitates not to affirm, that the idolatrous Athenians themselves did worship God. *Acts xvii. 23.* though at that time indeed they knew not what they worshipped: their worship was secretly and implicitly directed unto God, and did ultimately resolve itself into him, though they were not aware of it,—*whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you*; and that he declared God unto them, appears abundantly by the following verses. What he says in point of worship, the same I may say in point of love, trust, delight, dependence, and apply it to all sorts of idolaters, as well as image-worshippers, and affirm that the covetous idolater, even when he most fondly clings to his gold, and most firmly confides in his riches, doth “ignorantly” love and trust in God; the proud idolater, in the highest acts of self-seeking, and self-pleasing, doth “ignorantly” admire and adore God, the ambitious idolater, even in the hottest pursuit of secular glory, and popular applause, doth “ignorantly” seek and honour God. For that rest, contentment, peace, happiness, and satisfaction, at which these mistaken souls aim, what is it but God, though they attribute it to something else which cannot yield it, and so commit a real blasphemy? for they that do in their hearts, and the course of their lives, ascribe a full and satisfying virtue to

riches, pleasures, or honours, do as truly, though not so loudly, blaspheme, as they who cried out concerning the calf of gold, *Exod. xxxii. 4. These be thy gods, O Israel! &c.* And in this sense that I have been speaking, one may safely affirm, that the most professed atheist in the world doth secretly pursue the God whom he openly denies, whilst his will is seizing that which his judgment renounceth, and he allows that deity in his lusts which he will not own in heaven. The hypocrite professes to know God, but in works denies him; on the other hand, the atheist, though in words he deny God, yet in his works he professeth him: so natural and necessary it is for all men to acknowledge a deity, though some are so brutish and senseless as to make a God of their own bellies; of whom the apostle speaks, *Phil. iii. 19. Whose god is their belly;* I say natural; for they are not a few men only of a better education, and more contemplative minds who hunt after this invisible and satisfying good; but the most vulgar souls, retaining still the nature of souls, are perpetually aiming at an ultimate happiness and satisfaction, and are secretly stung and tormented with the want of it. Certainly the motions of a soul are more strong and weighty than we are ordinarily aware of; and I think, one may safely conclude, that if there were no latent sense, or natural knowledge of God, the poor man could not spend the powers of his soul so intensely to purchase a little food and raiment for the body, nor the covetous man so insatiably thirst after houses and land, and a larger heap of refined earth: did they not secretly im-

agine that some contentment, happiness, or satisfaction, was to be received together with these acquisitions, they would seem to be but dry and insipid food to a soul. And this ultimate happiness and satisfaction, as I said before, can be no other than God himself, whom these mistaken souls do ignorantly adore, and blindly seek.

Neither let any one think that this ignorant and unwary pursuit of God can pass for religion, or be acceptable in the sight of God; for as it is impossible that ever any man should stumble into a happy state, without foresight and free choice, and be in it without any kind of sense or feeling of it; so neither can God accept the blind for sacrifice, or be pleased with any thing less than reasonable service from a reasonable creature. As the Athenians, worshipping God by altars and images, are counted superstitious, not devout; so the whole generation of gross and sensual souls, admiring, loving, and ignorantly coveting after God in the pictures and images of true goodness, are indeed, truly blasphemers and idolaters; but religious they cannot be. We cannot excuse those from idolatry, who pretend to direct their worship to the true God by or through images; much less can we be favourable to those who bestow their love, joy, confidence, and delight, ignorantly upon the supreme and self-sufficient good, by or through any created good, in which they, as far as they understand, do terminate their devotion. I do not say that all souls have a distinct discovery of the good at which they aim; it is evident they have not; but yet the will of every man is secretly in pursuit of some

ultimate end and happiness; and indeed in its eager tendencies outflies the understanding. All which mystery seems to be embraced in that short but forcible inquiry, (which, if it were a little otherwise modified, would be an excellent description of the natural soul,) Ps. iv. 6. *Many say, Who will shew us any good?* The nature of the object is exhibited in the word *good*; the eagerness of the motion, in the form of the question, *Who will shew us?* and the ignorance of the inquirer appears in the indeterminateness of this object, which is well explained by the supply of the word *any*; *Who will shew us any good?* And that this is the cry of every rational soul is intimated by the word *many*; which *many* is also in metre multiplied into the greater sort, and must indeed necessarily be extended unto all.

2dly, "Every natural man thirsteth principally after happiness and satisfaction in the creature." The fall of the soul consisteth in its sinking itself into the animal life; and the business of every unrenewed soul is, in one kind or other, still to gratify the same life: for although, as I have shewn, God is the remote object of these men's cares, and loves, and desires, and is implied in all their thirstings; yet I may well say of them, as God says of the Assyrian monarch, when he executed his pleasure in correcting his people Israel, Isa. x. 7. *Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so.* God is not in all their thoughts, whilst they pursue that in the creature which really none but God alone can be unto them. They do ultimately direct, as to their intention, all their cares, and covetings, and thirstings, to

some created object; all which are calculated for the animal life, for gratifying and accomplishing their own base lusts. This is very apparent in the idolatry of the Pagans, whose lusts gave being to their gods; and so their deities were as many as their concupiscences and filthy passions: to sacrifice to their own revenge and sensuality, under the names of Mars, Bacchus, and Venus, what else was it but to proclaim to all the world that they took the highest contentment and satisfaction in the fulfilling of such kind of lusts? this was to them their god or supreme felicity.—The case is the same, though not so expressly and professedly, with all carnal Christians, who although they profess the true God, yet in truth make him only subservient to their own lusts and base ends; though they *name the name of Christ*, yet they in very deed deify their own passions, and sacrifice to the gratification of their animal powers. The Psalmist, as we have seen, determines the main end of all men to be good, *Ps. iv. 6.* but, lest any man should be deceived in them, he presently tells us where this good was placed, *ver. 7. viz. in corn and wine*; by which we must understand the animal life, and whatsoever administers to the delight thereof. And certainly this will extend far; for not only meats and drinks, carnal pleasures, gorgeous apparel, sumptuous buildings, splendid descent, honourable preferments, popular applause, inordinate recreations, and an unweildy bulk of earthly riches; but also orthodox opinions, philosophical, political, and even scholastic learning, fair professions, much pompous worship, yea, and worship industriously void of pomp, spe-

cious performances; to which we may add, the most comely exercises of undaunted valour, unshaken constancy, unbribed justice, uninterrupted temperance, unspotted chastity, and unlimited charity, (if much giving may deserve so sacred a name;) even all these, and many more, may serve only as fuel for the rapacious fire of lust and self-love, to maintain and keep alive the mere animal, or at most, intellectual life; and are ordinarily designed as sacrifices to that which we significantly call *self*, in contradistinction from God.

I need not here declaim against covetous, luxurious, ambitious souls, the apostle having so expressly prevented me by his plain and pointed arraignment of such men, *Col. iii. 5. Phil. iii. 19.* where he charges them with making a deity of their treasures and their bellies: otherwise I dare appeal to all the world that are not parties themselves, whether it be God or themselves that these persons do intend to serve, and please, and gratify: whether it be a real assimilation to God, and the true honour of his name, or some lust or humour of self-pleasing, self-advancing, and self-enjoying, to which they devote their cares and pains, and the chief desires of their souls. I am confident it will be readily acknowledged, that the covetous, voluptuous, and ambitious, do sacrifice all they are and possess to the latter; but, alas! it is not yet agreed among men who are these persons; the hypothesis is granted; but the explication is disputed: and indeed this is no wonder; for it is as natural for the animal life to excuse guilt, as it is to contract it; and the pride

of the natural man is no less conspicuous in his wrong endeavours to seem innocent of what he is indeed guilty, than his covetousness and voluptuousness are apparent in the matter wherein his guilt consisteth. It is not only these, and some few of the grossest and profanest sorts of souls, that are guilty in this way which I have been describing, though they indeed are grossly and most visibly guilty; but verily the whole race of mere animal men, who have no principle of divine life implanted in them, do spend all their days, bestow all their pains, and enjoy all their comforts, in a real and uninterrupted course of blasphemy. What a blasphemous kind of philosophy was that which professedly placed the supreme good and chief happiness of man in the fruition of pleasures. And indeed all those kinds of philosophy which placed it in any thing below God himself, and the enjoyment of him, were no less profane, though they may seem somewhat less beastly: for whether the Epicureans idolized their own senses, or the more exalted Stoics deified their own faculty, placing their chief contentment in their self-sufficiency, and the perpetual serenity and tranquillity of their own minds, it is too apparent that both the one and the other still moved within the narrow and low sphere of natural self, and grasped after a deity in the poor dark shadows, and glimmering representatives of him. But I am speaking to Christians: and, amongst these, let no man tell me how orthodox his opinions, how pure and spiritual his forms, how numerous and specious his performances are, how correctly he pays his homage,

and prays to one living God by one living Mediator; I willingly allow, and do with delight observe these things wherever they are; but yet all this doth not determine a man to be a Christian: for still that truth of the apostle must hold good, Rom. vi. 16. *His servants ye are to whom ye obey*: and I may add by a similar phraseology, *His children ye are whom ye resemble*; his creatures ye are, as far as ye can make yourselves so, whose sufficiency and power are most magnified in your hearts; his worshippers ye are whom ye most love, trust in, delight in, and depend upon; in a word, that is your god in which your soul doth chiefly rest, and centre, and involve itself. And, alas! how visibly dear and precious is the selfish life, which is so universally pampered, cherished, and sacrificed unto, besides the invisible and more spiritual oblations that are made thereunto. This is as true an Antichrist in the mystery, as there is any literal Antichrist in the world; and of this one may as truly say, as St. John doth of the other, *All the world wondereth after the beast*. In a word then, whosoever saith in his heart concerning any thing that is not God, what the rich man in the gospel said concerning his goods, *Soul, take thine ease, in them, and be merry*, the same is an idolater and blasphemer: and this I affirm to be the language of every apostate spirit, and unregenerated soul of man.

3dly, "No man can find that happiness, and soul-filling satisfaction in any creature-enjoyment, which every natural man principally seeketh therein." Here are two things to be discussed, viz. the enjoyments of men, or what they possess, and the

satisfaction which the natural man seeketh in such possessions. For the first of these, I cannot easily believe that ever any natural man was satisfied with such possessions, I mean as to the quantity of them; he never had so much of them as to be able freely to say, "It is enough." The rational soul hath a strong and insatiable appetite, and wherever it imagineth its beloved prey to be found, and full enjoyment to be had, it is exceeding greedy and rapacious; whether the same will ever be able to afford it or not, it matters not. The animal life is that voracious idol, (not like Bel in the story, which seems only to eat up, but) which doth really devour all the rich good and sensual pleasures that are sacrificed unto it, and yet is not filled therewith. The whole employment of the natural man, *quantum, quantum est*, [however great that employment may be,] is nothing else but, as the apostle elegantly describes it, Rom. xiii. 14. *To make provision for the flesh, to fulfil it in the lusts thereof*: wherein yet, to speak the truth, he loses his labour; for he sacrifices all to an insatiable idol, and pours it into a gulf that hath neither bottom nor bounds, but swalloweth up all, and is rather made to thirst than to cease from thirsting by all that is or can be administered unto it. I consider that expression of Solomon, *Eccl. i. 8. to be a clear proof in general of what I affirm, The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing*; the eye of man, as little as it is, is bigger than the whole visible world; and although it may be wearied with looking upon various objects, (as the English annotators observe upon these words,)

yet still it desires new ones, and can gaze upon them with great delight; so that, although the acts of the eye be scant and finite, yet the lusts of the eye seem to have a kind of infinity in them. And indeed by the unsatiableness of the eye and ear, is meant the greediness or voracity of the flesh or animal life, as Mr. Cawwright hath well observed upon Prov. xxvii. 20. *Hell and destruction are never full, so the eyes of a man are never satisfied*; where, by not being satisfied, is meant not having enough in quantity, as appears by the similitude in the former part of the verse. To the same sense he speaks, *Eccl. iv. 8. and v. 10.* It would be endless to relate the monstrous and insatiable desires, of covetous, ambitious, voluptuous, proud, and vain-glorious minds after their respective idols. And indeed I need not descend to particular instances; for I suppose never any natural man could heartily say he had enough of riches, promotion, applause, sensual delights, eloquence, policy, prowess, or victory, or of any other thing which is accommodated to the gratification of the flesh, no more than a godly soul sojourning upon earth could ever be yet able to say it had enough of God and eternal life. So that, in a word, I know not how to apply any description to this insatiable and devouring principle more properly than that which the prophet makes of hell, Isa. v. 44. *She enlargeth herself and openeth her mouth without measure, and all glory, multitude and pomp, descend into it.* I know there are of these men that pretend to have enough in quantity of these fleshly provisions; but I fear falsely and unjustly: for, as for the rich and honour-

able of the earth, it is too evident that they are still climbing higher, and grasping after more; as Alexander the great is said to have wept for more worlds, when he conceited himself to be master of all this. As for the poorer and meaner sort of people, who are as ready sometimes to lay claim to this virtue of thinking that they have enough, as well as others; it is too manifest to a wise observer, that it is not a real apprehension that they have enough, but either a lowness or weakness of spirit, arising from the meanness of their education, or a downright despair of ever getting more.

But be it imagined that the enjoyments of some natural men are enough in respect of quantity, yet still there is certainly wanting a true and sincere satisfaction of soul in such possessions; no man of all these finds that real happiness in those things after which he so vehemently searches. Solomon reduces all the pleasure and contentment that is to be found in multiplied riches to a very pitiful *sum total*, Eccl. v. 11. *What good is there to the owners thereof, save the beholding of them with their eyes?* And, alas! what is the sight of the eye to the satisfaction of the soul! The whole visible world is utterly too scant for, and incommensurate to the wide and deep capacity of an immortal spirit; so that the same can no more satisfy, than a less can fill a greater, which is surely impossible. Whatever is in the world not of God, is described by the prophet, *Isa. lv. 2.* to be *not bread*, there is the unsuitableness; and *not to satisfy*, there is the insufficiency of it to the soul of man. On the other hand, this soul

of man is so vastly capacious, that though it be ever so greedy and rapacious, snatching on the right hand, and catching on the left hand, as the prophet describes his people, *Isa. ix. 20.* yet still it is hungry and unsatisfied. Which ravenous and insatiable appetite of the sensual soul, is elegantly described by the prophet in the similitude of an whorish woman, who prostituteth herself to all comers, and *multiplieth her fornications*, yet it *unsatiable, is not, cannot be satisfied*, *Ezek. xvi. 28, 29.* The soul may indeed feed, yea, and surfeit upon, but it can never satisfy itself from itself, or from any created good; nothing can ultimately determine and concentrate the motions of a soul, but something superior to its own essence; which whilst it misses, it is as it were divided against itself, perpetually struggling and fluctuating and travelling in pangs with some new design or other to be at rest; like the old lioness in the parable of Ezekiel, breeding up one whelp after another to be a lion wherein to confide, but disappointed in all; or like the poor discontented butterfly, lighting and catching every where but resting no where; adoring something for a god to-day, which it will be ready to cast into the fire to-morrow, after their manner of creating gods to themselves, whom the Poet introduces as saying—

———*Hodie mihi Jupiter esto,
Cras mihi truncus eris ficulnus, inutile lignum.*

[To-day be thou my God;
To-morrow thou wilt be to me a despised and
useless block:]

Neither the quantity, variety, or duration of any created objects, can possibly fill that large and noble capacity wherewith God hath endued the rational soul; but having departed from its centre, and not knowing how to return to its original, it wanders up and down as it were in a wilderness, and having an imperfect, glimmering sight of something better than what itself as yet either is or hath, but not being able to attain to it, it is miserably tormented, even as a man in a thirst which he cannot quench; and the more he exerts himself in seeking water, the more is his thirst increased whilst he misses of it; so this distempered and distracted soul, whilst it seeks to quench its thirst at the creature-cistern does but inflame it, and in a continual pursuit of rest becomes most restless. That every unregenerate soul is in such a distressed, weary, restless state as I have been describing, appears most evidently by those remarkable gospel proclamations; one in Isa. lv. 1—3. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;* where, by the thirsters are meant those unfixed, unsatisfied souls, as appears by the second verse; the other in Matt. xi. 23. *Come unto me, all ye that labour, &c.* where the promise of giving rest does plainly imply the restless state of the persons invited. There is a certain horror and anguish in sin and wickedness, even long before it be swallowed up in hell; a certain vanity and vexation are folded up in all earthly enjoyments, though the same do not always sting and pierce the soul alike; so true is that notable aphorism of the prophet Isaiah, *There is no peace to the wicked.*

Athly, "Grace takes not away this thirst of the soul after happiness and plenary satisfaction." Love and desire, and a tendency towards blessedness, are so interwoven into the nature of the soul, and inlaid in the very essence of it, that it cannot possibly put them off; however it is the work of grace to change and rectify them, as we shall see under the next head. The soul of man is a kind of immaterial fire, an inextinguishable activity, always necessarily catching at some object or other, in conjunction with which she thinks to be happy: and therefore, if she be stripped of herself and the world, and be mortified to the love of fleshly and animal lusts, she will certainly cleave to some higher and more excellent object; as will soon more clearly appear. Grace does not stupify the soul as to its sense of its own indigence and poverty, but indeed makes it more abundantly sensible and importunate. There are more strong motions, and more powerful appetites in the godly soul towards its true and proper happiness, than in the ungodly and wicked. For the understanding of the regenerate soul is so enlightened, as that it doth present the will with an amiable and satisfactory object; which object therefore being more distinctly and perfectly apprehended, doth also apprehend or lay hold upon the soul, and attract her unto itself. *Oculi sunt in amore duces*, [the eyes are the inlets of love,] is most true of the eye of the soul, I mean the understanding, which first affects the heart with amorous passions. The first and fundamental error and mistake of the rational soul seems to lie in the understanding; here is the very root of the degen-

ate soul's distemper; and if this were thoroughly restored and healed, so as to present the will with pure and proper ideas and representations of God: it might be hoped that this ductile faculty would soon cleave unto him entirely; nay, it may be doubted whether it could possibly resist the dictates of it. Now in the regenerate soul this faculty is repaired; yea, I may say, that the spirit of regeneration first of all spreads itself upon the understanding, and awakens in it a sense of self-indigence and of the perfect, all-sufficient, suitable, and satisfactory fulness of God; in whom it sees all beauty, sweetness, and loveliness, in an infinitely ineffable manner wrapped up and contained; which will be so far from allaying the essential thirst of the soul, and stifling its eager pantings, that it must necessarily give a mighty edge and ardour to its inclinations, and produce a more bold and earnest struggling towards this glorious object, and charm the whole soul into the very arms of God. Therefore not thirsting in the text, must not be understood absolutely, as if grace did utterly extinguish the natural activities of the soul, and finish its propensions: but the regenerate and gracious soul doth not thirst in such sense, as to imply a want of a suitable good, or dissatisfaction, or to include torment properly so called. In this notion of thirst grace doth indeed quench it, as I intimated in the beginning of this discourse, and will further appear in the procedure of it. But this most essential, this natural thirst or vergency of the soul towards a central rest and happiness, is so far from being either extinguished or moderated by divine grace,

that it is greatly improved, and mightily increased thereby. I need not dwell upon a theme so popular, and a subject so readily acknowledged; therefore I will only present you with the instances of holy David in the Old Testament, and gracious Paul in the New, and then quit this head. I need not magnify the holy and divine frame of David's spirit by any rhetoric of mine; God himself hath given the amplest testimony, and fairest character of him that ever was given of any man, when he owns him for *a man after his own heart*: and what a longing, thirsting soul this was, I need do no more to demonstrate than to refer you to some passages and professions in his devout Psalms, such as *Ps. xlii. 12. lxiii. 1. cxliiii. 6.* where he borrows the strongest expressions that are to be found in the whole creation, to represent the devout ardours of his own soul; *As the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land: yea, he seems like one that would faint away for very longing: Hear me speedily, O Lord, my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit; I lift up my soul unto thee; I flee unto thee, &c.* The very same temper you will find in holy Paul, that chosen vessel of God, if you peruse his Epistles; in all which you will meet with devout and strong breathings of the same kind; particularly *Phil. iii. 11, 12, 13, 14.* where he seems so thirsty after a state of heavenly perfection, that

he longs after, (if I mistake not the meaning of the 11th verse,) something that he knows he cannot reach whilst he is in this world; even the resurrection of the dead, or such a perfect state of purity and holiness, as belongs to the children of the resurrection.

5thly, "The godly soul thirsteth no more after happiness in any creature, nor rests in any worldly thing; but in God alone." This particular consists also of two branches: the former and negative part whereof seems to me to contain in it the scope and meaning of our Saviour, in these words which I am now interpreting. We have already seen that every unsanctified soul is restless, and craving, wavering, unsatisfied, inconstant to itself, and its choice: by reason of its natural activity, it is always spending itself in restless and giddy motions, as we observed under the first head of this discourse; but by reason of its ignorance, and unacquaintance with the one supreme and all-sufficient good, and the multiplicity of lower ends and objects, it is miserably distracted, and doth necessarily meet with inevitable disturbances, in a continual unsteadiness; putting forth itself now towards one thing, presently to another; courting every thing, but uniting with nothing; like a fickle lover, that is always enamoured with the last feature he saw; or a greedy merchant, that being equally in love with the pleasure of being at home, and the profit of being abroad, cannot be contented to stay long in any place, but has always most desire after the place where he is not; as the Poet, elegantly describes—

Romæ Tybur amo ventosus, Tybur Romam.

[When at home, I am discontented and desire to be at Tybur; when at Tybur, to be at home.]

The description that our Lord gives of the unclean spirit that is gone out of a man, *Matt. xii. 43.* seems very aptly to agree with that unclean spirit that is in man, which being departed from God, its proper rest and habitation, walketh through dry and desart places, (I mean, empty and unsatisfying creature-enjoyments,) seeking rest but finding none. It was an accidental affliction of believers, but it is the natural and necessary affliction of every unbelieving and wicked soul, to wander up and down the world destitute, afflicted, tormented. Sinful self is so multiform, and that one root, the animal life, has such a multitude of branches, that it is impossible to administer due nourishment to them all; and yet they are all importunate and greedy: so that he must have a difficult task, and painful province, that is constrained to attend upon so many, so different, and yet all of them so impatient and imperious masters. But I shall lose labour by thus returning to my second head, except I can make this advantage of it, to inforce my subject with the greater strength and clearer evidence. The case standing thus with the unregenerate soul, as we have seen in this short review, I now say, that divine grace allays the insatiable thirst of the soul after other waters, that are foul, of which it could never yet drink deeply, or if it drank ever so deeply, could not be quenched; it determines the soul to one object, which before

was distracted with many. It does not destroy any of the natural powers, nor dry up the innate vigour of the soul, as I proved under the last head; but it takes it off from the pursuit of all inferior ends, and inadequate objects, setting it upon a vehement pursuit of the highest good, and causing it to spend all those its powers not less vigourously, but far more rationally and satisfactorily upon that *objectum par amori*, [object able to satisfy its love,] the infinitely amiable and all sufficient God. When the soul hath once met with this glorious object; is once delighted with this supreme good; is, by divine grace, expanded and enlarged, it cannot, with any ease, be satisfied with the creature any more; that is too scanty and insufficient for it. Certainly the soul that understands its own origin, nature, and capacity, and once views itself in God, will see itself too large to be bounded by the narrow confines of self, or any creature, and too free to be bound down to any earthly object whatever. The world indeed may, yea and will labour to take off the soul: *What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou art so fond of him? Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?* Be content, here is hay and provender; stay with me this night; let us rejoice and make merry together a little longer. But these Syren songs are sung to a deaf ear; they cannot enchant the wise and devout soul, that hath her senses well awakened, and exercised to discern between good and evil: O no, *I am sick of love*, and sick of every thing that keeps me from my Beloved; and therefore,

however you may injure me through fraud or force, through surprize or violence, yet I will not yield myself unto you. The gracious soul hath now discovered the most beautiful, perfect, and lovely object, even him whose name is love itself; which glorious vision hath so blasted and withered the choicest flowers in nature's garden, that they have now no such form nor comeliness, beauty, or fragrancy, as to deserve to be desired; she hath tasted the pure and perfect sweetness of the Fountain, which hath so imbittered all cistern-waters, that she finds no more thirstings in herself after them; which is that which our Saviour promised here, *shall never thirst*. A godly man cannot possibly be put off with any thing short of God; give him his God, or he dies; give him ever so much fair usage in the world, ever so much of earthly accommodations, they are not accommodated to his wants and thirsts, if they have not that God in them, separate from whom all worldly pleasures are even irksome and unpleasant, and all fleshly ease is tedious and painful: creature-employments are but a wearisome task to a soul that is acquainted with the work of angels; and creature-enjoyments, in themselves considered, are very insignificant, if not burdensome, to a mind that is feelingly possessed of the highest good.

But here it will be proper to take into consideration a grand inquiry, *viz.* Whether a godly man may not be said in some sense to desire the world, and how far such a person may be said to thirst after it. This I shall discuss as briefly, and yet as clearly as I can, in the four following particulars:—

1. "All godly souls are not equally mortified to worldly loves, nor equally zealous and importunate lovers of God." This is so evident, from the fact, that I need not insist upon it. Abraham seems to have been as much higher and nobler in spirit than his brother Lot, as Lot was more excellent than one of the ordinary sons of Adam, I had almost said, than one of the Sodomites amongst whom he dwelt. The one leaves all the pleasant and plentiful accommodations of his native country, at the very first call, going out, not knowing whether he went, relying wholly upon the gracious guidance of him whom he followed; he seems to reckon all countries alike for his sojourning, and the whole habitable world as his own city and home; as appears by his readiness to take down his tent, and quit his present habitation, rather than interfere with the conveniences of his nephew, *Gen. xiii. 9*. The other preferred a fruitful soil before a faithful society; and so, in some sense, his body before his soul; and yet, as if it had not been enough to make so unadvised a choice, he rests in it too; yea, though he was so severely reprov'd by the captivity that befel him there, whereby he was not so much called, as indeed carried away thence, yet this will not loosen him from his earthly conveniences, but he returns to Sodom, and from thence he will not part till he be driven out by fire; nay, and then also it is with much lingering and lothness, *Gen. xix. 16*. It is evident I say, from facts, both from this and many other instances which I purposely omit, that all godly souls are not equally regardless of these earthly things, nor carried

out with equal ardour and intemperance, as I may call it, towards the supreme and most glorious object; of which I can assign no better reason than this, that they are not all equally godly.

For,

2. "So far as grace prevails, and religion in the power of it actuateth the soul in which it is planted, so far earthly loves decay and wither." For these two cannot stand together, *mutuo se pellunt*, [they mutually repel each other;] the love of the world is inconsistent with the love of God, 1 John ii. 15. *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* So far as any soul is sanctified, so far is it mortified also to all creature-enjoyments, to all things that are only fuel for the animal life, such as honour, ease, victory, plenty, liberty, relations, recreations, all the entertainments and delights in this lower life, yea, and this very life itself. Earthly and heavenly loves are to each other as the two ends of a pair of balances, only they are never found equally poizing, as the one rises the other falls; just so much advantage as this gets, that loses. The more the sensual and self-central life thrives and prospers, and the creature is exalted, the more religion and the divine life faint and flag in the soul: and so certainly, on the other hand, the more divine grace prevails, and the divine life flourisheth in the soul, the more all earthly objects wither and lose their beauty, and the soul cooleth and languisheth in its love and desire of them. So far as a regenerate soul is unregenerate, so far she will be hastening after other lovers: which regeneration will not, I con-

ceive, be thoroughly perfected, and therefore these lustings not utterly extinguished, till this mortal put on immortality; or, as the apostle speaks elsewhere, till *mortality be swallowed up of life*.

3. For the preventing of rash and uncharitable judging, I do affirm, that "divine and holy souls are often mistaken by them that behold their ordinary conversation and actions in the body." They are thought sometimes to take pleasure in the creature, and to gratify the flesh, when indeed it is no such matter; but they take pleasure in the work of God, or the evidence of his fatherly love, which they contemplate therein; and do, perhaps, most of all subserve a spiritual end, and an eternal design in those very actions which others may think are calculated for the animal life, and the service of the flesh. Let not the blind world, nor the self-befriending hypocrite, be the judge, and it will appear that the truly godly soul counts nothing savoury to itself, but what represents, teaches, exhibits something of God, nothing pleasant but what hath a tendency to him: such a man doth not feel himself in his highest raptures, doth not view himself in his noblest accomplishments, doth not seek himself in his most excellent performances. Be not mistaken; he doth not so much thirst after long life, riches, friends, liberties, as indeed after God in them all; these all signify nothing to him, if they bring him not nearer to his God, and conduce to his real and spiritual happiness. Yea, possibly, in his most suspicious actions, and those that seem most foreign from religion, and most

designed to please the flesh, he may be highly spiritual and pure: so was our blessed Saviour, we know, even in his conversing with scandalous sinners, eating and drinking with publicans and notorious offenders, though he was traduced by a proud and hypocritical generation; and so I doubt not is many a good Christian, according to his measure, pure as Christ was pure. When a painted hypocrite, who can conjecture the temper of others in no way but by that which he finds in himself, and which he should be and do, if he were under the same circumstances, judges of the actions or disposition of one who is transformed into the image of the divine freedom and benignity, you may easily imagine what a perverse sentence he will pass. It need not seem very strange, methinks, in spiritual things, any more than it is in corporeal, that the most sound and healthful constitutions should, upon a lawful call, adventure themselves further than the crazy and sickly, and should familiarly converse with and handle, yea, and make good work with those briars and thorns, which would prove a snare, or a wound, or a pricking temptation to others. If it were possible for any man to arrive at the purity and perfection of his Saviour, and his firm and immoveable stability in true goodness, he would find himself so wholly dead to sin, and all temptations, and motions thereunto, that he would be able to dare to walk upon the most boisterous waves, without fear of being swallowed up in them, and to take up in his hands the most venomous serpent, not dreading the sting of it. However, the apprehensions and actions of

more perfect and refined souls are not rashly to be judged; for they may easily be mistaken, either by the unhallowed hypocrite, or the more imperfect and impotent saint.

4. To answer yet more fully, I do affirm, that "no truly religious soul in the world doth so thirst after the creature, as to place its main happiness in it, or to seek satisfaction from it." However, all holy souls may not be alike weaned from the world, nor equally love God, though the affections and actions of some may really be, and of others may seem to be, too gross and fleshly, yet no one of all these, in whom this new and divine life is indeed found, doth erect a self-supremacy in his own soul, nor consider his full and complete rest and happiness to consist in any creature-communion whatsoever. Surely this not thirsting is so far a consequent of true religion, that no religious soul in the world can be content to exchange the presence of God and acquaintance with him, for any thing, for all things besides; or, to be more plain, no such person could be content, no, not for all the world, the glory of heaven not excepted, if it may be supposed, to be wicked and ungodly: so that by thirsting here must not be meant some weak wishes, and faint propensions of the soul towards created objects; for certainly there is no soul found in an earthly body in which these are not found; and not only found, but there are some lively and strong strugglings after them, (how strong they may be in a good Christian, and yet predominated over by grace, we cannot punctually determine;) but, by thirsting here, must be

meant the most quick and powerful breathings, the highest and strongest ardour, the predominant and victorious motions and desires of the soul, which do, as it were, serve the whole soul, and lead all its powers and faculties with it into a grateful captivity. Thus shall he thirst no more, who hath once drunk of these waters which flow forth from the presence of the Lord of life, and which the blessed Redeemer of the world is here said to give.

But the latter branch of this particular is, that this inspired soul which we have been describing, thirsteth after his happiness in God alone; that is, in the enjoyment of him. We have already seen that grace does not destroy the natural and essential longing of the soul after a satisfactory good, but rather enhances it; and that the godly soul is most thirsty of all, but not with a thirst for created good, as is before proved: it remains then, that his thirsting after rest and happiness is terminated upon God alone. And so indeed it appears in the instances of holy men recorded in holy writ, to which I alluded under the last head, and so partly anticipated my present subject. But to those passages and expressions which were quoted out of *Ps. xlii. 1, 2, &c.* may be added such as *Ps. iv. 6.* which is the voice of every godly soul; *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us: Ps. xxxix. 6, 7. Surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain; he heapeth up riches, &c. And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee:* where you have the different seekings and centrings of the ungodly, and of the godly soul, ele-

gantly described. Lastly, you may, in *Ps. lxxiii. 25.* again view the object or end of the godly man's ambition; *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee!* Which translation of the words doth in a lively way describe the godly man's end, and aim, and object, and happiness, and indeed his all: or if we translate, perhaps more fitly, with Mollerus, yet they afford us the same doctrine, *Who will give me to be in heaven and with thee? On earth I desire nothing.*

And thus have we despatched the fifth proposition, viz. that the godly soul thirsteth no more after happiness in any creature, or rest in any worldly thing. We now come to the sixth and last particular designed for the explication of this not thirsting of the religious soul, which is this:—

In the enjoyment of God, this soul is at rest, is fully satisfied. I do not mean so satisfied as not to thirst after any more of him, as I have often hinted; but so satisfied, as to be perfectly matched with an object transcendently adequate to all its faculties, and their respective capacities; and so satisfied as to have peace and joy, and triumph in him. These two I will discuss distinctly, and then proceed.

Now for the better understanding of the first of these it should be noted, that the reasonable soul and the faculties of it are of a vast, large, and noble capacity. It is universally granted by all that are not Sadducees, that the capacity of angels is very great and noble; and that the condition of the human soul is not much inferior to

theirs, may, I think, be gathered from the Psalmist's words, Ps. viii. 5. *Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels*: which words, although the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews applies to Christ, *Heb. ii. 9.* and indeed they are peculiarly applicable to him, according to the Dutch translation, which runs thus, *We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, who was become a little lower than the angels, by reason of the sufferings of death; that he should by the grace of God, &c.* Yet I see nothing to hinder but that they may be well applied to the excellent condition of man by creation; especially considering that many other passages of the Old Testament have a double aspect, one more ordinary and obvious, which was most clearly understood by the prophet that wrote them; the other more abstruse and mysterious, principally intended by that Spirit that inspired him; and only to be understood by the revelation of the same Spirit; such are those passages, I conceive, which are found in *Isa. vii. 14. Hosea xi. 1.* interpreted by the evangelist, *Matt. i. 23. and ii. 15.* as also *Jer. xxxi. 15.* with many more. But however it may be with that text, and whether or no the souls of men be so near of kindred to the angels, as to their own comprehensions; yet, that they are capable of a most noble and excellent happiness, and much allied to God himself, doth appear from such texts of Scripture as require them to be *holy as God is holy; to be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect.* Neither need it seem to any incredible, that the rational soul should be so capacious; for we are no more to judge of

the angelical temper, and noble acts of the soul separated from the body, by what we see it to be and do in this body of flesh, than to judge of the prowess and strength of a renowned warrior at the head of an army, by what we discern in him when he lies bound in chains; or of the power and splendour of the sun, by what we discern of it when it is eclipsed, or beclouded; or, no more than we can judge of a man, by the imperfections, stammerings, and weaknesses of his childhood: for so the apostle Paul seems to state the case, *1 Cor. xiii. 10, 11.* plainly implying, that the present and future condition of the soul is comparable to the minority and adult state of a man; as if he had said, “the soul, in its future and separate state, will act as much nobler than what it doth now, as the soul of the wisest and most discreet man in the world acteth more nobly than what it did when he was a child:” yea, and what is still more to our present purpose, he seems clearly to intimate in the 12th verse, that this improvement shall happen, not so much by the more ample illumination and corroborations of the faculties. In the next place it will be easily inferred, that all created good is too scant and insufficient for this capacious spirit of man; too short a bed to stretch itself upon; nay, it cannot contract itself so as to be accommodated to any worldly good, without pain and anguish. From both which it will be naturally and necessarily concluded, that God alone is that adequate object which can match the soul of man, and satisfy it, as being infinitely superior and transcendent to it. The enjoyment of God is that ultimate

end, and only perfect good that is able to fix the spirit of man; which otherwise, not meeting with its match, would be tossed to and fro, and labour under perpetual disquietude and restless fluctuations. God is that almighty goodness and sweetness, who alone is able to draw out all the appetites of the soul unto himself, satisfy all its cravings, charm all its restless motions, and cause all its faculties, in the purest and most complacent manner, to conspire together to give up themselves wholly and entirely to himself.

Secondly, From this conjunction with omnipotent goodness, ariseth pure peace, yea, joy and triumph, to the religious soul. For the clearer understanding of this, I should premise, what some have wisely observed, that there is a natural congruity between God and the soul, it being a spiritual substance and he being a spiritual good, only suitable unto it. This seems to be evident by experience; for we see how difficult, I had almost said, impossible it is, utterly to eradicate and extinguish all sense of virtue and goodness out of the soul of man; to which purpose I think our divines generally speak, when they allow of some holy relics, something of the image of God remaining in the most degenerate souls, though all men have reduced the same to a very poor and inconsiderable spark, and many have buried that very spark under ashes too, and imprisoned that remainder of truth in unrighteousness, living according to those unnatural and foreign principles and conceptions that they have unhappily imbibed. Hence it is, I suppose, that sin and wickedness are so often styled the defilement of

the soul: now, we know, that whatsoever defileth, is adventitious and improper; and hence it is, that sin many times stings and wounds the consciences of those that take most pleasure in it, being so perfectly contrary to this noble and inbred sense of the soul; allowing, then, this natural sympathy that the soul of man hath with its Creator, it will be easy to give a philosophical account of that peace, joy, and triumph, of which the soul must needs be possessed, or rather indeed transported with, that finds and feels itself in conjunction with its centre, and in the dearest embraces of its Creator. It need not seem strange, that the soul should congratulate itself on its arrival at its own haven; nay, it were strange if it should not dissolve into secret joy and pleasure in the hearty entertainment of so blessed and proper a guest as God is unto it; nay, indeed it were unreasonable to imagine, that the conjunction of such noble and discerning faculties with so perfect and proper an object, should not beget the truest and sincerest delight and pleasure imaginable. The delights of an earthly and sensual mind are filthy and impure, in comparison of these pleasures of the refined and purified soul, which must live most gracefully, triumphantly, and deliciously, when it converseth with God most intimately. Certainly if there be any innocent and good natured self-feeling, or self-pleasing, in the world, this is it; though indeed to speak truly, it deserves a better name. It is not possible but that a godly soul, in its right senses, should taste a sweetness in these pure and divine accomplishments wrought in it by the eter-

nal Spirit of righteousness; which self-pleasing is no more blameable, than that natural pleasure which every creature finds in the enjoyment of that which is most aptly accommodated to its necessities, and most perfective of its happiness; which pleasure, I say, ariseth in the soul from its sensible union with God in the spirit, and enjoyment of him, by which enjoyment of God, you will easily perceive that I do not mean the bare pardon of sin, or an abstract justification; for this is not the attainment that is perfective of the soul, neither could it alone, if we could suppose it alone, fill the capacities of the soul, or make it happy, though the rapturous joys of the unprincipled hypocrite spring principally from the opinion and false apprehensions of this pardon; which indeed I take to be a notable, though not infallible, sign of a mercenary, low-spirited, and fleshly minded Christian; but by it I mean that the soul is really regenerated into the image of God, consisting in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and implantation into the root Christ Jesus, by which it partakes of his divine life, power, and Spirit.

And yet besides this, I conceive there is a more theological account to be given of these joys and pleasures which the renewed soul doth so plentifully reap upon her return to God, from whom she had so long strayed by sin and wickedness. For the *God of hope filleth the godly soul with all peace and joy in believing*, Rom. xv. 13. Christ doth on purpose speak words to the hearts of his disciples, that *their joy may be full*, John xv. 11. But whether the most benign and gracious Father of spirits doth immediately from himself

inspire the holy soul with divine joys and pleasures, kindled, as I may say, with nothing but his own breath; or whether he bring them to his holy mountain, and into his house of prayer, and by that, or any other like means, make them joyful, and of a glad heart, as in the day of a solemn festival, as he hath promised to do, *Isa. lvi. 7.* and *Isa. xxv. 6.* however it be, I say, sure it is, that he frequently puts a gladness into their hearts beyond that of the harvest or the vintage, *Ps. iv. 7.* and makes them to rejoice with *joy unspeakable and full of glory*, 1 *Péter i. 8.*

Having now unfolded the meaning of the expression that the gracious soul thirsts no more, I should pass to the last thing contained in the text; but finding myself oppressed in spirit by the consideration of this necessary consequent of true religion, when I compare the temper of Christians with it, I must beg leave to dwell a little upon the thought. And what shall I say? Shall I breathe out a sad and bitter complaint over that low, earthly, selfish, greedy spirit which actuateth the world at this day, yea, and the generality of the professors of that sacred religion which we call Christianity? Alas! what a company of thieves and murderers, I mean, base and sensual loves and lusts, lodge in those very souls which would be taken for temples consecrated to the name, and honour, and inhabitation of the eternal God, the Spirit of truth and holiness. O what pity is it, that the precious souls of men, yea, and of Christians, the best of men, that are all capable of so glorious a liberty, so high and honourable a happiness, should be bound

down under such vile and sordid lusts, and feed upon dust and gravel, to whom the hidden Manna is freely offered, and God himself is ready to become a banquet! And O, what a shame is it, for those who profess themselves children of God, disciples of the most holy Jesus, and heirs of his pure and undefiled kingdom of heaven; for these, I say, willingly and greedily to roll themselves in filthy and brutish sensualities, to set up that on high in their souls, which was made to be subject to their bodies, and so to love and live as if they studied to have no affinity at all; but would be as unlike as they could, to that God, and Redeemer, and unfit for that inheritance! How often shall it be protested to the Christian world, by men of the greatest devotion and seriousness, that it is utterly mad, and perfectly vain, to dream of entering into the kingdom of heaven hereafter, except the kingdom of heaven enter into our souls during their union with these bodies? How long shall the Son of God, who came into the world on purpose to be the most glorious example of true and divine purity, exact and perfect self-denial, and mortification, how long shall he be neglected in his word, as an antiquated pattern, only fit for the apostolical ages of the world, and only suited to some few morose and melancholy men? Is it not a monstrous spectacle, and to be hissed out of the world with the greatest indignation, to see a covetous, voluptuous, ambitious sensual saint? With what face can we pretend to true religion, or a feeling acquaintance with God, and the things of his personal service and kingdom, whilst the continual pantings of our souls af-

ter created good betray us so manifestly, and proclaim before all the world that the beast, the brutish life, is still powerful in us? *If ye seek me*, saith Christ to his followers, as he did also once to his persecutors, *then let these go*; let go the hold of these earthly objects; let vanish these worldly joys and toys; *withhold your throat from thirst, and your feet from being unshod*, and come, follow me only, and ye shall have treasure in heaven; for he that will not deny all for me, is not worthy of me. But, *O curvæ in terras animæ; &c.* [O these souls that are so prone to the earth, &c.] Ah sad and dreadful fall, that hath so miserably crippled this royal offspring, and made the King's son to be a lame Mephibosheth! Ah doleful apostacy! How are the sons of the morning become children of darkness, and the heirs of heaven, vassals and drudges to earth! How is the King's daughter unequally yoked with a churlish Nabal, that continually checketh her more divine and generous motions! *How unhappily art thou matched; O my soul!* And yet, alas! I see it is too properly a marriage; for thou hast forgotten *thine own people, and thy Father's house*. Take up, O take up a lamentation, thou virgin, daughter of the God of Zion: once indeed a virgin, but now, alas! no longer a virgin, but miserably married to an unworthy husband, that can never be able to match thy faculties, nor maintain thee according to the grandeur of thy birth or the necessary pomp of thy expenses, and way of living; nay, thou art become not only a miserable wife; but, in so being, thou art also a wicked adulteress, prostituting thyself to the very vilest

of thy lawful husband's servants. If thou be not incestuous, it is no thanks to thee, there being nothing in this world so near of kin to thee, as to make way for incest. *Return, return, O Shulamite, return, return; put away thine adulteries from between thy breasts, and so shall the king yet again greatly desire thy beauty;* for so he hath promised, *Jer. iii. 21.* that when there shall be a voice heard upon the high places, weeping, and supplications of the children of Israel, because they have perverted their way, and forgotten the Lord their God, and the backsliding children shall return, that then he *will heal their backslidings.*

CHAP. VIII.

The term or end of religion, eternal life, considered in a double notion: First, as it signifies the essential happiness of the soul. The second, as it takes in many glorious appendices. The former more fully described; the latter more briefly. The noble and genuine breathings of the godly soul after, and springing up into, the former; in what sense she may be said to desire the latter. The argument drawn from the example of Christ. Moses and Paul moderated. A general answer given to the query. It ends in a serious exhortation made to Christians, to live and love more spiritually, more suitably to the nature of souls, redeemed souls, resulting from the whole discourse.

I AM NOW come to the last thing whereby this most noble principle is described, *viz.* the term or end of it; and it is said in the text to be *everlasting life*. This is the highest pitch of perfection, toward which the new creature is continually advancing; which the apostle Paul hath expressed with as much eloquence as words will allow, calling it *the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*: this is that unbounded ocean into which this living fountain, by so many incessant issues, and unwearied streams, perpetually endeavours to empty itself; or rather to unbosom itself in it. Now what this is, we must confess with the apostle John, and indeed we have more reason to make such a confession than he had, that it doth not yet appear, *viz.* neither fully nor distinctly: but yet, since I am thus upon the contemplation of it, it will be a pleasant and profitable task a little to inquire into it; and though it surpass the power and skill of all created comprehensions to take the just dimensions, and faithfully give the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of it; yet we may essay to walk about this heavenly Jerusalem, as the Psalmist speaks of the earthly, *and tell the towers thereof, mark her walls, consider her palaces*, that we may tell it to the generation following.

1. Then, we will consider *eternal life* in the most proper notion of it, as it implies the essential happiness of the soul; and so it is no other than the pure, perfect, and established state of the soul. By a state I do designedly disparage that grosser notion of a place, as that which scarce deserves to enter into the description of

such glory; or, at best, will obtain but a very low room there; by purity, I do purposely explode that carnal ease, rest, immunity, affluence of sensual delights, accommodated only to the animal life; which last, Mahometans, and the former, too many professed Christians, and the Jews almost generally, do dream of, and judge heaven to be. By perfection I do distinguish it from the best state to which the best men upon earth can possibly attain. So then, I consider eternal life, in the primary and most proper notion of it, to be full, and perfect, and everlasting enjoyment of God, communion with him, and a most blissful conformity of all the powers and faculties of the soul to that eternal goodness, truth, and love, as far as it is or may become capable of the communications of the divinity.—This life was, at the highest rate imaginable, purchased by our ever blessed Lord and Saviour in the days of his flesh, and here in the text promised to every believing soul.—Now, since we are ignorant both of the present capacity of our own faculties, how large they are, and also ignorant, how much more large and ample they may be made, to receive the more rich and plentiful communications of the divine life and image, therefore can we not comprehend either the transcendent life, happiness, and glory, or that degree of sanctity and blessedness to which the believing soul may be advanced in another world. The Popish schoolmen nicely dispute about the sight of God, and the love of God, to wit, in which of these the formal blessedness of the soul consisteth, improperly separating those whom God hath so firmly join-

ed together; as if it were possible, that either a blind love, or a dry and unimpassioned speculation, could render a soul entirely happy: but it is much safer to say, that the happiness and eternal life of the soul consisteth in the possession or fruition of God; and this doth necessarily imply the proper perfection of every faculty. Nothing can be the real happiness of a spirit that is either inferior or extrinsical to it; it must be something divine, and that too must be wrought into the very nature and temper of it. I hesitate not to affirm, that if the soul of man could possibly be advanced, so as to receive adoration or divine power, yet if it were in the mean time void of divine dispositions, and a god-like nature; it were far from being glorified, and made happy as to its capacity. What health is to the body, that holiness is to the soul; which perhaps the apostle alludes to when he speaks of the *spirit of a sound mind*, 2 Tim. i. 7.

2. There is another notion of *eternal life*, for which some contend, by which they mean not barely the essential happiness of the soul; but that, with the addition of many suitable and glorious circumstances, the essential happiness of a glorified body, the beholding of Christ, the amicable society of angels, freedom from temptations, the knowledge of the secrets of nature and providence, and the like: to which may be also added, though of a lower degree, open absolution, or a visible deliverance of the saints out of the overthrow of the wicked at the conflagration of the world; also power over devils, eminence of place, enjoyment of friends, and other things of the like

kind. Now let us briefly consider what tendencies there are in the religious soul towards each of these: and here I must beg leave to speak jointly both of the end, and of the motion thereunto; though it may be thought that the former only falls fairly under our present consideration.

First, then, I suppose that *eternal life*, in the first sense of it, is intended here, to wit, the essential happiness of the soul, or its perfect and everlasting enjoyment of God. For the description is here made of religion itself in the abstract, or that principle of divine life which Christ Jesus implanted in the soul; and being so considered, it is hard to conceive how that should spring up into any of these appendent circumstances, or into any thing but the completion and perfection of itself; though the religious soul, taken in the concrete, possible may. And indeed though we should allow, (which we shall take into consideration under the next head,) that many of those high scriptural phrases which are brought to describe the future condition of believing souls, do principally respect the appendices of its essential happiness, (as a kingdom, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, an inheritance reserved, a place prepared, and the like) yet it seems very unnatural to interpret this phrase, *life*, and *eternal life*, any otherwise than of that which I call the essential happiness of the soul: but if we interpret it of this, the sense is very plain and easy; thus this principle of divine life is continually endeavouring to grow up to its just altitude, to advance itself unto a triumphant state, even as all other principles of life do naturally tend to-

wards a final accomplishment, and ultimate perfection. Carnal self, or the animal life, may be indeed said to be a well of water too, poisonous water; but that springs up into a sensual life, popular applause, self accommodations; or in the apostle's phrase, into the fulfilment of the lusts of the flesh. This I speak only by way of illustrative opposition: for, to speak more properly, this corrupt principle hath in it the central force of death and hell, and always gravitates downward; whereas this divine principle is always attracted upward: but they do both agree in this, that they both seek their own gratification, and study to acquire their respective perfections. The everlasting and most glorious enjoyment of God is certainly most perfective of the soul; and therefore is most properly and most deservingly said to be its *eternal life*, according to our Saviour, *John xvii. 3*. Now this *eternal life* is not a thing specifically different from religion, or the image of God, or the divine life, but indeed the greatest height, and the most possible perfection of itself: even as the sun at noon-day is not a light really distinct from what it was in the first dawns of the morning, but different in degree, and in its far more glorious state; which seems to be the very similitude whereby the Spirit of God illustrateth the matter in hand, *Prov. iv. 18*. or, as a man of perfect age is not a distinct species from a child, but only more complete and excellent in that species; to which the apostle refers, treating of this subject, *1 Cor. xiii. 11*. Man hath not two distinct kinds of happiness in the two distinct worlds, in which he is made to live; but

one and the same thing is his blessedness in both ; which, as I said before, must be the enjoyment of God. The translation made of the text is very suitable to this notion ; for this divine principle is said to spring up, not unto but into everlasting life ; in other words, it springs up till it be swallowed up in the perfect knowledge, love, and enjoyment of God. Even as youth is swallowed up in manhood, so this grace is swallowed up in glory, and is not so much abolished as perfected.

By this phrase the genius of true religion, and excellent temper of the truly religious soul, is most aptly described. This is the soul that, being in some measure delivered from its unnatural bondage, and freed from its unhappy confinement, now spreads itself in God, lifts up itself unto him, stretches itself upon him, is not contented merely with a heaven to come, but brings down a heaven into itself, by carrying up itself unto and after the God of heaven. God is become great and the only great in the eye of such a Christian ; he is indeed become all things to him ; whilst this principle is rightly and actually predominant in him, he knows no interest but to thrive and flourish in God ; no will but to serve the will, and comply with the mind of God ; no end, but to be united to God ; no business, but to display and reflect the glory and perfections of God upon the earth ; the main business of his life, I say, is to serve him ; the main ambition of his soul to be like unto him ; and his main happiness in this world to be united to him ; and in the world to come, to be swallowed up in him ; in this world to know, and love, and rest, and delight in, and

enjoy God more than all things, and in the world to come to enjoy him more than is possible here. The pleasant springing up of the tender flowers unto the friendly sun, having been blessed with his precious and benign influences, and the cheerful haste with which the sympathetic needle pursues the enchanting loadstone, when once rightly touched and affected with it, do a little, though but a little, resemble and represent the motions of a spirit impregnated with this divine principle, and strongly impressed with the image and stamp of God: he puts in his hand by the hole of the door, and the bowels of the espoused soul are presently moved, yea, melted for him, *Cant. v. 4*. He casts the skirt of his garment, the mantle of his love, and presently the converted soul leaves all to follow him. Faith, hope, and love, are knitting and springing graces, and this eternal life is the end and perfection of them all; not that any one of them, I conceive, shall be utterly made void and abolished, as some conclude concerning the two former, though without good ground, I think, from the apostle's words, *1 Cor. xiii. 13*. But faith will be ripened into the most firm and undisturbed confidence, affiance, and acquiescence in God; hope will be advanced into a more cheerful, powerful, and confident expectation, having for its object the perpetuation of the soul's felicity; and love will become much more intense, and more clearly distinguishable from the imperfect longings and languishings of this present state, when it shall blossom into pure delights and complacency, resting and glorying in the arms of its adequate, satisfactory, and eternal object. The

faith of the hypocrite, and indeed his hope too, is still springing up into self-preservation, deliverance, liberty, a splendid and pompous state of the church, (that is, of his own party) or some such thing as will gratify the animal life, and there it terminates; but the faith of the sincere and religious soul springs up into eternal life; it knows no term but *the salvation of the soul*, 1 Pet. i. 9. as its hope knows no accomplishment but a state of god-like purity and perfection, 1 John iii. 3. The mere natural man lives within himself, within a circle of his own, and cannot get out; whether he eat, or drink, or pray, or be zealous for the pulling down of the political Antichrist, he is still in his own circle, he is still sacrificing in all this to that great *helluo*, [glutton,] the animal life, as I have already made evident: but the godly soul is disinterested in regard to self, and so is still contriving the advancement of a nobler life within itself, and moving towards God as its supreme and all-sufficient good. Give a saint all that the whole world can afford, he cannot fix, nor settle, nor centre here: God hath put within him a holy restless appetite after an higher good, which he would rather possess than what he now has. I know indeed that the soul that is thus divinely free may be hindered in its flight; but it will deliver itself from the clog at length: you may obstruct and dam up the streams of this fountain perhaps, but they will burst out again; you may cast ashes upon this pure fire for a time, but it will flame again: such a damp cannot arise, no not from hell itself, as to extinguish it. The Philistines stopped the wells of

water which Abraham had digged in Gerar, *and filled them with earth*, Gen. xxvi. 15. But this well of water which God diggeth in the holy and humble soul, cannot be stopped, neither by the devil, that king of Gerar, that is, of wanderings, *Job i. 7.* nor by any of his servants, but it will find a passage upwards: though you endeavour to fill it with earth, which indeed is the likeliest to choke it, (*for amor rerum terrenarum est viscus spiritualium pennarum*) [for the love of terrestrial things weighs down our spiritual wings,] though you cast the dust and gravel of earthly pleasures, profits, or preferments into it, yet it is a well of living water, and will work its passage out. The hungerings of the godly soul are not, cannot be satisfied, till it feed upon the hidden Manna; nor its thirstings quenched, till swallowed up in the unbounded ocean of life and love.

But I see I cannot separate *springing up* from *eternal life*, nor pursue the term of religion, but I must also take in the motion of the religious soul, whereby it pursues it; which I have already handled in my discourse; therefore I will quit this head, and take a short view of the second.

The secondary and more improper notion of eternal life I told you, was that which includes the circumstances or appendices of it. And here we must allow, that the holy Scriptures openly avouch some of these circumstances, as those especially of the first rank that I named, of some of which it seems to make great account; and possibly the Scripture may somewhere or other imply all the rest, even those of the inferior rank. Again, we will allow, that many of those

phrases which the Scripture uses to describe the blessed state of the other world, principally respect these appendices of the soul's essential happiness; such perhaps are the *crown of righteousness* mentioned by the apostle, *1 Tim. iv. 8.* *The prize of the high calling*, mentioned by the same apostle, *Phil. iii. 14.* *The house which is from heaven*, spoken of in *2 Cor. vi. 2.* *A kingdom, an incorruptible inheritance, a place prepared, mansions, a reward, praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ*, *1 Pet. i. 7.* and that *glory, honour, and peace*, spoken of by the apostle Paul, *Rom. ii. 10.* These are all Scripture descriptions of the other state, and I suppose we may grant them to have a peculiar reference to this secondary and essential happiness of the soul: though I know not any necessity there is to be so liberal in our concessions; for it may be fairly said concerning all, or most of them, that the design of these phrases is not so much to establish this less proper notion, or to point to the circumstances of the glorified state, as to insinuate how much more ample and glorious that state shall be than this in which we now are; as a prize is looked upon as somewhat more excellent than what is done or expected to acquire it; (it must needs be so esteemed by runners and wrestlers;) a kingdom is a more glorious state than that of subjection, and an inheritance is incomparably more ample than the pension that is allowed to the heir in his minority.

But these things being conceded, it doth not appear how far, or under what notion, the religious soul, as such, doth spring up into these addi-

tional glories, and thirst after them. I know there are many that speak very highly of these appendices, and allow the godly soul a very high and irrelative valuation of them: and this they do principally infer from the example of Christ himself, as also of Moses and Paul. Give me leave, therefore, to suggest something, not to enervate, but to moderate the argument drawn from these persons; and, after that, I shall briefly lay down what I conceive to be most scriptural and rational in this matter.

1. As for the example of Christ, it seems to make not much for them in this matter. For however the text is very plain, that *for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross*; and this joy seems plainly to be his sitting at the right hand of God, Heb. xii. 2. yet, if by this joy we understand a more full and glorious possession of God, and a more excellent exaltation of his human nature to a more free fruition of the divine, then it cannot be applied to any thing but the springing up of the gracious soul into its essential happiness; which I have already contended for, as being the proper disposition of such a soul: or if by this joy and throne we understand the power with which Christ foresaw he should be vested, leading captivity captive, trampling under foot the powers of hell and darkness, and procuring gifts for men, which seems to me to be the most likely; then it belongs not at all to men, neither can this example be drawn for imitation.

As for the instance of Moses, who is said to have had *respect to the recompence of the reward*,

Heb. xi. 26. it is not yet granted, that that *recompence of reward* relates principally to these appendents of the soul's essential happiness; neither can it, I suppose, be evinced: but though I should also allow that, which I incline to do, yet all that can be inferred from it is but a respect that Moses had, as our translation well renders it, or some account, which he in his sufferings made of this recompence; which was a very warrantable contemplation.

The apostle Paul indeed doth openly profess that he looked for and desired the coming of Christ from heaven, upon the account of that glorious body with which he would then clothe him, *Phil. iii. 20, 21.* and so he might surely, and yet not desire it principally and primarily, but secondarily, and with reference.

And this leads me to the general answer that I was preparing to give, which is this. Some of these circumstances which I have named, especially that of the glorified body, may be reduced to the essential happiness of the soul, or included in it, so that the soul could not otherwise be perfectly happy. It is the opinion of all divines, I think, that a Christian is not completely happy till he consists of a soul and body both glorified. And indeed considering the dear affection, and essential aptitude that God hath planted in the human soul for a body, we cannot well conceive how it should be perfectly happy without one: and this earthly body is, alas! an unequal yoke-fellow, in which she is half stifled, and rather buried than conveniently lodged; so that it seems necessary even to her essential happiness, that

she should have some more heavenly and glorious body, wherein she may commodiously and pleasantly exert her innate powers, and whereby she may also express herself in a spiritual and noble manner, suitable to her own natural vigour, and to her infinitely amiable and most beloved object.

Concerning the rest of the circumstances which cannot be thus reduced, I conceive that such of them as are necessary to the essential happiness of the soul, by way of subserviency, may be eyed, and desired, and thirsted after secondarily, and with reference, as I said before: that is, under this notion only, as they are subservient to that essential blessedness; I confess I do not understand under what notion a religious soul can lift up itself unto them, I mean so far as it is holy and religious, and acts suitably to that divine principle which the Father of spirits, or rather the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath implanted in it. And if there be any other circumstance which cannot be reduced to one of these kinds, I suppose it may be reckoned among the objects and gratifications of the animal life, and not to make up any part of the godly man's heaven, or that eternal life into which religion springs up: for I can easily imagine, that a fleshly fancy may be mightily ravished with the desire of such a heaven as is suitable to it; and that a mere animal man may be as heartily desirous to be in such a kingdom of God as he hath marked out to himself, as he is utterly unwilling that the kingdom of God (such as the apostle describes, *Rom. xiv. 17.* consisting in

righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost) should be in him. If our continual cry be after safety, self-preservation, liberty, redemption, and deliverance from those things only that oppress and grieve our fleshly interest; and our thirstings principally terminated in knowledge, though it be of God himself, freedom from condemnation, power over devils, yea, or any visible pomp, glory, or splendour, though it be of ever so ethereal and heavenly a nature, what do we more than others? What is all this more than may naturally spring up from the animal life, and may be ultimately resolved into carnal self?

Wherefore, as a result from the whole discourse, especially from this last part of it, let me earnestly intreat all the professors of this holy religion, which the blessed Messiah, Christ Jesus, hath so dearly bought for the world, and so clearly revealed in it, not to value themselves by any thing which the power of natural self-love may exert or desire, perform or expect, nor by any thing below the image of God, and the internal and transforming manifestations of Christ Jesus in them; the perfection of which is eternal life, in the most proper and true notion of it, as you have heard. I know that I have often suggested the same lesson in this short treatise, but I know also that I can never inculcate it often enough; nay, the eloquence of angels is not sufficient to imprint it on the hearts of men. Possibly it may startle some hypocritical professors, and carnal gospel souls, (God grant it may effectually!) and make the ears of many that

hear it to tingle, but yet I will proclaim it, "It is possible for a man to desire not only the things of this world, (which St. James speaks of, chap. iv. 3.) but even heaven itself, to consume it upon his lusts; and he may as truly be making provision for the flesh, to fulfil it in the lusts thereof, in longing after a kind of self-salvation, as in eating, and drinking, and rising up to play." Certainly a true Christian spirit, rightly invigorated and actuated by this divine and potent principle, Christian religion, cannot look upon heaven as merely future, or as something perfectly distinct from him; but he eyes it as life, eternal life, the perfection of the purest and divine life communicable to a soul, and is daily thirsting after it, or rather, as it is in the text, growing up into it. I know that heaven is sometimes called a rest, in opposition to the dissatisfaction of the unsettled and unbelieving soul; but, in opposition to a sluggish, inert, and dormant rest, it is here said to be *life, eternal life*. Let us show ourselves to be living Christians, by springing up into the utmost consummation of life; let it appear that Christ Jesus, the Prince of life, who was manifested on purpose *to take away our sins*, 1 John iii. 5. hath not only covered our shame, and, as it were, embalmed our dead souls, to keep them from putrefaction, and strewed them with the flowers of his merits, to take away their offensive odour from the nostrils of his Father, but hath truly advanced, re-instated, and made to flourish, the souls that sin had so miserably degraded and deflowered. Deliver yourselves, O immortal souls! from all those unsuitable and unseemly cares,

studies, and joys, from all those low and particular ends and lusts, which do not only pinch and straiten, but even debase and debauch you: let it not be said that the king of Sodom made Abraham rich; that your main delight, happiness, and contentment are derived from any prosperous, plentiful, peaceable, pompous state, any thing that may be called a self-accommodation, either in the world that now is, or that which is to come; but from the righteousness of faith, and your vital union with the Father and the Son: to whom, in the unity of the Spirit, be honour and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

COMMUNION WITH THE DEITY.

PART I.

I JOHN I. 3.

Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

THESE words express the Christian life, and that kind of converse whereby a good man is distinguished from all other men.

A good man does not differ from other men by any thing without him, any church privileges which are common to hypocrites and sincere Christians; any external visible performances, in which the disciples of the Pharisees may be more abundant and more specious than the disciples of Christ, *Matt. ix. 14.* much less by any corporeal or temporal enjoyment or ornament, strength, beauty, riches, descent, &c. nor by any natural relation, though it were to Abraham, as the Jews boasted of their father Abraham, *John viii. 33.* but by something internal, substantial, by a relation to God; the character of a good man must be derived from his correspondence to the chief good; and the happiness of a soul must be judged of by its relation to life, and love, and blessedness itself. Things external, corporeal, temporal, make some difference among men, but

it is comparatively nominal and titular: by these, men are said to be rich or poor, noble or ignoble; but men are really and substantially different by the relation that they have to God; by this, they are good or bad, godly or wicked. This is the most certain and proper mark of a good man, viz. Communion with God: in all other things he may be like other men, but in this he differs from and excels them all. This is a character proper *quarto modo*; [as logicians say;] for it agrees to every good man, to none but a good man, and always to him, as we shall see hereafter. The ground of my discourse, then, shall be this short and plain proposition, viz. "A godly man hath communion with God."

In order to the more distinct handling hereof, I must premise a few things briefly.

1. "That the gracious and loving God made nothing miserable of all that he made." There are none born slaves in this great house of the world. He made all things out of himself, and he hath no idea of evil in himself, so that it was not possible that he should make any thing evil or miserable. Every thing was good, *Gen. i. 31.* and so in some sense happy. He was free to make the world; but making it, he could not make it evil or miserable. Every thing is the product of almighty love and goodness.

2. "The happiness of all creatures consists in their acting agreeably to that nature that God gave them, and those ends which he proposed to them, and suitably to those laws which he gave them;" which laws were contrived with the greatest suitability to those natures, and

subserviency to those ends. Every creature is in its kind happy, whilst it acts agreeably to that nature which the wise Creator implanted in it; as the sun runs its race without ceasing, and rejoices so to do, and is, in some sense, happy in so doing. Departing from that nature, the creature becomes miserable; as the earth, bringing forth briars and thorns, instead of those good fruits which it was appointed to bring forth, is said to be cursed, *Gen. iii. 17, 18.*

3. "The happiness of the creature is higher or lower, greater or less, according as it comes nearer to God, or is farther off from him;" according as it receives more or less from him; according to what communion it hath with him. The life and happiness of the sun is much lower than that of a man, because it cannot enjoy such high and excellent communications from, or communion with God as man doth.

4. "There can be no communion without likeness." The sun shines upon a wall, as well as upon a man, but a wall has no communion with the sun, because it hath no eyes to see the light of it as man hath; nor can it receive the benign influences of its heat as the herbs do. A log of wood lieth in the water as well as the fish, but it hath no communion with the water, nor receives any advantage by it as the fish doth. God is present, according to his infinite essence, with the devils as well as with the angels, but they have no likeness in nature to him, and so no communion with him, as these have.

5. "God hath given a larger and more excellent capacity to man, than to any other of his

creatures upon earth." God hath endued man with reason, and so made him capable of a higher life, and a more excellent communion with his Maker than all the rest. The rational soul of all sublunary creatures, is alone capable to know, love, serve, enjoy, imitate God, and so to have a glorious communion with him. The sun, in all its glory and brightness, is not so excellent a being as any soul of man upon this account. And although man, by his fall, lost his actual communion with God, yet he is a reasonable creature still; he hath not lost his capacity of receiving influences from him, and enjoying communion with him. The world, when it is at the darkest, is yet capable of being enlightened.

6. "When the nature of man is, by divine grace, healed of its distempered condition, and restored to its former rectitude, to act suitably to the end for which it was made, and to spend itself upon its proper object, then man comes to have a right communion with God, and to be happy."—All rational souls are capable of holding communion with God, but all do not hold communion with him; but they that express the purity and holiness of the divine life, that know God, and live like him, are his children, *Matt. v. 45*, and those only do rightly and really converse with him. When the Spirit of God informs these rational souls, and infuses the strength of a divine life into them, and stamps the lively impressions of divine perfections upon them, rendering our hearts, wills and ways, conformable to that glorious pattern, that infinite good, then do we enjoy a proper communion with him, and are truly

blessed; though we are not completely blessed, till this conformity be perfected according to what those souls are, or may be capable of.

This is the true and proper notion of man's communion with God, and relation to him, which we cannot fully describe, till we more fully enjoy. That soul that truly lives and feeds upon God, does enjoy more than it can tell; and yet it can tell this, that this is the most high, noble, excellent, glorious life in the world.

This communion, as also the intimateness and closeness of it, are described variously in the holy Scriptures, by the similitude of members being in the body, *1 Cor. xii. 27.* of branches being in the vine, *John xv. 1, 2.* by being *formed according to God's image, Rom. viii. 29.* *changed into his image, 2 Cor. iii. 18.* by *God's dwelling in the soul, and the soul in him, 1 John iv. 16.* by Christ's being formed in the soul, *Gal. iv. 19.* by the soul's having Christ, *1 John v. 12.* by Christ supping with the soul, and the soul with him, *Rev. iii. 20.* Because nothing is more our own, nor more one with us, than that which we eat and drink, for it is incorporated into us; therefore is this spiritual communion between God and the godly soul oftentimes in Scripture described by our eating and drinking with him. Thus God was pleased to allow his people under the law, when they had offered up a part of their beasts in sacrifice to him, to sit down and feast upon the rest, as a token of that familiarity and oneness that was between him and them. By the like action our Saviour shadowed out the same mystery, when, in the sacrament of his supper, he appointed them

to sit down to eat and drink with him, to intimate their feeding upon him, and most close communion with him: yea, the state of glory, which is the most perfect communion with God, is thus shadowed out, *Matt. viii. 11. Rev. xix. 9.* And what is worth noting, I think the sacramental eating and drinking hath some reference to that most intimate communion of the saints with God in glory: our Saviour himself seems to imply as much in that speech of his, *Luke xxii. 30. That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom:* in which words he seems plainly to allude to the sacramental eating and drinking which he had a little before instituted, *viz. ver. 19.* Which makes some to believe, that that gesture is to be retained in that ordinance, which is most proper and usual to express familiarity and communion; and to take away that gesture, is to destroy one great end of our Saviour in appointing this supper, which was to represent that familiar communion which is between himself and every believing soul. I will not here examine the validity of their argument, which possibly, if pressed home, might introduce a rudeness into the worship of God, under pretence of familiarity: but it seems very plain, that the nature of that ordinance doth shadow out the intimate communion between God and a godly soul.

I have already, in part, prevented myself, and shewed you wherein the soul's communion with God consists: but yet, to give you a more distinct knowledge of this great mystery, I shall unfold it in these three following particulars.

1st, "A godly soul hath communion with God

in his attributes." When the soul of man is moulded and formed into a resemblance of the divine nature, then hath it a true fellowship with him. Now, this communion with God in his attributes is to be seen two ways.

1. "When the soul is in its measure, according to the capacity of a creature, all that which God is." This is the communion which the angels have with God; their beholding of the face of God is not to be understood of a mere speculation, or an idle gazing upon a Deity; but they see him by receiving his image upon themselves, and reflecting his glory and brightness; they partake of the goodness, purity, holiness, wisdom, righteousness of God, which makes them such glorious spirits; and the want of this makes the other, whom we call devils, to be what they are. Thus godly men shall have communion with God, they shall see God, *Matt. v. 8. Heb. xii. 14.* Yea, thus they have communion with him in some measure: they do not only see God in the world, as the devils do, nor see him in the word, as many hypocritical and wicked men do, but they see him in themselves, in the frame of their own souls; they find themselves moulded in his image, and a resemblance of him drawn upon them. This is a beautiful vision of God, true and real, though not full and complete. This is set out in scripture by being *holy as God is holy, 1 Pet. i. 16. perfect as God is perfect, Matt. v. 48.* This our Saviour exhorts us to seek after, *Matt. xi. 29. Take my yoke upon you, learn of me; for I am meek and lowly:* and the apostle *Eph. v. 1. Be ye followers of God, as dear children.* When the

nature and perfections of God, his holiness, goodness, righteousness, wisdom, &c. are copied out upon our natures, and the same spirit is in us which was in Christ Jesus, then have we a true communion with God; which blessed communion, when the soul becomes all that which God is, is by a conformity of nature.

2. "When the soul, in its actions as a creature, doth rightly answer to the attributes of the Creator." As when the soul doth answer the goodness of God with suitable affections of love, and joy, and delight; when the soul doth correspond to the sovereignty and wisdom of God by the acts of self-denial and resignation; and doth converse with the righteousness of God by patience, and a holy acquiescence. When the soul doth rightly exert those acts which are proper and suitable to the nature of God, then it may be said to hold communion with him in his attributes. Now this suitableness of the soul is especially with reference to the incommunicable attributes of God, where there is no place for imitation, though it hold good in the rest also.

2dly, "A godly soul hath communion with God in his word." To read, profess, or hear the word, is not to hold a real communion with God therein: many do so that are strangers to God: a man may read my letters, and yet correspond with my enemy. That son in the gospel, that heard his father's command, and answered, *I go, Sir, but went not*, had no right communion with his paternal authority. But when the soul is ennobled into such a frame as this word doth require, then it holds communion with God in his word; *e. g.*

when the soul puts forth those acts of humiliation, holy fear, and reverence, godly trembling, which do suit the nature of a divine threatening, when the soul answers the command of God with suitable resolutions, repentings, reformatations, and real obedience, when it entertains the promise with suitable acts of holy delight, joy, refreshment, recumbency, and acquiesces in the same, then doth it truly converse with God in his word.

3dly, "A godly soul hath communion with God in his works." And that is, when the soul doth answer the several providences of God with suitable and pertinent affections and dispositions. The godly soul doth not only eye and observe the hand of God in all things that occur, but doth comply with those providences, and is moulded into that frame, and put upon those duties for which such providences call. Then doth the soul rightly hold communion with God in his works, when it is humbled under humbling providences; is refreshed, strengthened, and grows up under prosperous providences, as they did, *Acts ix. 31.* who, having rest given them, were edified, comforted, multiplied, &c. When the soul doth rightly comport with every providence, and the will is moulded into the will of God, then do we hold communion with him in his works. This theme is large, because the works of God are manifold; works of creation, redemption, preservation, works towards other men, and towards ourselves, both towards our outward and inward man: a godly soul hath communion with God in all these, in the same sense just named, though perhaps not equally in all, yet sincerely and truly.

By what hath been said, you understand that right fellowship with God is not a bare communion of names. To have the name of God called upon us, and to be called Christians, or the people of God, or to name the name of God, to profess it, to cry Lord, Lord, doth not make any one really and truly the better man, doth not make a soul really happy. It is not enough to cry, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord*, with them in *Jer. vii. 4*; to make our boast in the law with them, *Rom. ii. 23.*; to call ourselves the children of Abraham, as the Jews did in John the Baptist's time, *Matt. iii. 9.* These privileges and professions are extrinsical to the soul, and do nothing to the true ennobling of it. But right fellowship with God is a communion of hearts and natures, of will and affections, or interest and ends; to have one heart and will, the same interest and ends with God, is to be truly godly; a God-like man is the only godly man, a Christ-like nature brought into the soul doth alone denominate a man a true Christian. It is not speaking together, but loving and living together, that brings God and the soul into one; *I live, yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me*, *Gal. ii. 20.* And thus, I suppose, you have a fair account why the apostle James, chap. ii. does so much prefer works before faith, (for indeed faith is nothing worth, save only that faith which joins the soul to the object, and makes the thing believed one's own;) as also why the apostle Paul prefers love before a faith of miracles, *1 Cor. xiii. 2.* Though indeed a justifying faith is the most miraculous; that faith that unites the soul and God together is more ex-

cellent, and indeed more miraculous than the faith that removes mountains. When I consider the proper happiness, and perfection of a soul, and the nature of this blissful communion with God, I cannot but wonder how it is possible that men should take their communion with God to consist in a slight acquaintance with him, profession of him, and performances to him. I am confident it is not possible that men should have any true feeling of happiness in such acquaintance, any more than a man can be really filled with the seeing or carving of meat which he eats not.

Before I apply the doctrine, give me leave to lay down some rules or positions tending further to explain and clear it.

1. This must be held, which I touched upon before, that, "there can be no communion between God and man, but by a likeness of nature, a new, a divine principle implanted in the soul." A beast hath no communion with a man, because reason, the ground of such communion, is wanting. Of all the creatures, there was none found that could be a meet help for Adam, that could be taken into the human society, till Eve was made, who was a human person. So neither can there be any conjunction of the soul with God, but by oneness of spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 17. *He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.*

2. "There can be no communion with God but by a Mediator;" no Mediator but Christ Jesus, who is God-man. Two cannot walk together, nor hold communion, except they be agreed: and there can be no agreement made between God and man but by Christ Jesus. Therefore

it is said here, *Our communion is with the Father and the Son*, q. d. with the Father by the Son: and faith, whereby the soul and God are united, is still said to be *faith in Christ*, as we find throughout the Scriptures.

3. "There can be no perfect communion with God in this life." Our communion with heaven, whilst we are upon earth, is imperfect: our resemblance to God is scant and dark in comparison of what it shall be. We know but in part, love but in part, enjoy but in part; we are but in part holy and happy. There can be no perfect communion with God, till there be a perfect reconciliation of natures as well as persons; and that cannot be whilst there is any thing unlike to God in the soul, whilst any impure thing dwells in the soul, which cannot truly close with God, nor God with that. The Holy Spirit can never suffer any defiled thing to unite itself with it; it is not lawful for "any impure thing to mix itself with pure divinity," said Socrates the heathen. *What communion hath righteousness with unrighteousness?* saith the apostle, *2 Cor. vi. 14.*; and so far as a righteous man is in any part unrighteous, so far he is a stranger to God: the unregenerate part of a regenerate man hath no more communion with God than a wicked man, than the devil himself hath, no more than darkness hath with light.

4. "Our communion with God must be distinguished from the sense and feeling of it." Many have erred exceedingly, whilst they place communion with God in the sense and feeling of it, in raptures of joy, ecstasies, and transports of soul:

which indeed, if they be real, are not so much it, as the flower of it, something resulting and separable from it. Communion with God cannot be lost in a saint, for then he is not a saint; for it is the peculiar characteristic of a saint to have communion with God: and a saint under desertion hath communion with God even then as really, though not so feelingly, as at any other time, so far as he is sanctified. But the sense of this communion may be very much, if not altogether lost, and oftentimes is lost.

5. "A soul's communion with God cannot be interrupted by any local changes." It is a spiritual conjunction, and is not violated by any confinement; the walls of a prison cannot separate God and the godly soul; banishment cannot drive a soul from God,—*Cælum non animum mutant, &c.* [Men may change their situation, yet they cannot change the disposition, &c.] The blessed angels, those ministring spirits, when they are dispatched into the utmost ends of the world upon the service of God, are even then beholding the face of God, and enjoy as intimate communion with him as ever: the case is the same with all godly souls, whose communion with God does not depend upon any local situation; it is not thousands of miles that can beget a distance between God and the soul. Indeed nothing but sin does it, or can do it:—*Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, Isa. lix. 2.* nothing but sin is contrary to this divine fellowship, and so nothing but that can interrupt this spiritual society. To speak properly, sin does not so much cause the soul's distance from God, as itself is that

distance. Man and wife remain one, though a hundred miles distant; and believing souls maintain a certain spiritual communion one with another, though in several parts of the world. The society and communion of godly souls one with another, so far as it is spiritual, cannot be interrupted by bodily distance; much less can the fellowship of God with the godly man, who carries about with him, and in him, a divine nature, the image of God, a holy God-like disposition whithersoever he goes.

6. "This communion with God of which I have been speaking, is much better than all outward acts and enjoyments, duties and ordinances whatsoever, though they be ever so many or specious." God himself long since decided the matter, that a broken and contrite heart is better than all sacrifices, *Ps. li. 17.* that to obey was better than sacrifice, *1 Sam. xv. 22.* that mercy was better than sacrifice, *Hosea vi. 6.* that to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God, was to be preferred before thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil, *Mic. vi. 7, 8.* It holds good in reference to gospel duties, though they may seem more spiritual than the oblations of the law. A real soul-communion with God, a communion of hearts and natures, of wills and affections, of interests and ends, is infinitely more excellent than all hearing, praying, celebration of Sabbaths or sacraments, *James i. 25.* as the end is more excellent than the means: for so stands the case between them.

Yea, I will add, (though some proud and wanton spirit have made strange work of it, yet) it is

a sure and most excellent doctrine, that this spiritual communion is a continual Sabbath, (a Sabbath of communion is much better than a Sabbath of rest;) this is the Sabbath that the angels and saints in heaven keep, though they know no such thing as a first day in the week; have no reading, preaching, or praying, among them. This is a continual praying, and effectual way of praying in silence. A right, active, imbibing faith does virtually contain a prayer in it; right believing is powerful praying. The knees, eyes, and tongues, bear the least share in prayer; the whole of the work lies upon the soul, and particularly upon faith in the soul, which is indeed the life and soul of prayer. Faith can pray without words; but the most elegant words, even the phrase of angels, is not worthy to be called prayer, without faith. I speak not so much of faith inditing a prayer, or giving life to it, as of its being virtually prayer, if not something more; for faith indeed is a real bringing down of that God, and imbibing of those influences into the soul, for which prayer only looks up.

Communion with God is a continual fast; it is that spiritual and most excellent way of fasting, whereby the soul emptying itself of itself and all self-fulness, self-sufficiency, self-confidence, receives of God alone, and is filled therewith. A soul communing rightly with God, is a soul emptied of, and, as it were, fasting from itself; which is the most excellent way of fasting.

It is a continual thanksgiving; and indeed the best way of thanksgiving in the world. To render up ourselves to God purely and intirely, to

reflect the glory of God in an holy and god-like temper, is a real and living thank-offering. This is that hallelujah so much spoken of, which the angels and saints in glory do sing perpetually: what other adjunct of it there may be, I will not here presume to say.

This communion of hearts and wills is a constant and most excellent celebration of sacraments. The soul that is really baptized into the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, and feeds upon God, and is one with him, keeps a continual sacrament; without which the sacramental eating and drinking is but an empty and dry devotion. In a word, it is not possible for any thing that is extrinsical to the soul to make it happy; but the soul that is advanced into the noble state of communion with God, is made partaker of a new nature, and is truly happy.

Nay, further, I will add, that this communion with God is not only better than all duties and ordinances, but even better than all revelations, evidences, discoveries, that can be made or given to the soul, *ab extra*, all that are from without. A manifestation of God, i. e. of a divine life in the soul, is much better than such a manifestation as Moses had of his glory in the cleft of the rock, *Exod.* xxxiii. 22. Many think, O if they might but be assured of the love of God, of the pardon of sin, of an interest in Christ, they should be happy! Why, I will tell you, if you had a voice from heaven, saying that ye were the beloved children of God, as Christ had; an angel sent from God to tell you that ye were beloved, and highly favoured of God, as his

mother Mary had; yet communion with God ought to be preferred before these: for these things could not make a soul happy without real communion with God; but communion with God, can and doth make a soul happy without these: and to this purpose, I suppose, I may apply that notable speech of our Saviour by way of allusion, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*, to give up one's self, one's heart, will, interests, and affections to God, than to receive any external discoveries and manifestations from him. Why do we so earnestly seek after signs from without us of God's presence with us, as if there were any thing better or more desirable to the soul than Immanuel, God with us, as the apostle speaks, *Christ in us the hope of glory?* He that desires any other evidence of grace, but more grace, does not only light up a candle to see the sun by, but indeed he acts like one that thinks there is something better than God himself; though I do not say that all do think so who are desirous of such manifestations. But this I will say, and you may well think upon it, that holy longings after a true and spiritual communion with God do certainly spring from a divine principle in the soul; whereas a thirst after assurance of God's love, and reconciliation of our persons with him, may be only the fruit of self-love and interest. *Let me die the death of the righteous!* was the wish of a wicked man.

7. "Though communion with God concerns the whole soul, and all the faculties, affections, and motions of it," (it is God's spreading his influences, and exercising his sovereignty over all

the powers of the soul, and their mutual spending of themselves upon him, and conforming to him) “yet the great acts of the soul, whereby it chiefly holds communion with God, are loving and believing.” Love is the joining and knitting of the soul to God; faith is the soul’s labouring after more intimate conjunction with him, receiving influences from him, and participations of him into the soul. We may say that faith draws in supplies from heaven, and love enjoys them; faith imbibes sweetness and virtue from Christ, and love feeds upon it. Certainly these two eminent graces grow, live, and thrive together, and are inseparable companions. It is somewhat difficult to distinguish them, or to assign to each his proper place and work in the soul; they seem mutually to act, and to be mutually actuated by each other: perhaps the apostle might have respect to this mystery, when he speaks so doubtfully, *Gal. v. 6.* We know indeed that in the state of perfect communion, which we call glory, love shall abide and flourish more abundantly, and there shall be no room for faith there, not as to the principal act of it; but which of them hath the greater part in maintaining our communion with God in this world, is not easy, nor indeed needful to determine. The godly soul is the most proper temple wherein God dwelleth, according to that *2 Cor. vi. 16.* *Ye are the temple of the living God; faith and love are the Jachin and Boaz, the two great pillars which keep up the soul as a temple; take away these, and it remains a soul indeed, but the soul does not remain a temple to the Lord. In a word, these two are the*

soul's principal handmaids which she useth about this blessed guest; faith goes out and brings him in, and love entertains him; by faith she finds him whom she seeks, and by love she kisses him whom she finds, as the spouse is described, *Cant.* viii. 1.

8. "The communion that is between God and the godly soul is altogether different from that communion that is between creatures." Here I might shew you how it exceeds and excels that, in many respects; but I shall not insist upon any of those particulars, nor indeed upon any of those many differences that are between them, save only upon this one: the communion that is between creature and creature is perfect in its kind, and so, consequently, gives mutual satisfaction; I mean, it terminates the expectations, so that nothing remains to be enjoyed in them more than what is enjoyed. The creature is shallow, and soon is fathomed, we soon come to the bottom of it: a finite can grasp a finite being, and enjoy it, as I may say, all at once. A man may come so near to his friend that he can come no nearer; enjoy him as fully as he is capable of enjoying, or the other of being enjoyed: created sweetness may be exhausted to the very bottom. But the soul's communion with God does not give it any such satisfaction, though indeed, in some sense, it gives a satisfaction of a much higher and more excellent kind. I told you before, that the soul's communion with God is imperfect in this life; and therefore it must needs follow, that it cannot satisfy; that is, not terminate and fill up the desires of it. Communion with God is maintain-

ed by faith and love, (as you have heard,) which proves it to be very sweet; but it also admits of hope, which proves it to be not satisfactory: for where there is yet any place left for hope, there is no full or satisfactory enjoyment. This may serve as a certain mark whereby to judge of the truth of that communion with God; it is not glutting to the soul, but will certainly manifest itself in incessant hungerings; *inter opes inops*, the soul is in the midst of plenty, and yet cries out as if it were ready to starve for want. When I consider the temper of some who claim to be perfect, who decry duties and ordinances, as low and unprofitable rudiments, and boast of their full and perfect attainments, to which there can be no addition, and compare it with the temper of the great apostle, who did not reckon that he had attained, but still followed after, that he might apprehend; who forgot the things that were behind, and reached forth unto those things that were before, pressing towards the mark, &c. *Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14.* I am ready to cry out, *Aut hic non est apostolus, aut hi non sunt apostolici*; [Either he is not an apostle, or they are not apostolic.] but an apostle he was, and had very intimate communion with his Lord: and therefore, I confess, I cannot allow these men so high a place in my opinion, as they have in their own. God is infinite, and therefore though the soul may be ever grasping, yet it can never comprehend; and yet the soul finds him to be infinitely good, and so cannot cease grasping at him. The godly soul sees that there is yet much more to be enjoyed of God, and in him; and therefore, though it be

very near to him, yet cries out and complains of its distance from him, O when shall I come and appear before him! Though it be united to him, yet it longs to be yet more one with him still, to be in a closer conjunction. The godly soul forgets, with Paul, what it hath received, not through dissingenuity or unthankfulness, but through an holy ardour and covetousness; all that he hath of God seems little, because there is yet so much to be had. Though the godly soul drinks of the fountain, yet that is not enough, it would lie down by it; though it do lie down by it, yet so it is not satisfied neither, except it may bathe itself, and even be swallowed up therein. Behold a paradox! the godly soul is most thirsty, though, according to Christ's promise, it thirsts no more: it is most restless, though, according to his promise, it has rest. It is proper to God alone to rest in his love; for the creature cannot, in this imperfect state: by this we know, that we are not yet in heaven; for it is a state of perfect rest, not sloth, or cessation, but satisfaction. Faith is the fever of the soul, rendering it more thirsty, by how much the more it drinks of the water of life; the living streams that flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb. As the waters of the sanctuary are described by the prophet, growing deeper, and deeper, *Ezek. xlvii. 3, 4, 5.* so hope, which is the soul's appetite, grows larger and larger, and cannot be satisfied till the soul's capacity be filled.

COMMUNION WITH THE DEITY.

PART II.

I JOHN I. 3.

Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

THE doctrinal part of this subject being now briefly dispatched, it will be easy to infer some things by way of corollary.

1st, "All wicked men are strangers to God." We know indeed that God, according to his infinite essence, is present with all his creatures: not only men, but even devils too, have their being in him; he hath spread his omnipotence, as the foundation whereupon the whole creation doth stand; he reared up the world in himself, and in him it doth subsist at this day. However angels and men had sadly fallen from God, yet they may be truly said to live in him still; and although all wicked souls wander from God, as to their dispositions and affections, ingrafting themselves into another stock by sin and wickedness, yet they cannot possibly wander from him as to their subsistence, as the apostle teaches the Athenian Philosophers, Acts xvii. 27. *He is not far from every one of us, though few feel after him or find him.* And it may be truly said.

in some sense, that all the creatures, yea, the very worst of them, have a communion with God; all partake of him; no creature hath any thing of its own really distinct from him. Every thing that hath a being hath a relation to that infinite and supreme Being; and every living thing may be rightly said to have communion with him who is life itself. And all those several excellencies that are in the creatures are effluxes from God, who hath impressed various prints of his own beauty and perfection upon every thing that he hath made. God's making of a thing is no other than the communicating of himself thereunto. And therefore when you look into the world, do not view any creature in the narrow point of its own being, but in the unbounded essence of God, and therein love and admire it. But upon the immortal soul of man, God hath copied out his divine perfections more clearly and gloriously than upon any other creature in this world. God could not make a rational soul, without communicating his own infinite wisdom, life, and freedom unto it: so that there is more of the divine nature to be seen in the understanding and will of any one man, than in the whole fabric of heaven and earth.

Notwithstanding this, wicked men are strangers to God. They live and move in God indeed, but they know it not, they consider it not, they act as if they had no dependence upon him, no relation to him. Though they have some kind of communion with God, as creatures, yet this makes them not at all happy: for they are departed from God in their affections and dispo-

sitions, they have degenerated from that subserviency and subordination to the divine will, which is the proper perfection of the creature, and are *alienated from the life of God*, as the apostle speaks, *Eph. iv. 10*. It is not the soul's moving *in* God, that makes it truly and happily nigh unto him, but its moving *towards* God as the chief object, and according to the will of God as the chief rule; and therefore wicked men, who pitch upon other objects, and walk by other laws, even by the lusts and ordinances of their own flesh and fancy, are properly strangers to God, and miserable. He is not properly said to know God, who hath a notion of him formed in his head only; but he whose heart and will are moulded into a conformity to God, and to delight in him; so that a wicked man, though he know and believe, and tremble, as much as any of the devils, yet not loving nor delighting in God as his chief good, not being conformed to his image as the highest and purest perfection, may be truly said to be estranged from him; which is a state of hell, and death, and darkness. This is the man who, though not in words, yet interpretatively and really, saith unto God, *Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways*, with them in *Job xxi. 14*. Sinners really exempt themselves from the dominion of Christ, and do really, though not audibly, say with them in the gospel, *Luke xix. 14*. *We will not have this man to reign over us*. However men pretend, and boast of their relation to, and acquaintance with God, certainly all that live a mere sensual life, not conformed to the image of God, are truly said to be strangers to him, and without communion with him, *1 John i. 6*. *2 Cor. vi. 14*.

2. "The life of a true Christian is the highest and most noble life in the world; it exceeds the life of all other men, even of the greatest men. The character that is here given of the godly man is the highest that can be given of man, or indeed of any creature. It is the highest glory and excellency of the creature to partake of the life of God, of the perfections of the Creator; and such is the description that the Spirit of God here makes of the godly man. What an unreasonable and senseless reproach is that which this wicked world doth cast upon religion, calling it a low and despicable thing; and upon religious and godly men, calling them low-spirited, mean people! Can a man be better spirited than when he has the Spirit of God? Can any thing more truly ennoble a soul than a divine nature? Can a man be raised any higher than to heaven itself? So noble is the godly soul, *Prov. xv. 24. The way of life is above to the wise;* and consequently all wicked men lead a low life, and are bound under chains of death and darkness: the righteous man is of a high and divine origin, born of God, born from above; and therefore is more excellent than his neighbour, than any of his neighbours, even a king himself being judge, *Prov. xii. 26.* What wicked baseness is that sinful gallantry of spirit; what a brutishness is that sensuality of living, which the degenerate sons of Adam do so much magnify! True goodness and excellency of spirit must be measured by the proportion that it bears to the supreme good, the infinite pattern of all perfection. What excellent persons were those renowned saints of old, of whom the apos-

He says, that *the world was not worthy*, Heb. xi. 38. however they were thought *not worthy to live in the world*. What a noble and generous spirit of true Christian valour, patience, meekness, contempt of the world, and self-denial, was that which was to be seen in the blessed apostles, though they were esteemed as the filth and sweepings of the world, the *off-scouring of all things*? To which of the noble, wise, mighty men of the world, as such, did God ever say, "These are the men that have fellowship with me: these are the men that lead a noble and divine life?" No, no, *not many noble are called*; and when they are called, they are made more noble than ever they were by birth or descent, by places of preferment or command. The life of every wicked man, of what rank or station soever he be in the world, is but a low life, a life in most things common to the very beasts with him. If the chief of his business and delight be to eat, and drink, and sleep, and enjoy sensual pleasures, what doth he, what enjoyeth he more than *the beasts that perish*? But the life of the meanest soul, that hath true and spiritual communion with God, is a life common to him with the blessed angels, those *sons of the morning*, the flower of the whole creation. That life which hath self for its centre, must needs be a penurious and indeed a painful life: for how can the soul of man possibly feed to the full upon such spare diet, such scant fare as it finds at home? Nay, indeed, how can it choose but be in pain and torture whilst it lays out itself upon a self-sufficiency, or creature-fulness, which is not at all commensurate to it? But

the soul that rightly lays out and spends all its faculties upon the infinite and blessed God, finds all its capacities completely filled with that fountain of goodness, and itself perfectly matched with a suitable and satisfactory object. This is the true and only nobleness of spirit, when all powers and faculties of this immortal soul are exalted and advanced into a true and vital sympathy and communion with the chief Good, formed according to his will, conformed to his image.

And O that wisdom might be more *justified of her children!* O that the life of God did but clearly manifest itself, and shine forth in the lives of them that call themselves godly! Alas, that ever God himself should suffer reproach by reason of the low-spiritedness and laziness of his servants! For this cause is religion evil spoken of; the Lord awake and enable us to express and show forth the divine life with all power and vigour, to live as high as the calling where-with we are called, and so roll away this reproach!

3dly, "The life of a Christian is not a heavy sluggish thing, but active and vigorous," as the phrase, communion with God, imports. Religion is a communication of life and vigour from him who is life itself; which makes the truly god-like soul to be quick and powerful in its motions. Every thing is by so much the swifter and stronger in its motions, by how much the nearer it is to its centre, as philosophy tells us. Certainly the nearer any man is to God, who is the centre of souls, so much the more does he covet after more intimate communion with him,

and the more eagerly lay hold upon him. Communion does necessarily imply reaction or reflection: the soul that receives of God, and his fulness, will certainly be returning itself into him again. Communion, in the very force of the phrase, implies a mutuality; we cannot suppose a soul partaking of God, but it must needs mutually render up itself to him again. There can be no commerce nor correspondence without returns: but what return can the godly soul make unto God? Why, it renders up its whole soul unto him. Faith is a giving grace as well as receiving; it gives the soul back to Christ, as well as takes Christ into the soul; it receives strength and grace from God, and reciprocally spends the same, and the whole powers of the soul upon him. The happiness of a godly soul doth not consist in cessation and rest; the soul itself being a powerful and active being; the happiness of it, the very rest of it, must also be active and vigorous. Where there is communion there must needs be quick and lively returns, reciprocations, reflections, and correspondencies; the drawings of God are answered with the soul's running, *Cant. i. 14.* The motion of Christ's fingers begets a motion in the Christian's soul, *Cant. v. 4.* *My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.* These are the divine and harmonious responses which are made and maintained in the godly soul, the temple of the living God. O shake off that lazy and drowsy spirit, which hath so benumbed many in this cold and stupid age of the world; work out your salvation with care and diligence! If

your religion be nothing but a spiritual kind of sleep, your heaven will prove to be nothing but a pleasant kind of dream.

Communion with God speaks something divine, active, vigorous. The life of a Christian doth not consist only in cessation from evil, reformation of sin, or dying thereunto; mortification is but one part of regeneration. It is the opinion, and, I suspect, the deceit of many nominal Christians, that if they can but keep up an indifferent, even spirit and conversation, free from gross and scandalous sins from day to day, they are happy enough; their utmost ambition is to be innocent and harmless. This indeed is necessary and praise-worthy; but surely the happiness of a soul lies higher: thus happy are all the creatures that keep in the station, and keep up the order prescribed them of God: thus happy is the sun in the firmament, running its race continually, and never departing from the office which is assigned to it. But the soul of man is capable of a higher kind of happiness, viz. communion with God; which is, when the faculties thereof being awakened, refined, and actuated by the Spirit of God, do reciprocally act, and spend themselves upon him, longing to be perfectly swallowed up in him, and to be all that which God himself is, as far as the creature is capable of drinking in the perfections of the Creator, and becoming one with his Maker. This is that truly noble and divine life, which is here called communion with God, which the high-spirited and generous soul labours yet more and more to be growing up into, and perfected in.

Keep yourselves, with David, from your iniquities; it is something to be freed from the guilt and power of sin; but there is something higher than this, a more excellent attainment, a more divine accomplishment; go on therefore with the same David, and aspire after this pure and blissful state, this heaven upon earth, waiting for the more ample and glorious manifestations of God to you and in you, more than they that watch for the morning, as he did, *Ps. cxxx. 6.* This inference was drawn only for instruction, but the sweetness and necessity of the subject induces me to turn it into an earnest exhortation, from which I would not prevent myself. Therefore I proceed to improve this doctrine, by way of conviction or reprehension.

1. If our fellowship *is*, that is, now exists, it reproves them that can take up with a *shall be*, a heaven to come. I am now speaking, not to the worst of men, whose very souls are swallowed up in sensual enjoyments, and imprisoned in their senses: for these men either think of no heaven at all, or else they place their heaven and happiness in the enjoyment of themselves or of the creature. Nor yet do I speak to those men who, being persuaded of a future state, do indeed wish for a heaven to come, but then it is a poor kind of low and earthly heaven, consisting in ease, rest, safety, freedom from troubles or torments, which is the best happiness that most men understand, the highest heaven that any carnal mind can see or soar after. But I am speaking to a better and finer sort of souls than these, that verily possess a sense of a pure and

spiritual heaven in the world to come; yea, they are so overpowered with the foresight of it, as earnestly to expect and wish for it; yet, the hopes of it sustain and strengthen their hearts under the many temptations and persecutions of this present world; they are so really persuaded of the truth of it, and of their own title to it too, that they are content to endure this long and disconsolate night of dimness, and anguish, and frightfulness, merely in expectation of the dawning of that day, that clear and bright day of their glorious and everlasting redemption. And in this I am far from blaming them, nay, I must needs commend their magnanimous faith and self-denial. But, in the mean time, they dwell too much upon heaven as a future state, and comfort themselves only in a happiness to come, not longing and labouring to find a heaven opened within themselves, a beginning of eternal bliss brought into themselves; they are too well contented with a certain reversion, and do not eagerly enough endeavour to obtain a present possession, to be actually instated in so much of the inheritance of souls as may fall to their share even in this lower world; this slothful temper and inactivity I do condemn wherever it is found; though it be in my own soul. Every thing in the world, by a natural principle, thirsts after its proper rest, and a happiness suitable to the nature of it: no creature can be contented, though it may be constrained, to be at a distance from its centre, but it is still carried out towards its own perfection. And why then should a godly soul, who is God's only new creature in the

world, be contented with a state of imperfection? Why should not the saint as eagerly covet, and as earnestly pursue the most intimate and close communion and conjunction with his God, as they do with their respective centres? Can any earthly, sensual man be contented with an inheritance in reversion, so as to suspend his seeking and following of the world till some future time? Can any ambitious spirit, who places his chief happiness and contentment in popular estimation, and worldly greatness, be contented to stand gazing at preferments; will he be willing to sit still, and wait till they offer themselves to him? No, no, there is a raging thirst in the soul, which will not suffer it to be at rest, but is still awakening and provoking all the powers of the whole man, till they arise and obtain water to quench it. And therefore we read of men making haste to be rich, *Prov.* xxviii. 22. and hastening after another god, *Ps.* xvi. 4. which eager and ardent passions towards earthly objects, you may see lively described in the Bible in the instance of Ahab, Amnon, and Haman. And is there any reason to be given, why that new nature and divine principle, which God putteth into regenerate souls, should not carry them as hastily and as forcibly to a present fruition of their proper object and happiness, (so far as at present it may be enjoyed) as that corrupt and degenerated nature doth hurry on them in whom it ruleth, towards the satisfaction of their base lusts? Divines speak sometimes of making heaven and eternal life present to themselves, and say that this is the work of faith; which is a high and

excellent doctrine, but, I suspect, not thoroughly understood by ordinary Christians. To make heaven present to one's self, is not only to insist upon a state of future happiness in frequent meditations, to think much of it, neither is this that noble employment of saving faith: but the life and power of faith is most eminently exerted in imbibing participations of life and grace from Christ, and in a real bringing down of God and heaven into the soul. The truth is, heaven is a state of perfect communion with God, a state of love, joy, peace, purity, freedom; and as far as any soul is in such a state upon earth, so far it is above the earth, and may be said to be in heaven. Therefore a right active soul, that truly understands its proper and spiritual heaven and happiness, so far as it is thus active and sensible, cannot be contented to stay for all its happiness till the world to come; cannot be contented to be unhappy, no not for an hour, but is still growing up in God, and springing up into everlasting life, *John iv. 14.*

2. This subject reprehends them that make a stir about the kingdom of Christ in the world, and men's being brought into the communion of the church, but who advance not his kingdom in their own souls, nor long to have their own souls advanced into that noble state of communion with *the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* There is, doubtless, a generation of such popular Christians, who being strangers to the life, and power, and spirit of true religion, endeavour to exhibit themselves to the world, and commend themselves to the charity of their brethren, by a

pretended zeal for the kingdom of Christ in the world, and the glorious manifestation of it, as they say. I know indeed that it is worth the cares and prayers, and utmost diligence of every serious Christian, to spread and propagate the knowledge of the Gospel, to diffuse the ointment of Christ's name far and near. A more pure and spiritual administration of all Gospel ordinances throughout the world is highly desirable; yea, and I think an indifferent and careless disposition towards the worship of God, argues much of an earthly and atheistical mind. But I fear, that the kingdom of Christ, and those glorious manifestations and discoveries which are so much pretended to by many, if they should be thoroughly examined, would be, at length resolved into nothing else but the advancement of some one party or interest above all the rest, or the exchanging of an old form and dress of religion for a new one; and that this zeal would be found little better than the blazings of self-love, a fire kindled not by a coal from the altar, but by a spark of their own. But, be it so, that this disposition of their's is sincere and spiritual; should not their charity begin at home? The most proper kingdom of Christ is that whereby he ruleth in the hearts of men; the most excellent worship is when the soul itself becomes a temple for the living God to dwell in, and to receive and reflect the manifestations of his glory, when a fire of divine love is kindled in it, and therein it doth offer up, not bulls and goats, no, nor so much prayers and meditations, as indeed itself unto God, which is a reasonable service, as the

apostle speaks, far more glorious than either the Mosaic or evangelical dispensation, if you consider it in the letter only. Whatever men may pretend, no man can be truly and rightly studious of the advancement of the kingdom of God in the world, that hath not first felt the mighty power, and blessed effects of it in his own soul. Communion with the church is only so far to be valued, as it lies in order to a real and spiritual communion with God; which communion with God, if we do indeed sincerely wish to others, we shall more abundantly labour to promote in ourselves. I cannot believe that he doth heartily seek the happiness of others, who himself sits still, and is content to be miserable, especially when their happiness and his is one and the same.

3. It condemns them as not Christians, whose fellowship is only with their fellow creatures. We have seen that it is the character, the distinguishing character of a godly man, to have fellowship with God; it must needs follow then, that those degenerate souls that rise no higher than the world, that converse only with self or any other creature, are verily strangers to true Christianity, whatever their confidence or presumption may be. Christians, tell me not what you profess of Christ, what you believe of the Gospel, to what orthodox opinions you hold, or honest party you side with, how many and specious duties you perform, no, nor what hopes or wishes you have of going to heaven; but tell me where is your principal communion; what do you principally mind, follow, converse with; to

what pattern do you conform; by which rule do you live; at what object do you ultimately aim? The whole world of ungodly men doth hasten after another God, as the psalmist's phrase is, though not all after the same god; they spend their souls indeed on various objects, and use different methods to obtain rest; but yet all their happiness and contentment are ultimately resolved into creature communion. That dreadful sentence, that the apostle delivers universally concerning all men, is to be limited to all wicked men only, and of them it is undoubtedly true, Phil. ii. 21. *All seek their own, and none the things of Jesus Christ*; and of all these the psalmist's *many* is to be understood, Ps. iv. 6. *There be many that say, who will show us any good?* i. e. any creature-good, as the words following do explain it. All unregenerate souls are bound up in the creature, some creature or other; and therefore the noblest of them, whatever boasts they may make, are low and ignoble; their main converse is but with their fellow creatures, and indeed creatures much inferior to themselves, *corn and wine*, says the psalmist, *earthly things*, says the apostle, Phil. iii. 19. *Who mind earthly things*. In a word, though it be true, as the apostle says in one place, that all men in the world do live in God, *Acts xvii. 28*. yet it is also true, that most men, as the same apostle speaks elsewhere, do live *without God in the world*, have their hearts fastened down to one creature or other, and so fall short of this honourable character which the apostle here gives of godly men; *Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*.

I shall close the remainder of this discourse with an humble request and earnest expostulation.

“Reckon not on any happiness short of this communion.” There are many things which a Christian may take as comforts; but only one, this one, that he ought to take as the happiness of this life. I design not to say any thing to the prejudice of natural or civil ornaments or accomplishments, much less to the disparagement of any of those endowments or employments, which are, in a sense, spiritual, commonly called gifts and duties; but I confess, I wonder that such a noble and intelligent being as the soul of man should attend to, and pursue after things either extrinsical or inferior to itself, and in the mean time carelessly forget, or wilfully reject its main happiness, principal end, and proper perfection. As for those sensual persons, those mere animals, whose souls are incarnate in their senses, and seem to perform no higher office in the world than the souls of beasts, that is, to carry about their bodies, who value themselves by their bodies, or, which is baser, by the apparel that clothes them, or the estates that feed them, I shall not now trouble myself about them, but leave them to be chastised by Seneca or Plutarch, or indeed any ordinary heathen philosopher.

I shall rather apply myself to a sort of high-spirited people, whom by a condescension of charity, we call Christians, who, valuing themselves by external professions, privileges, performances, may indeed be said to be somewhat more

scrupulous and curious, but no less mistaken than the former; for if the grosser sort of sensualists deny and professedly abjure their own reason, and the finer sort of hypocrites more cunningly bribe their's, each method amounts to more than a cheat, and both parties will be alike miserable, only the latter will be somewhat more tormented in missing of a happiness for which he looked and hoped. It does not suit my present discourse, to speak so highly and honourable of these externals of Christianity, nor to press them so zealously, as I do at all times when I have occasion; for I do verily value all ordinances of Christ, and duties of God's worship at a high rate; nay, I know not any serious and truly godly soul in the world, who is not of the same profession with me; but I must confess, I think it is one of the greatest and most pernicious cheats in the world, for men to feed on the dish instead of the meat; to place their happiness in those things which God hath only appointed to be means to convey it.

This was the great destruction of the Jewish church; by this they perished; thus they are every where described in Scripture, as a people resting in their privileges and performances, boasting of their sacrifices and temple service; they expected a strange kind of flesh-pleasing heaven, something distinct from them, and reserved for them, to be given them by way of reward for the righteousness which they themselves had wrought by the power of their own free will, (which free will, they say is an effect of man's fall, but they make it a cause of man's rise;

for now he can purchase and merit a happiness, which happiness is also more illustrious than that given of mere grace;) which righteousness, if we look either into their own writings, or God's writings concerning them, we shall find was nothing else but a strict observance of the precepts of the law, according to the letter and external dispensation of it. Such a low and legal spirit was generally found among the Jews; I wish the greatest part of us, who are in profession and name evangelical, may not be found as truly legal in spirit and temper as they were. If we cry, the Gospel of Christ, the Gospel of Christ, with the same spirit as they cried, *the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord*; our confidence will as surely betray us into final misery as their's did. True, indeed, prayers, sacraments, sermons, are finer sounding words than the old obsolete ones, the law, sacrifices, ceremonies; but, alas! they are but words; at least they are not gods, of course, no more fit to terminate our devotions and affections than these. I beseech you, therefore, Christians, be not mistaken in this matter. True Christianity is not a notion but a nature; that is not religion which is treasured up in books, or laid up in men's understandings; but it is laid in the very constitution of the soul; it is a new principle implanted by God in the highest powers of the soul, refining and spiritualizing all the faculties thereof, and rendering them as like to God himself, as a creature can resemble its Creator.

It is a truth as clear as the sun, that nothing can make a soul truly happy but what is wrought into the nature of it; which must be something

more excellent than itself, and can be nothing less than divine, even the image of the blessed God. If you be Christians in deed and in truth, value all the ordinances of God, and the duties of the Christian religion, but value not yourselves or your happiness by these; attend upon them all for maintaining and increasing real fellowship with God; for though these are not it, yet they are the way wherein it pleases God to give it; drink the sincere milk of the word, but let it be only with a holy design of growing thereby, of growing up into God, and a divine life. Away with those low and base thoughts of happiness; the happiness of a soul is a high and excellent, indeed a divine thing; it is in some sense common to God and the soul; God is happy in himself alone, and the soul can be happy only in him. What contentment, what real happiness, Christian, can the rising of thy party in the world, or the rising of thy name in the country bring thee, if, in the mean time, thou thyself harbourest any carnal will or self-interest that doth rise up in opposition to the pure and perfect will and nature of God? How art thou happy in thy prayers, if thou cast sin out with thy mouth, and also in the mean time a fountain of iniquity be springing up in thy heart? What avails it towards a state of perfection to be of the most orthodox opinions, the most honorable society, the fairest profession, the most popular and sanctimonious form, or the most plausible performances, if the soul is in the mean time alienated from the life of God, and feeds upon some earthly trash or other, which destroys the native powers and vigour of it, and

keeps it under a perpetual langour? As much as a silken stocking on a broken leg, or a princely diadem on an aching head, avails towards a state of ease and soundness of body. Let nothing limit your ambition but a state of god-like perfection; let nothing set bounds to your loving and longing souls, but a real fruition of God himself; nay, let not that bound them neither; but the more you enjoy, see, and taste, the more let your love be strengthened; after the manner of fire, which, the more it is fed, the more hungry and devouring it grows. In a word, let nothing satisfy you but the highest character that can be given of mortal man, to be men *after God's own heart*, to have God dwelling in you, to be filled with his fulness, to have this real and excellent *communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*. To whom be all honour, praise, and glory, for ever and ever! *Amen.*

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

THE Rt. Rev. THOMAS BARLOW, bishop of Lincoln, who is said to have been a great reader, and very good judge of books, as well as considerable casuist, having perused the True Christian's Test, wrote to Mr. SHAW a very respectful letter, in which he stated that he had read all his book, and some parts of it more than once, with great satisfaction and benefit; for, he adds, in your meditations of your love of God and the world, I am neither afraid nor unwilling to confess it, and make you my confessor, you have instructed me in several things which I knew not before, or considered not so seriously and so often as I might and ought.

The Rev. JOB ORTON. I wish this book was re-printed. It is a most serious, useful and entertaining book, short chapters, and many excellent stories, and references to the Classics.

Mr. SHAW's Welcome to the Plague, and his Immanuel; saith Dr. WILLIAMS, of London, in his Appendix to his Preacher, have been often re-printed, and are deservedly in high estimation. The latter treats with much depth and unction of the divine life in the soul.

Being requested to give our opinion respecting the religious discourses of the Rev. SAMUEL SHAW, we would state, that we have for several years possessed the principal volume of his works, and have often perused particular parts of them, and that, in our opinion, his writings contain more than an ordinary spirit of practical and experimental piety, and cannot be attentively read without profit to eve-

Recommendations.

ry serious mind. We rejoice sincerely in the prospect of their re-publication in this country, and believe the publisher will do a real service to the cause of religion by printing and circulating a large edition. The price at which the volumes are proposed is reasonable, and places them within the reach of the great body of Christians among us. We wish the undertaking entire success.

Theol. Seminary.

MOSES STUART, D. D.

Assoc. Prof. Sacred Literature.

JAMES MURDOCK, D. D.

Brown Prof. Sac. Rhetoric.

With the above recommendations I cheerfully concur.
Rev. JOHN CODMAN.

So far as our knowledge of SHAW's writings extends, we perfectly coincide with the opinion above expressed, and most heartily wish success to the publisher.

LEONARD WOODS, D. D.

Abbot Prof. Christian Theology.

EBENEZER PORTER, D. D.

Bartlet Prof. Sac. Rhetoric.

THOMAS BALDWIN, D. D.

EDWARD D. GRIFFIN, D. D.

Rev. SERENO E. DWIGHT.

JAMES WILSON, D. D.

We have read the Rev. SAMUEL SHAW's Welcome to the Plague; his Angelical Life; his Communion with the Deity; his Farewell to Life, and his Immanuel. With respect to experimental religion, we know of no writings which are more edifying and animating. We can recommend them as writings worthy the attention of all real Christians, and in many respects instructive and useful.

ASA BURTON, D. D.

SETH PAYSON, D. D.

In the above recommendations I cordially concur.
Rev. DANIEL SHARP.

Recommendations.

We have read the several discourses last mentioned of the venerable SAMUEL SHAW, and judging by what they so edifyingly state and exhibit of genuine religion, have no hesitation in expressing our earnest wish, that the whole of his works above proposed may be re-published.

JOSEPH DANA, D. D.

DANIEL DANA, D. D.

SAMUEL WORCESTER, D. D.

New-York, March 1821. We entertain a high opinion of the writings of the Rev. SAMUEL SHAW, and most cheerfully recommend them to the Christian community.

JOHN B. ROMEYN, D. D.

GARDINER SPRING, D. D.

Rev. R. B. E. M'LEOD.

We have read portions of the Immanuel, and other pieces of the Rev. SAMUEL SHAW. They contain intimate views of experimental and practical religion; and are adapted by their serious and affectionate strain, and warmth, and power of expression, to edify and quicken devout readers, and make an impression on the careless.

JOHN T. KIRKLAND, D. D. LL. D.

NATHANAEL EMMONS, D. D.

THADDEUS MASON HARRIS, D. D.

DANIEL CHAPLIN, D. D.

JOSEPH SUMNER, D. D.

ELIJAH PARISH, D. D.

Our acquaintance with the writings of the Rev. SAMUEL SHAW, that eminently pious and devoted minister of CHRIST, is chiefly confined to his *Welcome to the Plague*, and his *Immanuel*. These, however, we esteem so highly that we can have no doubt of the useful tendency of all his works, and rejoice that an American edition of the whole is intended.

SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

JEDIDIAH MORSE, D. D.

Rev. BROWN EMERSON.

Recommendations.

With the writings of the Rev. Mr. SHAW, generally, I am not acquainted. His Immanuel I have read with much satisfaction ; and judging of the tenour of his whole works from this interesting specimen, I rejoice in the prospect of their re-publication, and recommend them to the patronage of all my friends.

WILLIAM STOUGHTON, D. D.

Philadelphia, Aug. 30, 1820.

We can with much pleasure recommend to the Christian public the works of the Rev. SAMUEL SHAW ; and are well persuaded that you will do an interesting service to the Church of our Lord JESUS, by publishing an edition which shall contain the whole which he has written. His productions are greatly esteemed in Great Britain, and must be so wherever they are known. They present us with principles which afford support under the severest trials, and which supported the author amidst the desolations of the church in the period in which he lived.

SAMUEL BLATCHFORD, D. D.

Lansingburgh, Feb. 1, 1821

Rev. JONATHAN BURR,

Rev. WILLIAM JENKS, Boston.

AS

