

Henry Manley 1804
THE

RISE and PROGRESS

OF

RELIGION in the SOUL:

ILLUSTRATED

In a COURSE of SERIOUS and

PRACTICAL ADDRESSES,

Suited to PERSONS of every CHARACTER

and CIRCUMSTANCE:

WITH

A Devout MEDITATION or PRAYER added to each

CHAPTER.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A SERMON ON THE CARE OF THE SOUL,

and also subjoined,

A plain and serious ADDRESS to the Master of a

FAMILY, on the important subject of

FAMILY RELIGION.

By the late Rev. PHILIP DODDRIDGE, D. D.

Qua feret hic Gressum. Fontes dabit arida Vallis,

Inque cavas Fossas depluet Agmen Aquæ:

Instaurabit Iter Vires: & Nominis Ora

Vifurus Solymæ figet in Æde Pedem.

Johnst Psal. lxxxiv, 5. 6.

Testifying—Repentance toward GOD, and Faith toward our Lord
Jesus Christ.

Acts xx. 21.

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all
Wisdom; that we may present every Man perfect in Christ Jesus.

Col. i. 28.

N O R T H A M P T O N :

Printed by WILLIAM BUTLER, for the Society
for propagating the Gospel among the Indians and
others in NORTH AMERICA; the Hampshire Missionary
Society, and the trustees of Phillips's Andover
Academy.

1804.

BV4500
D6
1804

By Exchange

Hamilton College

APR 8 1940

LC Control Number



tmp96 031626

T H E
C O N T E N T S.

C H A P. I.

THE introduction to the work, with some general account of its design. Page 37

A prayer for the success of it, in promoting the rise and progress of religion. 45

C H A P. II.

The careless sinner awakened. 47

The meditation of a sinner, who was once thoughtless, but begins to be awakened. 55

C H A P. III.

The awakened sinner urged to immediate consideration, and cautioned against delay. 57

A prayer for one, who is tempted to delay applying to religion, though under some conviction of its importance. 63

C H A P. IV.

The sinner arraigned and convicted. 65

The confession of a sinner, convinced in general of his guilt. 74

C H A P. V.

The sinner stripped of his vain pleas. 75

The meditation of a convinced sinner, giving up his vain pleas before God. 83

C H A P. VI.

The sinner sentenced. 85

The reflection of a sinner struck with the terror of his sentence. 92

C H A P. VII.

The helpless state of the sinner under condemnation. 93

The lamentation of a sinner in this miserable condition. 98

C H A P. VIII.

News of salvation by Christ brought to the convinced and condemned sinner. 100

The sinner's reflection on this good news 106

C H A P.

C H A P. IX.

- A more particular account of the way, by which this salvation is to be obtained. 107
 The sinner deliberating on the expediency of falling in with this method of salvation. 115

C H A P. X.

- The sinner seriously urged and entreated to accept of salvation in this way. 117
 The sinner yielding to these intreaties, and declaring his acceptance of salvation by Christ. 122

C H A P. XI.

- A solemn address to those, who will not be persuaded to fall in with the design of the gospel. 124
 A compassionate prayer in behalf of the impenitent sinner. 136

C H A P. XII.

- An Address to a soul so overwhelmed with a sense of the greatness of its sins, that it dares not apply itself to Christ with any hope of salvation. 138
 Reflection on the encouragements he has to do it, ending in an humble and earnest application to Christ for mercy. 143

C H A P. XIII.

- The doubting soul more particularly assisted in its enquiries as to the sincerity of its faith and repentance. 145
 The soul submitting to divine examination the sincerity of its repentance and faith. 150

C H A P. XIV.

- A more particular view of the several branches of the Christian temper; by which the reader may be farther assisted in judging what he is, and what he should endeavour to be. 152
 A review of the several branches of this temper in a scriptural prayer. 165

C H A P. XV.

- The reader reminded how much he needs the assistance of the spirit of God to form him to this temper, and what encouragement he has to expect it. 168
 An humble supplication for the influences of divine grace to form and strengthen religion in the soul. 173

C H A P. XVI.

The Christian convert warned of, and animated against those discouragements which he must expect to meet with, when entering on a religious course. 175

The soul alarmed by a sense of these difficulties, committing itself to divine protection. 180

C H A P. XVII.

The Christian urged to, and assisted in an express act of self-dedication to the service of God. 182

An example of self-dedication, or a solemn form of renewing our covenant with God : 185

Together with an abstract of it, to be used with proper and requisite alterations. 190

C H A P. XVIII.

Of entering into church communion by an attendance upon the Lord's-supper. 193

A prayer for one who desires to attend, yet has some remaining doubts concerning his right to that solemn ordinance. 197

C H A P. XIX.

Some more particular directions for maintaining continual communion with God, or being in his fear all the day long ; in a letter to a pious friend. 199

A serious view of death proper to be taken as we lie down on our beds. 213

C H A P. XX.

A serious persuasive to such a method of spending our days. 215

A prayer suited to the state of a soul, who longs to attain to such a life. 222

C H A P. XXI.

A caution against various temptations, by which the young convert may be drawn aside from the course before recommended. 225

The young convert's prayer for divine protection from the danger of these snares. 233

C H A P. XXII.

The case of spiritual decay and languor in religion. 235

A prayer for one under spiritual decays, 244

C H A P. XXIII.

The sad case of relapse into known and deliberate sin, after

- ter solemn acts of dedication to God, and some progress made in religion. 247
- A prayer for one who has fallen into gross sin, after religious resolutions and engagements. 254
- C H A P. XXIV.
- The case of the Christian under the hidings of God's face. 258
- An humble supplication for one under the hidings of God's face. 268
- C H A P. XXV.
- The Christian struggling under great and heavy afflictions. 271
- An address to God under the pressure of heavy afflictions. 275
- C H A P. XXVI.
- The Christian assisted in examining into his growth in grace. 278
- The Christian breathing earnestly after growth in grace. 287
- C H A P. XXVII.
- The advanced Christian reminded of the mercies of God, and exhorted to the exercises of habitual love to him, and joy in him. 288
- An example of the genuine workings of this grateful joy in God. 294
- C H A P. XXVIII.
- The established Christian urged to exert himself for purposes of usefulness. 298
- The Christian breathing after more extensive usefulness. 307
- C H A P. XXIX.
- The Christian rejoicing in the views of death and judgment. 309
- The meditation and prayer of a Christian, whose heart is warmed with these prospects. 317
- C H A P. XXX.
- The Christian honoring God by his dying behaviour. 319
- A meditation and prayer suited to the case of a dying Christian. 327

A SERMON ON THE CARE OF THE SOUL.

L U K E X. 42—FORMER PART,

ONE THING IS NEEDFUL.

IT was the amiable character of our blessed Redeemer, that *he went about doing good.** This great motive, which animated all his actions, brought him to the house of his friend *Lazarus*, at *Bethany*, and directed his behaviour there. Though it was a season of recess from public labour, our Lord brought the sentiments and the pious cares of a preacher of righteousness into the parlour of a friend; and there his doctrine *dropped as the rain, and distilled as the dew*, on the little happy circle that were then surrounding him. *Mary*, the sister of *Lazarus*, with great delight made one amongst them; she set herself down at the feet of Jesus, in the posture of an humble disciple; and we have a great deal of reason to believe, that *Martha*, his other sister, would gladly have been with her there; but domestic cares pressed hard upon her, and she was *cumbered with much serving*, being, perhaps, too solicitous to prepare a sumptuous entertainment for her heavenly master and the train that attended him. Happy, are they, that in a croud of business do not loose something of the spirituality of their minds, and of the composure, and sweetness of their tempers! This good woman comes to our Lord with too impatient a complaint; insinuating some little reflection, not only on *Mary*, but on himself too. *Lord dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.* † Our Lord, willing to take all opportunities of suggesting useful thoughts, answers her in these words, of which the text is a part, *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is need-*
a ful,

* Acts x. 38.

† Luke x. 40.

ful, and *Mary* has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her, *q. d.* Alas *Martha*! the concerns of the soul are of so much greater importance than those of the body, that I cannot blame your sister on this occasion: I rather recommend her to your imitation, and caution you, and all my other friends, to be much on your guard, that in the midst of your worldly cares, you do not loose sight of that which so much better deserves your attention.

I shall consider these words, *one thing is needful*, as a kind of aphorism, or wise and weighty sentence, dropped from the mouth of our blessed Redeemer, and evidently worthy of our most serious regard. In handling them I shall,

I. Consider what we are to understand by the *one thing* here spoken of.

II. Shew you what is intended when it is represented as the one thing *needful*.

III. I will shew how justly it may be so represented, or prove that it is indeed the one thing needful.

IV. Conclude with some reflections and application.

My friends, the words which are now before us are to this day as true, as they were seventeen hundred years ago. Set your hearts to attend to them. O that you might, by divine grace, be awakened to hear them with a due regard, and might be so impressed with the plain and serious things which are now to be spoken, as you probably would, if I were speaking by your dying beds, and you had the full exercise of your reason, and the near and lively view of eternity!

I. I am briefly to consider what we are to understand by the *one thing needful*.

Now I answer in a few words, it is the care of the soul, opposed, as you see in the text, to the care, *i. e.* the excessive care of the body, for which *Martha* was gently admonished by our Lord. This is a general answer, and it comprehends a variety of important particulars which is the business of our ministry often to open to you at large: The care of the soul implies a readiness to hear the words of Christ, to set ourselves with *Mary* at his feet,

feet, and to receive both the law and the gospel from his mouth. It supposes that we learn from this divine teacher the worth of our souls, their danger and their remedy. That we become above all things solicitous about their eternal salvation. That, heartily repenting of all our sins, and cordially believing the everlasting gospel, we receive the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness and life, resting our souls on the value of his atonement, and the efficacy of his grace. It imports the sincere dedication of ourselves to the service of God, and a faithful adherence to it, notwithstanding all the oppositions arising from inward corruptions, or outward temptations, and a resolute perseverance in the way of gospel dependence, till we receive the end of our faith in our complete salvation. This is the *one thing needful*, represented indeed in various scriptures by various names. Sometimes it is called *regeneration*, or *the new creature*, because it is the blessed work of God's efficacious grace. Sometimes the *fear of God*, and sometimes *his love*, and the *keeping his commandments*; - and very frequently in the New Testament is called *faith*, or *receiving Christ*, and *believing on him*, which, therefore, is represented as the *great work of God*; * *i. e.* the great thing which God in his glorious gospel requires, as well as by his spirit produces in us: Each of these, if rightly understood and explained, comprehends all that I have said on this head. On the whole, we may say, that, as the *body is one, though it has many members*, and the soul is one, though it has many faculties; so, in the present case, this real, vital religion is *one thing*, one sacred principle of divine life, bringing us to attend to the care of our souls, as of our greatest treasure. It is *one thing*, notwithstanding all the variety of views in which it may be considered, and of characters under which it may be described. I proceed,

II. To consider what may be intended in the representation which is here made of it, as the *one thing needful*.

Now I think it naturally includes these three particulars: It is a matter of universal concern, of the highest importance, and of so comprehensive a nature, that eve-

ry

ry thing which is truly worthy of our regard may be considered as included in it, or subservient to it. Let me a little illustrate each of these particulars, reserving the proof of what I now assert to the third general; where it will abundantly appear.

1. The care of the soul may be called the *one thing needful*, "as it is matter of universal concern."

Our Lord, you see, speaks of it as *needful* in the general. He says not for this or that particular person; or for those of such an age, station, or circumstance in life, but needful for all. And, indeed, when discoursing on such a subject, one might properly introduce it with those solemn words of the Psalmist, *give ear, all ye people, hear, all ye inhabitants of this earth, both high and low, rich and poor together.** For it is the concern of all, from the king that sits upon the throne, to the servant that grindeth at the mill, or the beggar that lieth upon the dunghill. It is *needful* for us that are *ministers*, for our own salvation is concerned. And woe, insupportable woe will be to our souls, if we think it enough to recommend it to others, to talk of it in a warm, or an awful manner, in public assemblies, or in our private converse, while it does not penetrate our hearts as our own greatest care. Our case will then be like that of the *Israelitish* lord in *Samaria*, † who was employed to distribute the corn when the siege was raised, seeing it with our eyes, and dispensing it with our hands, we shall ourselves die miserably, without tasting the blessings we impart. It is *needful* to all *you that are our hearers*, without the exception of one single person. It is *needful* to you that are *rich*, though it may, on some accounts, be peculiarly difficult for you; even as difficult, comparatively speaking, as for *a camel, to go through the eye of a needle*; ‡ yet, if it be neglected, you are poor in the midst of all your wealth, and miserable in all your abundance; and a wretch, starving for hunger, in a magnificent palace and a rich dress, would be less the object of compassion than you. It is *needful* for you that are *poor*; though you are distressed with so many anxious cares, *what you shall eat, and what*

* Psalm xlix. 1, 2. † 2 Kings vii. 2. ‡ Mat. xix. 24.

what you shall drink, and wherewithall you shall be cloathed.* The nature, that makes you capable of such anxieties as these, argues your much greater concern in the bread which endures to eternal life, † than in that by which this mortal body must be supported. It is needful for you that are advanced in years, though your strength be impaired so that the grasshopper is a burden; ‡ though you have by your long continuance in sin rendered this great work so hard, that were it less important, one would in pity let you alone without reminding you of it: Yet late as it is, it must be done, or your hoary heads will be brought down to the grave with wrath, and sink under a curse aggravated by every year and by every day of your lives. It is needful to you that are young, though solicited by so many gay vanities, to neglect it; though it may be represented as an unseasonable care at present, yet I repeat it, it is needful to you; immediately needful, unless you, who walk so frequently over the dust of your brethren and companions, that died in the bloom and vigour of their days, have made some secret covenant with the grave for yourselves, and found out some wonderful method, hitherto unknown, of securing this precarious life, and of answering for days and months to come, while others cannot answer for one single moment.

2. The care of the soul is “a matter of the highest importance;” beyond any thing which can be brought into comparison with it.

As Solomon says of wisdom, that it is more precious than rubies, and that all things which can be desired are not to be compared with her, § so may I properly say of this great, and most important branch of wisdom, whatever can be laid in the balance with it, will be found altogether lighter than vanity. This is strongly implied when it is said in the text, one thing is needful; q. d. one thing, and one thing alone is so. Just as the blessed God is said to be only wise, ¶ and only holy, || because the wisdom and holiness of angels and men is as nothing, when compared with his. What seems most great and most important in life, what

B

kings

* 1 Mat. vi. 31. † John vi. 27. ‡ Eccles. xii. 5.

§ Prov. iii. 15. ¶ 1 Tim. i. 17. || Rev. xv. 4.

kings and senators, what the wisest and greatest of this world are employing their time, their councils, their pens, their labours upon, are trifles, when compared with this *one thing*. A man may subsist, he may in some considerable measure be happy, without learning, without riches, without titles, without liberty, without friends, nay, though *the life be more than meat, and the body than raiment*,* yet may he be happy, unspeakably happy, without the body itself. But he cannot be so in the neglect of the *one thing needful*. I must therefore bespeak your regard to it in the words of *Moses, it is not a light thing, but it is our life*.†

3. The care of the soul is of so comprehensive a nature, that “every thing truly worthy of our regard may be considered as included in it, or subservient to it.”

As *David* observes, that the *commandment of God is exceeding broad*,‡ so we may say of this *one thing needful*; and as *Solomon* very justly and emphatically expresses it, *to fear God and to keep his commandments is the whole of man*;§ his whole duty, and his whole interest; and every thing which is wise and rational does in its proper place and connection make a part of it. We should judge very ill concerning the nature of this care, if we imagined, that it consisted merely in acts of devotion, or religious contemplation; it comprehends all the lovely and harmonious band of social and humane virtues. It requires a care of society, a care of our bodies, and of our temporal concerns; but then all is to be regulated, directed, and animated by proper regards to God, Christ, and immortality. Our food and our rest, our trades and our labours are to be attended to, and all the offices of humanity performed in obedience to the will of God, for the glory of Christ, and in a view to the improving the mind in a growing meetness for a state of complete perfection. Name any thing which has no reference at all to this, and you name a worthless trifle, however it may be gilded to allure the eye, however it may be sweetened to gratify the taste. Name a thing which, instead of

thus

* Mat. vi. 25. † Deut. xxxii. 47. ‡ Psal. cxix. 96.

§ Eccles. xii. 13.

thus improving the soul, has a tendency to debase and pollute, to enslave and endanger it, and you name what is most unprofitable and mischievous, be the wages of iniquity ever so great; most foul and deformed, be it in the eyes of men ever so honourable, or in their customs ever so fashionable. Thus I have endeavoured to shew you what we may suppose implied in this expression of *one thing being needful*. I am now,

III. To shew you with how much propriety the care of the soul may be represented under this character, of the *one thing needful*, as a matter of universal and most serious concern, to which every thing else is to be considered as subservient, if at all worthy of our care and pursuit. Now let me appeal to the sentiments of those who must be allowed most capable of judging, and to the evident reason of the case itself, as it must appear to every unprejudiced mind.

1. Let me argue "from the sentiments of those who must be allowed most capable of judging in such an affair," and we shall quickly see that the care of the soul appears to them the *one thing needful*.

Is the judgment of the blessed God *according to truth*, how evidently and how solemnly is that judgment declared? I will not say merely in this or the other particular passage of his word, but in the whole series of his revelations to the children of men, and the whole tenor of his addresses to them. Is not this the language of all, from the early days of *Job* and *Moses* to the conclusion of the canon of scripture. *If* wisdom be hid from the eyes of all the living, surely God understandeth the way thereof, he knoweth the place thereof; and if he does, it is plainly pointed out, for unto man he still saith, behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding.* By *Moses* he declared to the *Israelites*, that to do the commandments of the Lord would be their wisdom and their understanding in the sight of the nations, who should hear his statutes, and say, *surely this is a wise and an understanding people.*† When he had raised up one man on the throne of *Israel*, with the character

* Job xxviii. 21, 23, &c.

† Deut. iv. 6.

of the wisest that ever lived upon the face of the earth, he chose to make him eminently a teacher of this great truth. And now all that he spoke on the curious and less concerning subjects of natural philosophy, is lost, *though he spake of trees from the cedar to the hyssop, and of beasts and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes*;* that saying is preserved in which he testifies, that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*† and those proverbs, in almost every line of which they, who neglect God and their own souls, are spoken of as fools, as if that were the most proper signification of the word, while the religious alone are honoured with the title of wise. But in this respect as attesting this truth in the name of God and in his own, *a greater than Solomon is here.*

For if we enquire what it was that our Lord *Jesus Christ* judged to be the *one thing needful*, the words of the text contain as full an answer as can be imagined; and the sense of them is repeated in a very lively and emphatical manner, in that remarkable passage wherein our Lord not only declares his own judgment, but seems to appeal to the consciences of all, as obliged by their own secret convictions to subscribe to the truth of it. *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*‡ If it were once lost, what would he not be willing to give to redeem it? But it depends not on the words of Christ alone. Let his actions, his sufferings, his blood, his death speak what a value he set on the souls of men. Is it to be imagined, that he would have relinquished heaven, that he would have dwelt upon earth, that he would have laboured by night and by day, and at last have expired on the cross, for a matter of light importance? Or can we think that he, in whom *dwell all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*,§ was mistaken in judgment so deliberately formed, and so solemnly declared?

If after this there were room to mention human judgment, and testimonies, how easy would it be to produce a
cloud

* 1 Kings iv. 33. † Prov. i. 7. ix. 10. ‡ Mat. xvi. 26.
§ Col. iii. 9.

cloud of witnesses in such a cause, and to shew that the wisest and best of men in all ages of the world have agreed in this point, that amidst all the diversities of opinion and profession, which succeeding generations have produced, this has been the unanimous judgment, this the common and most solicitous care of those, whose characters are most truly valuable, to secure the salvation of their own souls, and to promote the salvation of others.

And let me beseech you seriously to reflect, what are the characters of those who have taken the liberty, most boldly and freely to declare their judgment on the contrary side? The number of such is comparatively few; and when you compare what you have observed of their temper and conduct, I will not say with what you read of holy men of old, but with what you have yourselves seen in the faithful, active, and zealous servants of Christ, in these latter ages, with which you have conversed, do you on the whole find that the rejectors and deriders of the gospel, are in other respects so much more prudent and judicious, so much wiser for themselves, and for others that are influenced by them, as that you can be in reason obliged to pay any great deference to the authority of a few such names as these, in opposition to those to which they are here opposed?

But you will say, and you will say it too truly though but a few may venture in words to declare for the neglect of the soul and its eternal interest, the greater part of mankind do it in their actions. But are the greater part of mankind so wise, and so good, as implicitly to be followed in matters of the highest importance? And do not multitudes of these declare themselves on the other side, in their most serious moments? When the intoxications of worldly business and pleasures are over, and some languishing sickness forces men to solitude and retirement; what have you generally observed to be the effect of such a circumstance? Have they not then declared themselves convinced of the truth we are now labouring to establish? Nay, do we not sometimes see that a distemper which seizes the mind with violence, yet does not utterly destroy its reasoning faculties, fixes this conviction on the soul in a

few hours, nay sometimes in a few moments? Have you never seen a gay, thoughtless creature, surprized in the giddy round of pleasures and amusements, and presently brought not only to seriousness, but terror and trembling, by the near view of death? Have you never seen the man of business and care interrupted, like the rich fool in the parable, in the midst of his schemes for the present world? And have you not heard one and the other of them owning the vanity of those pleasures and cares, which but a few days ago were every thing to them? Confessing that religion was the *one thing needful*, and recommending it to others with an earnestness, as if they hoped thereby to atone for their own former neglect? We that are ministers frequently are witnesses to such things as these, and I believe few of our hearers are entire strangers to them.

And once more, what if to the testimony of the dying, we could add that of the dead? What if God were to turn aside the veil which separates between us and the invisible world, and to permit the most careless sinner in the assembly to converse for a few moments with the inhabitants of it? If you were to apply yourself to a happy spirit, that trod the most thorny road to paradise, or passed thro' the most fiery trial, and to ask him, "was it worth your while to labor so much, and to endure so much for what you now possess?" Surely if the blessed in heaven were capable of indignation, it would move them to hear that it should be made a question. And on the other hand, if you could enquire of one *tormented in that flame below*, though he might once be *cloathed in purple and fine linnen, and fare sumptuously every day*,* if you could ask him, "whether his former enjoyments were any equivalent for his present sufferings and despair?" What answer do you suppose he would return? Perhaps an answer of so much horror and rage, as you would not be able so much as to endure. Or if the malignity of his nature should prevent him from returning any answer at all, surely there would be a language even in that silence, a language in the darkness, and flames, and groans of that infernal prison, which

* Luke xvi. 19.

would speak to your very soul what the word of God is with equal certainty, though less forcible conviction, speaking to your ear, that *one thing is needful*. You see it is so in the judgment of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, of the wisest and best of men, of many, who seemed to judge most differently of it, when they come to a more deliberate and serious thought, and not only of the dying, but of the dead too, of those who have experimentally known both worlds, and most surely know what is to be preferred. But I will not rest the whole argument here, I add therefore,

2. I appeal to the evident reason of the case itself, as it must appear to every unprejudiced mind, that the care of the soul is, indeed, the *one thing needful*.

I still consider myself as speaking not to atheists, or to deists, but to those who not only believe the existence and providence of God, and a future state of happiness and misery, but likewise who credit the truth of the Christian revelation, as many undoubtedly do, who live in a fatal neglect of God and their own souls. Now on these principles a little reflection may be sufficient to convince you, that it is *needful* to the present repose of your own mind; *needful* if ever you would secure eternal happiness; if ever you would avoid eternal misery, which would be aggravated, rather than alleviated, by all your present enjoyments.

1. The care of the soul is the *one thing needful*, because "without it you cannot secure the peace of your own mind, nor avoid the upbraidings of your conscience."

That noble faculty is indeed as you are often told, the vicegerent of God in the soul. It is sensible of the dignity and worth of an immortal spirit, and will sometimes cry out of the violence that is offered to it, and cry so loud, as to compel the sinner to hear, whether he will or no. Do you not sometimes find it yourselves! When you labour most to forget the concerns of your soul, do they not sometimes force themselves on your remembrance? You are afraid of the reflections of your own mind, but with all your artifice and all your resolution, can you entirely avoid them? Does not conscience follow you to your beds, even
if

if denied the opportunity of meeting you in your closets, and tho' with an unwelcome voice, there warn you, "that your soul is neglected, and will quickly be lost;" Does it not follow you to your shops and your fields, when you are busied there? Nay, I will add, does it not sometimes follow you to the feast, to the club, to the dance, and, perhaps, amidst all resistance, to the theatre too? Does it not sometimes mingle your sweetest draughts with wormwood, and your gayest scenes with horror? So that you are like a tradesman, who, suspecting his affairs to be in a 'bad posture, lays by his books and his papers, yet sometimes they will come accidentally in his way. He hardly dares to look abroad for fear of meeting a creditor or an arrest; and if he labors to forget his cares and his dangers, in a course of luxury at home, the remembrance is sometimes awakened, and the alarm increased, by those very extravagances in which he is attempting to lose it. Such, no doubt, is the case of some of your minds, and it is a very painful state; and while things are thus within, external circumstances can no more make you happy, than a fine dress could relieve you under a violent fit of the stone. Whereas if this great affair was secured, you might delight in reflection, as much as you now dread it; and conscience, your bitterest enemy, would become a delightful friend, and the testimony of it your greatest rejoicing.

2. The care of the soul is the *one thing needful*, "because without it you cannot possibly secure your eternal happiness."

A crown of everlasting glory is not surely such a trifle as to be thrown away on a careless creature that will, not in good earnest pursue it. God doth not ordinarily deal thus, even with the bounties of his common providence, which are comparatively of little value. As to these, the *hand of the diligent generally makes rich*, and he would be thought distracted, rather than prudent, who should expect to get an estate merely by wishing for it, or without some resolute and continued application to a proper course of action for that purpose. Now, that we may not foolishly dream of obtaining heaven, in the midst of a course of indolence and sloth, we are expressly told in

the word of God, that *the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force* ;* and are therefore exhorted to *strive*, with the greatest intenseness, and eagerness of mind, as the word properly signifies, *to enter in at the strait gate*, for this great and important reason, *because many shall another day seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* † Nay, when our Lord makes the most gracious promises to the humble petitioner, he does it in such a manner as to exclude the hopes of those who are careless and indifferent. *Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and you shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* ‡ If therefore you do not ask, seek and knock, the door of mercy will not be opened, and eternal happiness will be lost.

And surely if I could say no more as to the fatal consequences of your neglect, than this, that *eternal happiness will be lost*, I should say enough to impress every mind that considers what *eternity* means. To fall into a state of everlasting forgetfulness might indeed appear a refuge to a mind filled with the apprehension of future misery. But, O how dreadful a refuge is it ! Surely it is such a refuge, as a vast precipice, from which a man falling would be dashed to pieces in a moment, might appear to a person pursued by the officers of justice, that he may be brought out to a painful and lingering execution. If an extravagant youth would have reason to look round with anguish on some fair and ample paternal inheritance, which he had sold or forfeited merely for the riot of a few days : How much more melancholy would it be for a rational mind to think that its eternal happiness is lost for any earthly consideration whatever. Tormenting thought ! had I attended to that *one thing* which I had neglected, I might have been great and happy, beyond expression, beyond conception. Not merely for the little span of ten thousand and thousand ages, but FOR EVER. So that the moment would have come, when, if it had been asked concerning me, “ How long has that glorious spirit been an inhabitant of Heaven ? How long has it been enjoying God, and itself, in that state of perfection ? ” — The answer would have been such, that a line reaching even to the remotest
star

*Mat. xi. 12.

† Luke xiii. 24.

‡ Mat vii. 7.

star would not have been able to contain the number of ages, nor would millions of years have been sufficient to figure them down. This is eternity, but I have lost it, and am now on the verge of being. This lamp, which might have outlasted those of the firmament, will presently be extinguished, and I blotted out from amongst the works of God, and cut off from all the bounties of his hand. Would not this be a very miserable case, if this were all? And would it not be sufficient to prove this to be *the better part*, which, as our Lord observes, can *never be taken away*? But God forbid that we should be so unfaithful to him, and to the souls of men, as to rest in such a representation alone. I therefore add once more,

3. The care of the soul is *the one thing needful*, because "without it you cannot avoid a state of eternal misery, which will be aggravated, rather than alleviated by all your present enjoyments."

Nothing can be more evident from the word of the God of truth. If there plainly appears to be a determined case, which leaves no room for a more favourable conjecture or hope. *The wicked shall be turned into hell, even all the nations that forget God.* They shall go away into everlasting punishment,† into a state where they shall in vain seek death, and death shall flee from them.* O! sirs, it is a certain, but an awful truth, that your souls will be thinking and immortal beings, even in spite of themselves. They may indeed torment, but they cannot destroy themselves. They can no more suspend their power of thought and perception, than a mirror its property of reflecting rays, that fall on its surface. Do you suspect the contrary? Make the trial immediately. Command your minds to cease from thinking but for one quarter of an hour; or for half that time, and exclude every idea and every reflection. Can you succeed in that attempt? Or rather, does not thought press in with a more sensible violence on that resistance; as an anxious desire to sleep, makes us the more wakeful. Thus will thought follow you beyond the grave, thus will it, as an unwelcome guest, force itself upon you, when it can serve only to perplex and distress the mind. It will for
ever

* Psa. ix. 17.

* Mat. xxv. 46.

ever upbraid you, that notwithstanding all the kind expostulations of God and man, notwithstanding all the keen remonstrances of conscience, and the pleadings of the blood of Christ, you have gone on in your folly, till heaven be lost, and damnation incurred ; and all for what ? for a shadow and a dream.

O think not, sinner, that the remembrance of your past pleasures, of your success in your other cares whilst that of the *one thing needful* was forgotten, think not that this will ease your minds. It will rather torment them the more. *Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things.* Bitter remembrance ! Well might the heathen poets represent the unhappy spirits in the shades below, as eagerly catching at the water of forgetfulness, yet unable to reach it. Your present comforts will only serve, to give you a livelier sense of your misery, as having tasted such degrees of enjoyment ; and to inflame the reckoning, as you have misimproved those talents lodged in your hands for better purposes. Surely, if these things were believed, and seriously considered, the sinner would have no more heart to rejoice in his present prosperity, than a man would have to amuse himself with the curiosities of a fine garden, thro' which he was led to be broken upon the rack.

But I will enlarge no farther on these things. Would to God that the unaccountable stupidity of men's minds, and their fatal attachment to the pleasures and cares of the present life, did not make it necessary to insist on them so frequently and so copiously !

IV. I proceed to the reflections which naturally arise from hence, and shall only mention two.

1. How much reason have we to lament the folly of mankind in neglecting the *one thing needful*.

If religion, indeed, be the truest wisdom, then surely we have the justest reason to say with *Solomon, that folly and madness is in men's hearts.** Is it the *one thing needful* ? Look on the conduct of the generality of mankind, and you would imagine they thought it the *one thing needless* : The vainest dream and the idlest amusement of the mind. God is admonishing them by ordinances, and providences, some-
times

* Eccles. ix. 3.

times by such as are most awful, to lay it to heart; he *speaks once, yea twice, yea a multitude of times, but man regards not.** They profess, perhaps, to believe all that I have been saying, but act as if the contrary were self-evident; they will risk these souls and this eternity, for a thing of nought, for that for the sake of which they would not risk so much as a hand, or a finger, or a joint, no, nor, perhaps, a toy that adorns it. Surely this is the wonder of angels, and, perhaps, of devils too, unless the observation of so many ages may have rendered it familiar to both.— And can we, my christian brethren, behold such a scene with indifference? If some epidemical madness had seized our country, or the places where we live, so that as we went from one place to another, we should every where meet with lunatics and see, among the rest, some, perhaps, of the finest genius and improvements, and in the most eminent stations in life, amusing themselves with straws and bubbles, or wounding themselves and others; surely were we ever so secure from the danger of infection or assault, the sight would cut us to the heart. Surely a good natured man would hardly be able to go abroad, or even be desirous to live, if it must be amongst so many sad spectacles. Yet these poor creatures might, notwithstanding this be the children of God, and the higher their frenzy rose, the nearer might their complete happiness be. But alas, the greater part of mankind are seized with a worse kind of madness, in which they are ruining their souls: And can we behold it with indifference! The Lord awaken our compassion, our prayer, and our endeavours in dependence on divine grace, that we may be instrumental in bringing them to their right mind, and making them wise indeed, that is, wise to salvation.

2. How necessary it is that we should seriously inquire how this *one thing needful* is regarded by us!

Let me entreat you to remember your own concern in it, and inquire—Have I thought seriously of it?—Have I seen the importance of it?—Has it lain with a due and an abiding weight on my mind?—Has it brought me to Christ, that I might lay the stress of these great eternal interests on

him?

* Job xxxiii. 14.

him?—And am I acting in the main of my life as one that has these convictions?—Am I willing in fact to give up other things, my interests, my pleasures, my passions to this?—Am I conversing with God and with man as one that believes these things, as one that has deliberately chosen *the better part*, and is determined to abide by that choice!

Observe the answer which conscience returns to these inquires, and you will know your own part in that more particular application, with which I am to conclude my discourse.

1. Let me address those that are entirely unconcerned about the *one thing needful*.

Sirs, I have been stating the case at large, and now I appeal to your consciences, are these things so, or are they not? God and your own hearts best know for what the care of your soul is neglected; but be it what it will, the difference between one grain of sand, and another, is not great, when it comes to be weighed against a talent of gold. Whatever it is, you had need to examine it carefully. You had need to view that commodity on all sides, of which you do in effect say, for this will I sell my soul, for this will I give up heaven and venture hell, be heaven and hell whatever they may. In the name of God, sirs, is this the part of a man, of a rational creature? To go on with your eyes open towards a pit of eternal ruin, because there are a few gay flowers in the way. Or what if you shut your eyes? will that prevent your fall? It signifies little to say, I will not think of these things, I will not consider them. God has said, *in the last days they shall consider it perfectly*.* The revels of a drunken malefactor will not prevent, nor respite his execution. Pardon my plainness: if it were a fable, or a tale, I would endeavour to amuse you with words, but I cannot do it where your souls are at stake.

2. I would apply to those who are convinced of the importance of their souls, yet are inclined to defer that care of them a little longer, which in the general they see to be necessary.

I know you that are young are under peculiar tempta-

* Jer. xxiii. 20.

tions to do this ; tho' it is strange that the death of so many of your companions should not be an answer to some of the most specious and dangerous of those temptations. Methinks if there were the least degree of uncertainty, the importance is too weighty to put matters to the venture. But here the uncertainty is great and apparent. You must surely know that there are critical seasons of life for managing the concerns of it, which are of such a nature, that, if once lost, they may never return : Here is a critical season. *Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.* To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.†* This language may not be spoken to-morrow. Talk not of a more *convenient season*, none can be more convenient ; and that to which you would probably refer it, is least of all so, a dying time. You would not chuse then to have any important business in hand ; and will you of choice refer the greatest business of all to that languishing, hurrying, amazing hour ? If a friend were then to come to you with the balance of an intricate account, or a view of a title to an estate, you would shake your fainting head, and lift up your pale trembling hand, and say, perhaps, with a feeble voice, "alas, is this a time for these things ?" And is it a time for so much greater things than these ? I wish you knew, and would consider into what a strait we that are ministers are sometimes brought, when we are called to the dying beds of those who have spent their lives in the neglect of the *one thing needful*. On the one hand we fear, lest if we palliate matters, and speak smooth things, we shall betray and ruin their souls ; and on the other, that if we use a becoming plainness and seriousness, in warning them of their danger, we shall quite overwhelm them, and hasten the dying moment which is advancing by such swift steps. O let me intreat you, for our sakes, and much more for your own, that you do not drive us to such sad extremities : But that if you are convinced, as I hope some of you may now be, that the care of the soul is that *needful thing* we have represented, let the conviction work, let it drive you immediately to the throne of grace, that from thence you may derive that

wisdom

* 2 Cor. vi. 2.

† Heb. iii. 7, 8.

wisdom and strength which may direct you in all the intricacies which entangle you, and animate you in the midst of difficulty and discouragement.

3. I would, in the last place, address myself to those happy souls, who have in good earnest attended to the *one thing needful*.

I hope when you see how commonly it is neglected, neglected, indeed, by many, whose natural capacities, improvements, and circumstances in life, appear to you superior to your own, you will humbly acknowledge, that it was distinguishing grace that brought you into this happy state, and formed you to this most necessary care.— Bless the Lord, therefore, who hath *given* you that *counsel*, in virtue of which you can say that *he is your portion*—Rejoice in the thought that the great concern is secured; as it is natural for us to do, when some important affair is dispatched which has long lain before us, and which we have been inclined to put off from one day to another, but have at length strenuously and successfully attended.—Remember still to continue acting on these great principles which at first determined your choice; and seriously consider, that those, who desire their *life* may at last be *given* them *for a prey*, must continue on their guard, in all stages of their journey thro' a wilderness, where daily dangers are still surrounding them. Having secured the great concern, make yourselves easy as to others of smaller importance. You have chosen *the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, other things therefore shall be added unto you*; and if any which you desire should not be added, comfort yourselves with this thought, that you have *the good part which can never be taken away*. And, not to enlarge on these obvious hints, which must so often occur, be very solicitous that others may be brought to a care about the *one thing needful*. If it be *needful* for you, it is so for your children, your friends, your servants. Let them, therefore, see your concern in this respect for them as well as for yourselves. Let parents, especially, attend to this exhortation, whose care for their offspring often exceeds in other respects and fails in this. Remember that your children may never live to enjoy the effects of your labour

bour and concern, to get them estates and portions.—The charges of their funerals may, perhaps, be all their share of what you are so anxiously careful to lay up for them. And O ! Think what a sword would pierce thro' your very heart, if you should stand by the corpse of a beloved child with this reflection, “This poor creature has done with life before it learnt its great business in it, and is gone to eternity, which I have seldom been warning it to prepare for, and which, perhaps, it learnt of me to forget.”

On the whole, may this grand care be awakened in those by whom it hath been hitherto neglected ; may it be revived in each of our minds. And that you may be encouraged to pursue it with greater cheerfulness, let me conclude with this comfortable thought, that in proportion to the necessity of the case, is the provision which divine grace has made for our assistance. If you are disposed to set down at Christ's feet, he will teach you by his word and spirit. If you commit this precious jewel, which is your eternal all, into his hand, he will preserve it unto *that day*, and will then produce it richly adorned, and gloriously improved to his own honour, and to your everlasting joy.

A M E N.

To the REVEREND
Dr. ISAAC WATTS.

Reverend and Dear Sir,

WITH the most affectionate gratitude and respect, I beg leave to present to you a book, which owes its existence to your request, its copiousness to your plan, and much of its perspicuity to your review, and to the use I made of your remarks on that part of it, which your health and leisure would permit you to examine. I address it to you, not to beg your patronage to it, for of that I am already well assured; and much less from any ambition of attempting your character, for which, if I were more equal to the subject, I should think this a very improper place: But chiefly from a secret delight, which I find in the thought of being known to those whom this may reach, as one whom you have honoured, not only with your friendship, but with so much of your esteem and approbation too, as must substantially appear in your committing a work to me, which you had yourself projected as one of the most considerable services of your life.

I have long thought the love of popular applause a meanness, which a philosophy far inferior to that of *our divine Master* might have taught us to conquer. But to be esteemed by eminently great and good men, to whom we are intimately known, appears to me, not only one of the most solid attestations of some real worth, but, next to the approbation of God and our own consciences, one of its most valuable rewards. It will, I doubt not, be found so in that world, to which spirits like yours are tending, and for which through divine grace you have obtained so uncommon a degree of ripeness. And permit me, sir, while I write this, to refresh myself with the hope, that when that union of hearts, which has so long

c

subsisted

subsisted between us, shall arrive to its full maturity and endearment there, it will be matter of mutual delight, to recollect, that you have assigned me, and that I have in some degree, executed a task, which may, perhaps, under the blessing of God, awaken and improve religious sentiments in the minds of those whom we leave behind us, and of others who may arise after us, in this vain, transitory, ensnaring world.

Such is the improvement you have made of your capacities for service, that I am fully persuaded, heaven has received very few, in these latter ages, who have done so much to serve its interests here below ; few, who have laboured in this best of causes with equal assiduity, and equal success. And therefore, I cannot but join with all who wish well to the *Christian interest* among us, in acknowledging the goodness of providence to *you* and to *the church of Christ*, in prolonging a life at once so valuable and so tender, to such an advanced period. With them, sir, I rejoice, that God hath given you to possess in so extraordinary a degree, not only the consciousness of intending great benefit to the world, but the satisfaction of having effected it, and of seeing such an harvest already springing up, I hope as an earnest of a much more copious increase from thence. With multitudes more I bless God, that you are not, in this evening of so afflicted and yet so laborious a day, rendered entirely incapable of serving the public from the *press*, and from the *pulpit* ; and that amidst the pain which your active spirit feels, when these pleasing services suffer long interruptions from bodily weakness, it may be so singularly refreshed by reflecting on that sphere of extensive usefulness, in which by *your writings* you continually move.

I congratulate you, dear sir, that, while you are in a multitude of *families*, and *schools* of the lower class, condescending to the humble, yet important work of forming infant minds to the first rudiments of religious knowledge and devout impressions, by your various *catechisms* and *divine songs* ; you are also daily reading lectures of *logic*, and other useful branches of *philosophy*, to studious youth : And this, not only in private academies, but in the most public and celebrated seats of learning ; nor merely in

Scotland

Scotland, and in our *American Colonies*, (where, from some peculiar considerations, it might most naturally be expected;) but, through the amiable candor of some excellent men, and accomplished tutors, in our *English universities* too. I congratulate you, that you are teaching, no doubt, hundreds of *Ministers*, and thousands of *private Christians*, by your *Sermons*, and other *theological writings*; so happily calculated to diffuse through their minds that light of knowledge, and through their hearts that fervour of piety, which God has been pleased to enkindle in your own. But above all, I congratulate you, that by your *sacred poetry*, especially by your *Psalms*, and your *Hymns*, you are leading the worship, and I trust also animating the devotion of *myriads*, in our public assemblies every sabbath, and in their families or closets every day. This, sir, at least so far as it relates to the *service of the sanctuary*, is an unparalleled favour, by which God hath been pleased to distinguish you, I may boldly say it, beyond any of his servants now upon earth. Well may it be esteemed a *glorious equivalent*, and indeed, much more than an equivalent, for all those views of *ecclesiastical preferment*, to which such talents, learning, virtues, and interest might have entitled you in an establishment; and, I doubt not, but you joyfully accept it as such.

Nor is it easy to conceive, in what circumstances you could, on any supposition, have been easier and happier, than in that *pious* and truly *honorable family*, in which, as I verily believe, in special indulgence both to you and to it, providence has been pleased to appoint that you should spend so considerable a part of your life. It is my earnest prayer, that all the remainder of it may be serene, useful and pleasant. And as, to my certain knowledge, your *compositions* have been the singular comfort of many *excellent Christians* (some of them numbered among my dearest friends,) on their dying beds; for I have heard *stanzas* of them repeated from the lips of several, who were doubtless in a few hours, to begin *the song of Moses and the Lamb*: So I hope and trust, that when God shall call you to *that salvation*, for which your faith and patience have so long been *waiting*, he will shed around you the choicest beams of his favour, and gladden your heart

heart with *consolations*, like those which you have been the happy instrument of administering to others.

In the mean time, sir, be assured, that I am not a little animated in the *various labours* to which providence has called me, by reflecting, that I have *such a contemporary*, and especially *such a friend*; whose single presence would be to me as that of a *cloud of witnesses* here below, to awaken my alacrity in the *race that is set before me*. And I am persuaded, that while I say this, I speak the sentiment of many of my brethren, even of various denominations: A consideration, which I hope will do something towards reconciling a heart so generous as yours, to the delay of that *exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, which is now so nearly approaching. Yes, my honored friend, you will, I hope, cheerfully endure a little longer continuance in life amidst all its infirmities; from an assurance, that while God is pleased to maintain the exercise of your reason it is hardly possible that you should *live in vain*, to the world, or yourself. Every day, and every trial, is brightening your crown, and rendering you still more *meet for an inheritance among the saints in light*. Every word that you drop from the *pulpit*, has now, surely, its peculiar weight: The eyes of many are on their *ascending prophet*, eagerly intent that they may catch, if not *his mantle*, at least, *some divine sentence* from his lips, which may long guide their ways and warm their hearts. This solicitude your friends bring into those happy moments, in which they are favored with *your converse in private*; And when you are retired from them, *your prayers*, I doubt not, largely contribute towards guarding your country, watering the church, and blessing the world. Long may they continue to answer these great ends! And permit me, sir, to conclude with expressing my cheerful confidence, that, in those best moments you are often particularly mindful of one, who so highly esteems, so greatly needs, and so warmly returns that remembrance, as, *Reverend and dear sir,*

Your most affectionate brother,
And obliged humble servant,

P. DODDRIDGE.

Northampton, Dec. 13, 1744.

P R E F A C E.

THE several hints given in the *dedication*, and the *first Chapter* of this treatise, which contains a particular *Plan of the design*, render it unnecessary to introduce it with a long preface. Some of my readers may, perhaps, remember, that several years ago I promised this work to the public, in the *preface to the second edition* of my *Sermons on the power and grace of Christ, &c.* My much honoured friend Dr. WATTS had laid the *scheme*, especially of the *former part*: But as those indispositions, with which (to the unspeakable grief of the churches,) God has been pleased to exercise him, had forbid his hopes of being able to add *this* to his many *labours of love* to immortal souls, he was pleased in a very affectionate and importunate manner to urge me to undertake it. And I bless God with my whole heart, not only that he hath carried me thro' *this delightful task*, (for such indeed I have found it,) but also that he hath spared that worthy and amiable person to see it accomplished, and given him strength and spirit to review so considerable a part of it. His approbation, expressed in stronger terms than modesty will permit me to repeat, encourages me to hope, that it is executed in such a manner, as may, by the divine blessing, render it of some general service. And I the rather expect it will be so, as it now comes abroad into the world, not only with *my own prayers* and *his*, but also with those of *many other pious friends*, which I have been particularly careful to engage for its success.

Into whatever hands this work may come, I must desire, that before any pass their judgment upon it, they would please to read it through; that they may discern the connection between one part of it and another. Which I the rather request, because I have long observed, that *Christians of different parties* have been eagerly laying hold on *particular parts* of the *system of divine truth*, and have been contending about them, as if *each* had been *all*; or

as if the separation of the members from each other, and from the head, were the preservation of the body, instead of its destruction. They have been zealous to espouse the defence and to maintain the honour and usefulness of *each apart*; whereas their honour as well as usefulness, seems to me to lie much in *their connection*. And suspicions have often arisen between the respective defenders of each, which have appeared as unreasonable and absurd, as if all the preparations for securing one part of a ship in a storm were to be censured as a contrivance to sink the rest. I pray God, to give to *all his ministers, and people*, more and more of *the spirit of wisdom, and of love and of a sound mind*; and to remove far from us those mutual *jealousies and animosities*, which hinder our acting with *that unanimity*, which is necessary in order to the successful carrying on *our common warfare* against the enemies of *Christianity*. We may be sure, these enemies will never fail to make their own advantage of our *multiplied divisions*, and severe contests with each other: But they must necessarily lose both their ground and their influence, in proportion to the degree, in which the energy of *Christian principles* is felt, to unite and transform the hearts of those by whom they are professed.

I take this opportunity of adding, that as *this treatise* may be looked upon as the sequel of my *Sermons on regeneration*, though in something of a different method; a second edition of *those Sermons* is now published (in compliance with the request of many of my friends,) in the same form and size with this book. I have been solicitous to make them both as cheap as possible, that I may fall in with the charitable designs of those who may purpose to give them away. There is however an edition of *this treatise* in *Octavo*, for such as rather chuse to have it in a larger character and fairer form.

I have studied the greatest *plainness of speech*, that the lowest of my readers may, if possible, be able to understand every word; and I hope, persons of a more elegant taste and refined education will pardon what appeared to me so necessary a piece of charity. Such a care in *practical writings* seems one important instance of that *honouring all men*, which our amiable and condescending religion teaches

teaches us : And I have been particularly obliged to *my worthy patron*, for what he hath done to shorten some of the sentences, and to put my meaning into plainer and more familiar words. Yet I dare say, the world will not suspect it of having contracted any impropriety or inelegance of language, by passing through the hands of Dr.

WATTS.

I must add one remark here, which I heartily wish I had not omitted in the first edition, *viz.* That though I do in this book consider my reader as successively in a great variety of supposed circumstances, beginning with those of a *thoughtless sinner*, and leading him through several stages of *conviction, terror, &c.* as what may be previous to his sincerely accepting the gospel, and devoting himself to the service of God ; yet I would by no means be thought to insinuate, that *every one*, who is brought to that happy resolution, arrives at it through those *particular steps*, or feels agitations of mind equal in degree to those I have described. Some sense of sin, and some serious and humbling apprehension of our danger and misery in consequence of it, must, indeed, be necessary to dispose us to receive the grace of the gospel, and the saviour who is there exhibited to our faith. But God is pleased sometimes to begin the work of his grace on the heart, almost from the first dawning of reason, and to carry it on by such gentle and insensible degrees, that very excellent persons, who have made the most eminent attainments in the divine life, have been unable to recount any remarkable history of their conversion : And so far as I can learn, this is most frequently the case with those of them, who have enjoyed the benefits of a *pious education*, when it has not been succeeded by a vicious and licentious youth.— God forbid therefore, that any such should be so insensible of their own happiness, as to fall into perplexity with relation to their spiritual state, for want of being able to trace such a *rise of religion* in their minds, as it was necessary on my plan for me to describe, and exemplify here.— I have spoke my sentiments on this head so fully in the VIIIth of my *Sermons on Regeneration*, that I think none who has read, and remembers the general contents of it, can be in danger of mistaking my meaning here. But as
it

it is very possible, this book may fall into the hands of many, who have not read the other, and have no opportunity of consulting it, I thought it proper to insert this caution in the preface to this; and I am much obliged to that worthy and excellent person, who kindly reminded me of the expediency of doing it.



THE
RISE AND PROGRESS
OF
RELIGION IN THE SOUL.



CHAP. I.

THE INTRODUCTION TO THE WORK, WITH SOME
GENERAL ACCOUNT OF ITS DESIGN.

That true religion is very rare, appears from comparing the nature of it with the lives and characters of men around us.—

§. 1, 2. *The want of it, matter of just lamentation. §. 3. To remedy this evil, is the design of the ensuing treatise: §. 4. To which, therefore, the author earnestly bespeaks the attention of the reader, as his own heart is deeply interested in it. §. 5, 6. A general plan of the work; of which the fifteen first chapters relate chiefly to the RISE of religion, and the remaining chapters to its PROGRESS. §. 7,—12. The chapter concludes with a Prayer for the success of the work.*

§. 1. **W**HEN we look round about us with an attentive eye, and consider the characters and pursuits of men, we plainly see, that though, in the original constitution of their natures, they only, of all the creatures that dwell on the face of the earth, be capable of religion, yet many of them shamefully neglect it. And whatever different notions people may entertain of what they call religion, all must agree in owning, that it is *very far from being an universal thing.*

§. 2. Religion, in its most general view, is such a sense of God on the soul, and such a conviction of our obligations to him, and of our dependance upon him, as shall
D engage

engage us to make it our great care, to conduct ourselves in a manner which we have reason to believe will be pleasing to him. Now when we have given this plain account of *religion*, it is by no means necessary, that we shall search among the savages of the *African* or *American* nations, to find instances of those who are strangers to it. When we view the conduct of the generality of people at home, in a *Christian* and *protestant* nation, in a nation whose obligations to God have been singular, almost beyond those of any other people under heaven, will any one presume to say, that *religion* has an universal reign among us? Will any one suppose, that it prevails *in every life*? That it reigns *in every heart*? Alas! the avowed infidelity, the prophanation of the name and day of God, the drunkenness, the lewdness, the injustice, the falshood, the pride, the prodigality, the base selfishness, and stupid insensibility of the spiritual and eternal interests of themselves and others, which so generally appear among us, loudly proclaim the contrary. So that one would imagine upon this view, that thousands and ten thousands thought the *neglect*, and even the *contempt of religion*, were a glory, rather than a reproach. And where is the neighbourhood, where is the society, where is the happy family, (consisting of any considerable number,) in which on a more exact examination, we find reason to say, "religion fills even this little circle?" There is, perhaps, a freedom from any gross and scandalous immoralities, an external decency of behaviour, an attendance on the outward forms of worship in public, and (*here and there*) in the family; yet, amidst all this, there is nothing which looks like the genuine actings of the spiritual and divine life. There is no appearance of love to God, no reverence for his presence, no desire of his favour as the highest good: There is no cordial belief of *the gospel of salvation*; no eager solicitude to escape that *condemnation* which we have incurred by sin; no hearty concern to secure that *eternal life*, which Christ has purchased and secured for his people, and which he freely promises to all who will receive him. Alas! whatever the love of a friend, or even of a parent, can do, whatever inclination there may be, to *hope all things, and believe all things* the most favourable;
evidence

evidence to the contrary will force itself upon the mind, and extort the unwilling conclusion ; that, whatever else may be amiable in this dear friend, in that favorite child, " religion dwells not in its breast."

§. 3. To a heart that firmly believes *the gospel*, and views persons and things in the light of eternity, this is one of the most mournful considerations in the world.— And, indeed, to such a one, all the other calamities and evils of human nature appear trifles, when compared with this ; the absence of real *religion*, and that contrariety to it which reigns in so many thousands of mankind. Let *this* be cured, and all the other evils will easily be borne ; nay, good will be extracted out of them : But if this continue, it *bringeth forth fruit unto death* ; (a) and in consequence of it, multitudes, who share the entertainments of an indulgent providence with us, and are at least allied to us by the bond of the same common nature, must in a few years be swept away into *utter destruction*, and be plunged beyond redemption into *everlasting burnings*.

§. 4. I doubt not, but there are many, under those various forms of religious profession, which have so unhappily divided us in this nation, who are not only lamenting this in public, if their office in life calls them to an opportunity of doing it ; but are likewise mourning before God in secret, under a sense of this sad state of things ; and who can appeal to him that *searches all hearts*, as to the sincerity of their desires to revive the languishing cause of vital *christianity* and substantial piety. And, among the rest, the *author of this treatise* may with confidence say, it is this which animates him to the present attempt, in the midst of so many other cares and labours. For this he is willing to lay aside many of those curious amusements in science, which might suit his own private taste, and, perhaps, open a way to some reputation in the learned world. For this, he is willing to wave the laboured ornaments of speech, that he may, if possible, descend to the capacity of the lowest part of mankind. For this, he would endeavour to convince the judgment, and to reach the heart of every reader. And, in a word, for this, without any dread of the name of an enthusiast, whoever may at random throw it out upon the occasion,

he would, as it were, *enter with you into your closet*, from day to day; and, with all plainness and freedom, as well as seriousness, would discourse to you of the great things which he has learnt from the christian revelation, and on which he assuredly knows your everlasting happiness to depend: That if you hitherto have lived without religion, you may be now awakened to the consideration of it, and may be instructed, in its nature and importance; or, that if you are already, thro' divine grace, experimentally acquainted with it, you may be assisted in making a greater progress.

§. 5. But he earnestly intreats this favour of you, that, as it is plainly *a serious business* we are entering upon, you would be pleased to give him a serious and an attentive hearing. He intreats, that these addresses, and these meditations, may be perused at leisure, and be thought over in retirement; and that you would do him and yourself the justice to believe the representations which are here made, and the warnings which are here given, to proceed from sincerity and love? from an heart, which would not designedly give one moment's unnecessary pain to the meanest creature on the face of the earth, and much less to any human mind. If he be importunate, it is because he at least imagines, that there is just reason for it; and fears, lest, amidst the multitudes who are undone by the utter neglect of religion, and among those who are greatly damaged for want of a more resolute and constant attendance to it, this may be the case of some into whose hands this treatise may fall.

§. 6. He is a barbarian, and deserves not to be called a man, who can look on the sorrows of his fellow creatures without *drawing out his soul* unto them, and *wishing*, at least, that it were *in the power of his hand* to help them. Surely earth would be an heaven to that man, who could go about from place to place scattering happiness wheresoever he came, tho' it were only the body that he were capable of relieving, and though he could impart nothing better than the happiness of a moral life. But the happiness rises, in proportion to the nature and the degree of the good which he imparts. Happy, are we ready to say, were those honoured servants of Christ, who, in the early days of his church, were the benevolent and sympathizing instruments

of conveying miraculous healing to those whose cases seemed desperate ; who poured in upon the blind and the deaf the pleasures of light and sound, and called up the dead to the powers of action and enjoyment. But this is an honour and happiness, which it is not fit for God commonly to bestow on mortal men. Yet there have been in every age, and, blessed be his name, there still are those, whom he has condescended to make his instruments in conveying nobler and more lasting blessings than these to their fellow-creatures. Death hath long since veiled the eyes, and stopped the ears of those, who were the subjects of miraculous healing, and recovered its empire over those who were once recalled from the grave. But the souls, who are prevailed upon to receive the gospel, *live for ever*. God has owned the labours of his faithful ministers in every age, to produce these blessed effects ; and some of them *being dead, yet speak* (b) with power and success in this important cause. Wonder not then, if living and dying, I be ambitious of this honour ; and if *my mouth be freely opened*, where I can truly say, *my heart is enlarged*. (c)

§. 7. In forming my *general plan* I have been solicitous, that this little treatise might, if possible, be useful to all its readers, and contain something suitable to each. I will therefore take the *man* and the *christian*, in a great *variety of circumstances*. I will first suppose myself addressing one of the vast number of *thoughtless creatures*, who have hitherto been utterly unconcerned about religion ; and will try what can be done, by all plainness and earnestness of address, to *awaken him* from this fatal lethargy, to a *care*, (*chap. 2.*) an affectionate and an *immediate care* about it, (*chap. 3.*) I will labour to fix a deep and awful *conviction of guilt* upon his conscience, (*chap. 4.*) and to strip him of his *vain excuses* and his flattering hopes. (*chap. 5.*) I will read to him, O ! that I could fix on his heart, *that sentence*, that dreadful sentence, which a righteous and an almighty GOD hath denounced against him as a sinner ; (*chap. 6.*) and endeavour to shew him, in how *helpless a state* he lies under this condemnation, as to any capacity he has of delivering himself. (*chap. 7.*) But I do not mean to leave any in so terrible a situation ; I will joyfully proclaim *the glad tidings of pardon and salva-*

(b) Heb. xi. 4.

d

(c) 2 Cor. vi. 11.

tion

tion by *Christ Jesus our Lord*, which is all the support and confidence of my own soul: (*chap. 8.*) and then I will give some general view of *the way*, by which *this salvation* is to be obtained; (*chap. 9.*) urging the sinner to accept of it, as affectionately as I can; (*chap. 10.*) tho' nothing can be sufficiently pathetic, where, as in this matter, the life of an immortal soul is in question.

§. 8. Too probable it is, that *some* will, after all this, remain *insensible*; and therefore, that their sad case may not incumber the following articles, I shall here *take a solemn leave* of them: (*chap. 11.*) And then shall turn and address myself, as compassionately as I can, to a most contrary character; I mean, to a *soul overwhelmed* with a sense of the greatness of its sins, and trembling under the burthen, as if there were *no more hope for him in God.* (*chap. 12.*) And that nothing may be omitted, which may give solid peace to the troubled spirit, I shall endeavour to *guide its enquiries* as to the *evidences* of sincere *repentance* and *faith*; (*chap. 13.*) which will be farther illustrated by a more particular view of the *several branches* of the *christian temper*, such as may serve at once to assist the reader in judging *what he is*, and to shew him *what he should labour to be.* (*chap. 14.*) This will naturally lead to a view of *the need* we have of the *influences of the blessed spirit*, to assist us in the important and difficult work of the *true christian*, and of the *encouragement* we have to *hope* for these *divine assistances*, (*chap. 15.*) In an humble dependence on which, I shall then enter on the consideration of *several cases* which often occur in the *christian life*, in which *particular addresses* to the conscience may be requisite and useful.

§. 9. As some peculiar difficulties and discouragements attend the *first entrance* on a religious course, it will here be our first care to *animate the young convert* against them. (*chap. 16.*) And that it may be done more effectually, I shall urge a *solemn dedication* of himself to God; (*chap. 17.*) To be confirmed by entering into the full communion of the church by an *approach to the sacred table.* (*chap. 18.*) That these engagements may be more happily fulfilled, we shall endeavour to draw a *more particular plan* of that devout, regular, and accurate *course*, which ought daily

daily to be attended to: (*chap. 19.*) And because the idea will probably rise so much *higher*, than what is the *general practice*, even of good men, we shall endeavour to persuade the reader to *make the attempt*, hard as it may seem; (*chap. 20.*) and shall caution him against *various temptations*, which might otherwise draw him aside to negligence and sin. (*chap 21.*)

§. 10. Happy will it be for the reader, if these exhortations and cautions be attended to with becoming regard; but as it is, alas, too probable, that notwithstanding all, the infirmities of nature will sometimes prevail, we shall consider the case of *deadness and languor in religion*, which often steals upon us by insensible degrees; (*chap. 22.*) from whence there is too easy a passage to that terrible one of *a return into known and deliberate sin.* (*chap. 23.*) And as the one or the other of these tends, in a proportionable degree, to *provoke* the blessed God *to hide his face*, and his injured *spirit to withdraw*, that melancholy condition will be taken into a particular survey. (*chap. 24.*) I shall then take notice also of the case of *great and heavy afflictions* in life; (*chap 25.*) a discipline which the best of men have reason to expect, especially when they *backslide* from God, and yield to their spiritual enemies.

§. 11. Instances of this kind will, I fear, be too frequent; yet, I trust, there will be many others, whose *path like the dawning light*, will *shine more and more until the perfect day.* (d) And therefore we shall endeavour, in the best manner we can, to assist the *christian* in *passing a true judgment* on the *growth of grace* in his heart, (*chap 26.*) as we had done before in judging of its sincerity. And as nothing conduces more to the advance of grace, than the lively exercise of *love* to God, and a *holy joy* in him, we shall here remind the real *christian* of those *mercies*, which tend to *excite that love and joy*; (*chap. 27.*) and, in the views of them, to *animate him* to those vigorous efforts of *usefulness in life*, which so well become his character, and will have so happy an efficacy on brightning his crown. (*chap. 28.* Supposing him to act accordingly, we shall then labour to illustrate and assist *the delight* with which he may *look forward* to the awful solemnities of *death and judgment*: (*chap. 29.*) And shall close the scene by accompanying

(d) Prov. iv. 18.

panying him, as it were, to the nearest confines of that *dark valley*, through which he is to pass to glory; giving him such *directions*, as may seem most subservient to his honouring God, and adorning religion, by his dying behaviour.— (*chap. 30.*) Nor am I without a pleasing hope, that, through the divine blessing and grace, I may be in some instances so successful, as to leave those *triumphing* in the views of judgment and eternity, and glorifying God by a true *christian* life and death, whom I found *trembling* in the apprehensions of future misery; or, perhaps in a much more dangerous and miserable circumstance than that; I mean, entirely forgetting the prospect, and sunk into the most stupid *insensibility* of those things, for an attendance to which the human mind was formed, and in comparison of which all the pursuits of this transitory life are *emptier than wind, and lighter than a feather*.

§. 12. Such a variety of heads must, to be sure, be handled but *briefly*, as we intend to bring them within a bulk of a moderate volume. I shall not, therefore, discuss them, as a *preacher* might properly do in *sermons*, in which the truths of religion are professedly to be explained and taught, defended and improved, in a wide variety, and long detail of propositions, arguments, objections, replies, and inferences marshalled and numbered under their distinct generals. I shall here speak in a looser and freer manner, as a *friend* to a friend; just as I would do, if I were to be in person admitted to a private audience, by one whom I tenderly loved, and whose circumstance and character I knew to be like that, which the *title* of one *chapter* or another of this treatise describes. And when I have discoursed with him a little while, which will seldom be so long as *half an hour*; I shall, as it were, step aside, and leave him to *meditate* on what he has heard, or endeavour to assist him in such fervent *addresses* to God, as it may be proper to mingle with those *meditations*. In the mean time, I will here take the liberty to *pray* over my reader, and my work; and to commend it solemnly to the divine blessing, in token of my deep conviction of and entire dependance upon it. And I am well persuaded, that sentiments like these are common, in the general to every *faithful minister*, to every *real christian*.

A PRAYER

A PRAYER for the success of this work, in promoting the
Rise and Progress of Religion.

“ O THOU great eternal original, and author, of all created being and happiness ! I adore thee, who hast made man a creature capable of religion, and hast bestowed this dignity and felicity upon our nature, that it may be taught to say, *where is GOD our maker ?* (e) I lament that degeneracy spread over the whole human race, which has *turned our glory into shame*, (f) and has rendered the forgetfulness of God (unnatural as it is,) so common, and so universal a disease. Holy Father, we know it is thy presence and thy teaching alone, that can reclaim thy wandering children ; can impress a sense of divine things on the heart, and render that sense lasting and effectual.— From thee proceed all good purposes and desires ; and this desire above all, of diffusing wisdom, piety, and happiness in this world, which (though sunk into such deep apostacy,) thine infinite mercy hath not utterly forsaken.

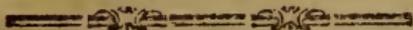
“ Thou knowest, O Lord, *the hearts of the children of men* ; (g) and an upright soul, in the midst of all the censures and suspicions it may meet with, rejoices in thine intimate knowledge of its most secret sentiments and principles of action. Thou knowest the sincerity and fervency, with which thine *unworthy servant* desires to spread the knowledge of thy name, and the favour of thy gospel, among all to whom this work may reach. Thou knowest, that hadst thou given him an abundance of this world, it would have been, in his esteem, the noblest pleasure that abundance could have afforded, to have been thine almoner, in distributing thy bounties to the indigent and necessitous, and so causing the sorrowful heart to rejoice in thy goodness, dispensed through his hands. Thou knowest, that hadst thou given him, either by ordinary or extraordinary methods, the gifts of healing, it would have been his daily delight, to relieve the pains, the maladies, and the infirmities of men’s bodies ; to have seen the languishing countenance, brightened by returning health and cheerfulness ; and much more to have beheld the roving distracted mind, reduced to calmness and serenity, in the exercise

(e) Job xxxv. 10 (f) Hof. iv. 7. (g) 2 Chron. vi. 30.

of its rational faculties. Yet happier, far happier will he think himself, in those humble circumstances, in which thy providence hath placed him, if thou vouchsafe to honour these his feeble endeavours, as the means of relieving and enriching men's minds; of recovering them from the madness of a sinful state, and bringing back thy reasonable creatures to the knowledge, the service, and the enjoyment of their God; or of improving those, who are already reduced.

“O may it have that blessed influence on the person, whosoever he be, that is now reading these lines, and on all who may read or hear them! *Let not my Lord be angry*, if I presume to ask, that however weak and contemptible this work may seem in the eyes of the children of this world, and however imperfect it really be, as well as the author of it unworthy, it may, nevertheless, *live before thee*; and, thro' a divine power, be mighty to produce the rise and progress of religion in the minds of multitudes, in distant places, and in generations yet to come. Impute it not, O God, as a culpable ambition, if I desire, that whatever becomes of *my name*, about which I would not lose one thought before thee, this work, to which I am now applying myself in thy strength, may be completed, and propagated far abroad; that it may reach to those that are yet unborn, and teach them *thy name* and *thy praise*, when the author has long dwelt in the dust: That so, when he shall appear before thee in the great day of final account, *his joy* may be increased, and *his crown* brightened, by numbers before unknown to each other, and to him! But if *this petition* be too great to be granted to one, who pretends no claim, but thy sovereign grace, to hope for being favoured with the least, give him to be in thine almighty hand the blessed instrument of converting and saving *one soul*: And if it be *but one*, and that the weakest and meanest of those who are capable of receiving this address, it shall be most thankfully accepted as a rich recompense for all the thought and labour it may cost; and, though it should be amidst a thousand disappointments with respect to others, yet it shall be the subject of immortal songs of praise to thee, O blessed God, for and by every soul, whom, through the *blood of Jesus* and the *grace of thy*

thy spirit, thou hast saved ; and everlasting honours shall be ascribed to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, by the innumerable company of angels, and by the general assembly and church of the first born of heaven. Amen.



CHAP. II.

THE CARELESS SINNER AWAKENED.

It is too supposable a case, that this treatise may come into such hands : §. 1, 2. Since many, not grossly vicious, fall under that character, § 3, 4. A more particular illustration of this case, with an appeal to the reader whether it be not his own. §. 5, 6. Expostulation with such ; §. 7—9. more particularly, (1.) From acknowledged principles, relating to the nature of God, his universal presence, agency, and perfections, §. 10—12. (2.) From a view of personal obligations to him. §. 13. (3.) From the danger of this neglect, when considered in its aspect on a future state. §. 14. An appeal to the conscience, as already convinced. §. 15. Transition to the subject of the next chapter. §. 16. The meditation of a sinner, who, having been long thoughtless, begins to be awakened.

§. 1. SHAMEFULLY and fatally as religion is neglected in the world, yet, blessed be God, it has some sincere disciples ; *children of wisdom*, by whom, even in this foolish and degenerate age, it *is justified* ; (a) who having, by divine grace, been brought to the *knowledge of God in Christ*, have faithfully devoted their hearts to him, and, by a natural consequence, are devoting their lives to his service. Could I be sure this treatise would fall into no hands but theirs, my work would be shorter, easier and pleasanter.

§. 2. But among the thousands that neglect religion, it is more than possible, that some of my readers may be included :

(a) Matt. xi. 19.

cluded : And I am so deeply affected with their unhappy case, that the temper of my heart, as well as the proper method of my subject, leads me, in the first place, to address myself to *such* ; to apply to every one of them ; and therefore to *you*, O reader, whoever you are, who may come under the denomination of a *careless sinner*.

§. 3. Be not, I beseech you, angry at the name. The physicians of souls must speak plainly, or they may murder those whom they should cure. I would make no harsh and unreasonable supposition. I would charge you with nothing more, than is absolutely necessary to convince you, that *you* are the person to whom I speak. I will not, therefore, imagine you to be a profane and abandoned profligate. I will not suppose, that you allow yourself to blaspheme God, to dishonor his name, by customary swearing, or grossly to violate his sabbath, or commonly to neglect the solemnities of the public worship : I will not imagine that you have injured your neighbors, in their lives, their chastity, or their possessions, either by violence or by fraud ; or that you have scandalously debased the rational nature of man, by that vile intemperance, which transforms us into the worst kind of brutes, or something beneath them.

§. 4. In opposition to all this, I will suppose, that you believe the existence and providence of God, and the truth of christianity, as a revelation from him : Of which, if you have any doubt, I must desire, that you would immediately seek your satisfaction elsewhere.* I say, *immediately* ; because not to believe it, is in effect to disbelieve it ; and will make your ruin equally certain, though, perhaps, it may leave it less aggravated, than if contempt and opposition had been added to suspicion and neglect. But supposing you to be a nominal christian, and not a deist, or a sceptic ; I will also suppose your conduct among men to be not only blameless, but amiable ; and that they who know you
most

* In such a case, I beg leave to refer the reader to my *Three Sermons on the Evidence of Christianity* ; the last of the *Ten on the Power and Grace of Christ* ; in which he may see the hitherto unshaken foundations of my own faith, in a short and, I hope, a clear view.

most intimately, must acknowledge, that you are just and sober, humane and courteous, compassionate and liberal : Yet, with all this, you may *lack that one thing*, (b) on which your eternal happiness depends.

§. 5. I beseech you, reader, whoever you are, that you would now look seriously into your own heart, and ask it this one plain question, *am I truly religious?* Is the love of God the governing principle of my life? Do I walk under a sense of his presence? Do I converse with him from day to day, in the exercise of prayer and praise? And am I, on the whole, making his service my business and my delight, regarding him as my master and my father?

§. 6. It is my present business, only to address myself to the person whose conscience answers in the negative.— And I would address with equal plainness, and equal freedom, to high and low, to rich and poor : To you, who (as the scripture with a dreadful propriety expresses it) *live without God in the world* ; (c) and while, in words and forms, you *own God, deny him in your actions*, (d) and behave yourselves in the main, (a few external ceremonies only excepted,) just as you would do, if you believed, and were sure, *there was no God*. Unhappy creature, whoever you are ! your own *heart condemns you immediately* ; and how much more that *God who is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things*. (e) He is *in secret*, (f) as well as in public ; and words cannot express the delight, with which his children converse with him *alone* : But *in secret* you *acknowledge him not* ; you neither pray to him, nor praise him, in your retirements. Accounts, correspondences, studies, may often bring you into your closet ; but if nothing but devotion were to be transacted there, it would be to you quite an unfrequented place. And thus you go on from day to day, in a continual forgetfulness of God ; and are as thoughtless about religion, as if you had long since demonstrated it to yourself, that it was a mere dream. If, indeed, you are sick, you will, perhaps, call to God for health, in any extreme danger, you will lift up your eyes and voice for deliverance : But as for the pardon of sin,

E

and

(b) Mark x. 21. (c) Eph. ii. 12. (d) Tit. i. 16.

(e) 1 John iii. 20. (f) Matt. vi. 6.

and the other blessings of the gospel, you are not at all inwardly solicitous about them ; though you profess to believe, that the gospel is divine, and the blessings of it eternal. All your thoughts, and all your hours, are divided between the business and the amusements of life : And if, now and then, an awful providence, or a serious sermon or book awakens you, it is but a few days, or it may be a few hours, and you are the same careless creature you ever were before. On the whole, you act, as if you were resolved to put it to the venture, and at your own expence to make the experiment, whether the consequences of neglecting religion be indeed as terrible, as its ministers and friends have represented. Their remonstrances do, indeed, sometimes force themselves upon you, as (considering the age and country in which you live,) it is hardly possible entirely to avoid them ; but you have, it may be, found out the art of *Isaiah's* people, *hearing to hear, and not understanding ; and seeing to see, and not perceiving ; Your heart is waxed gross, your eyes are closed, and your ears heavy.* (g) Under the very ordinances of worship, your thoughts are at the ends of the earth. (h) Every amusement of the imagination is welcome, if it may but lead away your mind from so insipid, and so disagreeable a subject, as religion. And probably the very last time you were in a worshipping assembly, you managed, just as you would have done, if you had thought, God knew nothing of your behaviour ; or, as if you did not think it worth one single care, whether he were pleased or displeased with it.

§. 7. Alas ! Is it then come to this, with all your belief of God, and providence, and scripture ! That religion is not worth a thought ! That it is not worth one hour's serious consideration and reflection, " what *God* and *Christ* are ; and what *you yourselves* are, and what you must hereafter be ?" Where then are all your rational faculties ? How are they employed ? Or rather, how are they stupified and benumbed ?

§. 8. The *certainty* and *importance* of the things of which I speak are so evident, from the principles which you yourselves grant, that one might almost set a child or an idiot

(g) *Isa.* vi. 9, 10. (h) *Prov.* xvii. 24.

idiot to reason upon them. And yet they are neglected by those, who are grown up to understanding, and, perhaps, some of them to such refinement of understanding, that they would think themselves greatly injured, if they were not to be reckoned among the politer, and the more learned part of mankind.

§. 9. But it is not your neglect, sirs, that can destroy the being or importance of such things as these. It may indeed destroy you, but it cannot in the least affect them. Permit me, therefore, having been myself awakened, to come to each of you, and say, as the mariners did, to Jonah, while asleep in the midst of a much less dangerous storm, *what meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon thy God.* (i) Do you doubt as to the reasonableness, or necessity of doing it? *I will demand, and answer me:* (k) Answer me to your own conscience, as one that must, 'ere long, render another kind of account.

§. 10. You own, that *there is a God:* And well you may: For you cannot open your eyes, but you must see the evident proofs of his being, his presence and his agency. You behold him around you in every object.— You feel him within you, if I may so speak, in every vein, and in every nerve. You see, and you feel, not only that he has formed you with an exquisite wisdom, which no mortal man could ever fully explain or comprehend; but that he is continually near you, wherever you are, and however you are employed, by day or by night; *in him you live, and move, and have your being.* (l) Common sense will tell you, that it is not your own wisdom, and power, and attention, that causes your heart to beat, and your blood to circulate; that draws in and sends out that *breath* of life, that precarious breath of a most uncertain life, *that is in your nostrils.* (m) These things are done when you sleep, as well as in those waking moments, when you think not of the circulation of the blood, or of the necessity of breathing, nor so much as recollect that you have a heart and lungs. Now what is this, but the hand of God, perpetually supporting and actuating those curious machines that he has made?

§. 11. Nor

(i) Jon. i. 6. (k) Job xxxviii. 3. (l) Acts xvii. 28.

(m) Isa. ii. 22.

§. 11. Nor is this his care limited to you ; but, if you look all around you, far as your views can reach, you see it extending itself on every side : And O, how much farther than you can trace it ! Reflect on the light and heat, which the sun every where dispenses : on the air which surrounds all our globe, on the right temperature of which the life of the whole human race depends, and that of all the inferior creatures which dwell on the earth. Think of the suitable and plentiful *provision* made for man and beast ; the grass, the grain, the variety of fruits, and herbs, and flowers ; every thing that nourishes us, every thing that delights us ; and say, whether it doth not speak plainly and loudly, that our almighty maker is near, and that he is careful of us, and kind to us. And while all these things proclaim *his goodness*, do they not also proclaim *his power* ? For what power is any thing comparable to that, which furnishes out these gifts of royal bounty ; and which, unwearied and unchanged, produces continually from day to day, and from age to age, such astonishing and magnificent effects, over the face of the whole earth, and through all the regions of heaven ?

§. 12. It is then evident, that *God is present*, present with you at this moment, even *God* your creator and preserver, *God* the creator and preserver of the whole visible and invisible world. And is he not present as a most observant and attentive being ? *He that formed the eye, shall not he see ? He that planted the ear, shall not he hear ? He that teaches man knowledge*, that gives him his rational faculties, and pours in on his opening mind all the light it receives by them, *shall not he know ?* (n) He who sees all the necessities of his creatures, so seasonably to provide for them, shall he not see their actions too ; and seeing, shall he not judge of them ? Has he given us a sense and discernment of what is good and evil, of what is true and false, of what is fair and deformed in temper and conduct ; and has he himself no discernment of these things ? Trifle not with your conscience, which tells you at once, that he judges of it, and approves or condemns, as it is decent or indecent, reasonable or unreasonable ; and that the judgment which he passes, is of infinite importance to all his creatures.

§. 13. And now, to apply all this to your own case,
(n) Psal. xciv. 9, 10.

let me seriously ask you, is it a decent and reasonable thing, that this great and glorious benefactor should be neglected by his rational creatures ? by those, that are capable of attaining to some knowledge of him, and presenting to him some homage ? Is it decent and reasonable, that he should be forgotten and neglected *by you* ? Are you alone, of all the works of his hands, forgotten and neglected by him ? O sinner, thoughtless as you are, you cannot dare to say that, or even to think it. You need not go back to the helpless days of your infancy and childhood, to convince you of the contrary. You need not, in order to this, to recollect the remarkable deliverances, which, perhaps, were wrought out for you many years ago. The repose of the last night, the refreshment and comfort you have received this day ; yea, the mercies you are receiving this very moment, bear witness to him ; and yet you regard him not. Ungrateful creature that you are ! Could you have treated any human benefactor thus ? Could you have borne to neglect a kind parent, or any generous friend, that had but for a few months acted the part of a parent to you ? To have taken no notice of him, while in his presence ; to have returned him no thanks, to have had no contrivances to make some little acknowledgment for all his goodness ? *Human nature*, bad as it is, is not fallen so low. Nay, the *brutal nature* is not so low as this. Surely every domestic animal around you must shame such ingratitude. If you do but for a few days take a little kind notice of a dog, and feed him with the refuse of your table, he will wait upon you, and love to be near you ; he will be eager to follow you from place to place, and when, after a little absence, you return home, will try, by a thousand fond transported motions, to tell you how much he rejoices to see you again. Nay, *brutes*, far less sagacious and apprehensive, have some sense of our kindness, and express it after their way : As the blessed God condescends to observe, in this very view in which I mention it, *the dull Ox knows his owner, and the stupid Ass his master's crib* : (o) What lamentable degeneracy, therefore, is it, that *you do not know* that you, who have been numbered among God's professing people, do not, and will not consider your numberless obligations to him ?

§. 14. Surely, if you have any ingenuity of temper, you must be ashamed and grieved in the review : But if you have not, give me leave farther to expostulate with you on this head, by setting it in something of a different light. Can you think yourselves safe, while you are acting a part like this ? Do you not in your conscience believe, there will be a future judgment ? Do you not believe, there is an invisible and eternal world ? As professed christians, we all believe it ; for it is no controverted point, but displayed in scripture with so clear an evidence, that, subtile and ingenious as men are in error, they have not yet found out a way to evade it. And, believing this, do you not see, that while you are thus wandering from God, *destruction and misery are in your ways* ? (p) Will this indolence, and negligence of temper, be any security to you ? Will it guard you from death ? Will it excuse you from judgment ? You might much more reasonably expect, that shutting your eyes would be a defence against the rage of a devouring lion ; or that looking another way should secure your body from being pierced by a bullet or a sword. When God speaks of the extravagant folly of some thoughtless creatures, who would hearken to no admonition now, he adds, in a very awful manner : *In the latter day they shall consider it perfectly.* (q) And is not this applicable to you ? Must you not, sooner or later, be brought to think of these things, whether you will or no ? And, in the mean time, do you not certainly know, that timely and serious reflection upon them, is through divine grace, the only way to prevent your ruin ?

§. 15. Yes, sinner, I need not multiply words on a subject like this. Your conscience is already inwardly convinced, tho' your pride may be unwilling to own it. And to prove it, let me ask you one question more : Would you, upon any terms and considerations whatever, come to a resolution, absolutely to dismiss all farther thought of religion, and all care about it, from this day and hour, and to abide by the consequences of that neglect ? I believe, hardly any man living would be bold enough to determine

(p) Rom. iii. 16.

(q) Jer. xxiii. 20.

termine upon this. I believe, most of my readers would be ready to tremble at the thought of it.

§. 16. But if it be necessary to take these things into consideration at all, it is necessary to do it *quickly*; for life itself is not so very long, nor so certain, that a wise man should risque much upon its continuance. And I hope to convince you, when I have another hearing, that it is necessary to do it *immediately*; and that next to the madness of resolving, *you will not think of religion at all*, is that of saying, *you will think of it hereafter*. In the mean time, pause on the hints which have been already given, and they will prepare you to receive what is to be added on that head.

The MEDITATION of a sinner who was once thoughtless, but begins to be awakened.

“AWAKE, O my forgetful soul, awake from these wandring dreams. Turn thee from this chace of vanity, and for a little while be persuaded, by all these considerations, to *look forward*, and to *look upward*, at least for a few moments. Sufficient are the hours, and days, given to the labours and amusements of life. Grudge not a short allotment of minutes, to view thyself, and thine own more immediate concerns; to reflect, who, and what thou art; how it comes to pass, that thou art here, and what thou must quickly be!

“It is, indeed, as thou hast now seen it represented. O my soul! Thou art *the creature of God*; formed and furnished by him, and lodged in a body, which he provided, and which he supports; a body, in which he intended thee only a transitory abode. O, think how soon *this tabernacle must be dissolved*, (r) and thou must *return to God*. (s) And shall he, the one infinite, eternal, ever blessed, and ever glorious being, shall he be *least of all regarded* by thee? Wilt thou live and die with this character, *saying*, by every action of every day, *unto God, depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways*? (t) The morning, the day, the evening, the night, every period of time, has its excuses for this neglect. But, O my soul,

what

(r) 2 Cor. v. 1. (s) Eccles. xii. 7. (t) Job xxi. 14.

what will these excuses appear, when examined by his penetrating eye ! They may *delude me* ; but they cannot *impose upon him*.

“ O thou injured, neglected, provoked benefactor ! When I think, but for a moment or two, of all thy greatness, and of all thy goodness, I am astonished at this insensibility, which hath prevailed in mine heart, and even still prevails. *I blush, and am confounded, to lift up my face before thee.* (u) On the most transient review, I see, that *I have played the fool, that I have erred exceedingly.* (x) And yet this stupid heart of mine would make its having neglected thee so long, a reason for going on to neglect thee. I own, it might justly be expected, that, with regard to thee, every one of thy rational creatures should be all duty and love : That each heart should be full of a sense of thy presence ; and that a care to please thee shall swallow up every other care. Yet thou *hast not been in all my thoughts* ; (y) and religion the end and glory of my nature, has been so strangely overlooked, that I have hardly ever seriously asked my own heart, what it is.—I know, if matters rest here, I perish. And yet, I feel in my perverse nature, a secret indisposition to pursue these thoughts ; a proneness, if not entirely to dismiss them, yet to lay them aside for the present. My mind is perplexed and divided ; but, I am sure, thou, who madest me, knowest what is best for me. I therefore beseech thee, that thou wilt, *for thy name's sake lead me and guide me.* (z) Let me not delay, till it is forever too late. *Pluck me as a brand out of the burning.* (a) O break this fatal enchantment, that holds down my affection to objects, which my judgment comparatively despises ? and let me, at length, come into so happy a state of mind, that I may not be afraid to think of thee, and of myself ; and may not be tempted to wish, that thou hadst not made me, or that thou couldst forever forget me ; that it may not be my best hope, to perish like the brutes.

“ If what I shall farther read here, be agreeable to truth and reason ; if it be calculated to promote my happiness, and is to be regarded as an intimation of thy will and

(u) Ezr. x. 6. (x) 1 Sam. xxvi. 21. (y) Psal. x. 4.
(z) Psal. xxxi. 3. (a) Amos iv. 11.

and pleasure to me ; O God, let me hear and obey ! Let *the words of thy servant*, when pleading thy cause, *be like goads* to pierce into my mind, and let me rather feel and smart, than die ! Let them be *as nails fastened in a sure place*. (b) That, whatever mysteries as yet unknown, or whatever difficulties there be in religion, if it be necessary, I may not finally neglect it ; and that if it be expedient to attend immediately to it, I may no longer delay that attendance ! And, O let thy grace teach me the lesson, I am so slow to learn ; and conquer that strong opposition, which I feel in my heart, against the very thought of it ! Hear these broken cries, for the sake of thy Son, who has taught and saved many a creature as untractable as I, and *can out of stones raise up children to Abraham !* (c) Amen."

(b) Eccl. xii. 11.

(c) Mat. iii. 9.

CHAP. III.

THE AWAKENED SINNER URGED TO IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION, AND CAUTIONED AGAINST DELAY.

Sinners when awakened, inclinable to dismiss convictions for the present. §. 1. *An immediate regard to religion urged.* §. 2. (1.) *From the excellency and pleasure of the thing itself.* §. 3. (2.) *From the uncertainty of that future time on which sinners presume, compared with the sad consequences of being cut off in sin.* §. 4. (3) *From the immutability of God's present demands.* §. 5. (4) *From the tendency which delay has, to make a compliance with these demands more difficult than it is at present.* §. 6. (5) *From the danger of God's withdrawing his spirit, compared with the dreadful case of a sinner given up by it :* §. 7. *Which probably is now the case of many.* §. 8. *Since, therefore, on the whole, whatever the event be, delays must prove matter of lamentation.* §. 9. *The chapter concludes with an exhortation against yielding to them :* §. 10. *And a prayer against temptation of that kind.*

§. 1. I HOPE

§. 1. I HOPE my last address so far awakened the convictions of my reader, as to bring him to this purpose, "that some time or other he would attend to religious considerations." But give me leave to ask earnestly and punctually, "when that shall be?" *Go thy way for this time, and at a more convenient season I will send for thee*, was the language and the ruin of unhappy *Felix*, (a) when he trembled under the reasonings and expostulations of the apostle. The tempter presumed not to urge, that he should give up all thoughts of repentance and reformation; but only that, considering the present hurry of his affairs, (as no doubt they were many,) he should defer it to a longer day. The artifice succeeded, and *Felix* was undone.

§. 2. Will you reader, dismiss me thus? For your own sake, and out of tender compassion to your perishing immortal soul, I would not willingly take up with such a dismissal and excuse. No, not tho' you should *fix a time*; tho' you should determine on *the next year, or month, or week, or day*. I would turn upon you with all the eagerness and tenderness of friendly importunity, and intreat you to bring the matter to an issue *even now*: For, if you say, "I will think on these things *to-morrow*, I shall have *little hope*"; and shall conclude, that all that I have hitherto urged, and all that you have read, hath been offered and viewed in vain.

§. 3. When I invite you to the care and practice of religion, it may seem strange, that it should be necessary for me, affectionately to plead the case with you, in order to your immediate regard and compliance. What I am inviting you to, is so noble and excellent in itself, so well worthy the dignity of our rational nature, so suitable to it, so manly, and so wise, that one would imagine, you should take fire, as it were, at the first hearing of it; yea, that so delightful a view should presently possess your whole soul with a kind of indignation against yourself, that you pursued it no sooner. "May I lift up mine eyes, and my soul, to God? May I devote myself to him? May I *even now* commence a friendship with him? A friendship which

(a) Acts xxiv. 25.

which shall last forever, the security, the delight, the glory of this immortal nature of mine?" And shall I draw back, and say, "nevertheless let me not commence this friendship *too soon*: Let me live at least a few weeks, or few days longer, *without God in the world*?" Surely it would be much more reasonable to turn inward, and say, "O my soul, on what vile husks hast thou been feeding, while thine heavenly father has been forsaken, and injured? Shall I desire to multiply the days of my poverty, my scandal, and my misery?" On this principle, surely, an immediate return to God, should in all reason be chosen; rather than to *play the fool any longer*, and to go on a little more to displease God, and thereby to starve and to wound your own soul; even though your continuance in life were ever so certain, and your capacity to return to God and your duty ever so entirely in your own power, now, and in every future moment, through scores of years yet to come.

§. 4. But who, or what are you, that you should delay your account for years, or for months to come? *What is your life?* Is it not *even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away?* (b) And what is your security, or what is your peculiar warrant, that you should thus depend upon the certainty of its continuance? and that so absolutely, as to venture, as it were, to pawn your soul upon it? Why, you will, perhaps, say, "I am young, and in all my bloom and vigour: I see hundreds about me, who are more than double my age; and not a few of them, who seem to think it too soon to attend to religion yet."—You view the living, and you talk thus. But I beseech you, think of the dead. Return in your thoughts, to those graves, in which you have left some of your young companions, and your friends. You saw them a while ago gay and active; warm with life and hopes, and schemes. And some of them would have thought a friend strangely importunate, that should have interrupted them in their business, and their pleasures, with a solemn lecture of death and eternity. Yet they were then on the very borders of both. You have since seen their corpses, or at least their coffins; and probably carried about with you
the

(b) Jam. iv. 14.

the badges of mourning, which you received at their funerals. Those once vigorous, and, perhaps, beautiful bodies of theirs, now lie mouldering in the dust ; as senseless, and helpless, as the most decrepid pieces of human nature, which fourscore years ever bro't down to it. And, what is infinitely more to be regarded, their souls, whether prepared for this great change, or thoughtless of it, have made their appearance before God and are at this moment fixed either in heaven, or in hell. Now let me seriously ask you, would it be miraculous, or would it be strange, if such an event should befall you? How are you sure, that some fatal disease shall not this day begin to work in your veins ! How are you sure, that you shall ever be capable of reading or thinking any more if you do not attend to what you now read, and pursue the thought which is now offering itself to your mind ? This sudden alteration may at least possibly happen ; and if it does, it will be to you a terrible one indeed. To be thus surprized into the presence of a forgotten God ; to be torn away, at once, from a world, to which your whole heart and soul have been rivetted ; a world, which has engrossed all your thoughts and cares, all your desires and pursuits : and be fixed in a state, which you could never be so far persuaded to think of, as to spend so much as one hour in serious preparation for it : How must you even shudder at the apprehension of it, and with what horror must it fill you ? It seems matter of wonder, that, in such circumstances, you are not almost distracted with the thoughts of the uncertainty of life, and are not even ready to die for fear of death. To trifle with God any longer, after so solemn an admonition as this, would be a circumstance of additional provocation, which, after all the rest, might be fatal. Nor is there any thing you can expect in such a case, but that he should cut you off immediately, and teach other thoughtless creatures, by your ruin, what a hazardous experiment they make, when they act as you are acting.

§. 5. And will you, after all, run this desperate risque ? For what imaginable purpose can you do it ? Do you think, *the business of religion* will become *less necessary*, or *more easy* by your delay ? You know, that it will not.

You

You know, that whatever the blessed God demands now, he will also demand twenty or thirty years hence, if you should live to see the time. God hath fixed the method, in which he will pardon and accept sinners, in his gospel. And will he ever alter that method? Or if he will not, can men alter it? You like not to think of repenting, and humbling yourself before God, to receive righteousness and life from his free grace in Christ; and you above all dislike the thought, of returning to God in the ways of holy obedience. But will he ever dispense with any of these, and publish a new gospel, with promises of life and salvation to *impenitent, unbelieving sinners*, if they will but call themselves Christians, and submit to a few *external rites*; how long, do you think, you might wait for such a change in the constitution of things? you know, death will come upon you; and you cannot but know, in your own conscience, that a general dissolution will come upon the world, long before God can thus deny himself, and contradict all his perfections, and all his declarations.

§. 6. Or if his demands continue the same, as they assuredly will, do you think, any thing, which is now disagreeable to you in them, will be less disagreeable hereafter than it is at present? Shall you love sin less, when it is become more habitual to you, and when conscience is yet more enfeebled and debauched? If you *are running with the footmen and fainting*, shall you be able to contend with the horsemen? (c) Surely you cannot imagine it. You would not say, in any distemper which threatened your life, "I will stay till I grow a little worse, and then I will apply to a physician: I will let my disease get a little more rooting in my vitals, and then I will try what can be done to remove it." No, it is only where the life of the soul is concerned, that men think thus widely: The life and health of the body appear too precious, to be thus trifled away.

§. 7. If after such desperate experiments you are ever recovered, it must be by an operation of divine grace on your soul, yet more powerful and more wonderful, in proportion to the increasing inveteracy of your spiritual

F

maladies.

(c) Jer. xii. 5.

maladies. And can you expect, that *the holy spirit* should be *more ready to assist you*, in consequence of your having so shamefully trifled with him, and affronted him? He is now, in some measure, moving on your heart: If you feel any secret relentings in it upon what you read, it is a sign you are not yet utterly forsaken: But who can tell, whether these are not the last touches he will ever give, to a heart so long hardened against him? Who can tell, but God may this day *swear in his wrath, that you shall not enter into his rest?* (d) I have been telling you, that you may immediately die. You own it possible, you may. And can you think of any thing more terrible? Yes sinner, I will tell you of one thing *more dreadful, than immediate death and immediate damnation.* The blessed God may say, “as for that wretched creature, who has so long trifled with me, and provoked me, let him *still live*: Let him live in the midst of prosperity and plenty: Let him live under the purest, and most powerful ordinances of the gospel too; that he may abuse them, to aggravate his condemnation, and die under sevenfold guilt, and a sevenfold curse. I will not give him the grace to think of his ways for one serious moment more; but he shall go on from bad to worse, *filling up the measure of his iniquities*, till death and destruction seize him in an unexpected hour, and *wrath come upon him to the uttermost.*” (e)

§. 8. You think this an uncommon case; but, I fear, it is much otherwise. I fear, there are few congregations, where the word of God has been faithfully preached, and where it has been long despised, especially by those whom it had once awakened, in which the eye of God does not see a number of such wretched souls; though it is impossible for us to pronounce upon the case, who they are.

§. 9. I pretend not to say, how he will deal with you, O reader; whether he will immediately cut you off, or seal you up under final hardness and impenitency of heart; or whether his grace may, at length, awaken you to consider your ways, and to return to him, even when your heart is grown yet more obdurate than it is at present: For to his almighty grace nothing is hard, not even to transform a rock of marble into a man and a saint. But this I

will

(d) Heb. iii. 13.

(e) 1 Theff. ii. 16.

will confidently say, that if you delay any longer, the time will come, when you will bitterly repent of that delay; and either lament it before God in the anguish of your heart here, or curse your own folly and madness in hell; yea, when you will wish, that, dreadful as hell is, you had rather fallen into it sooner, than have lived in the midst of so many abused mercies to render the degree of your punishment more insupportable, and your sense of it more exquisitely tormenting.

§. 10. I do therefore earnestly exhort you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the worth, and, if I may so speak, by the blood of your immortal and perishing soul, that you delay not a day, or an hour longer. Far from *giving sleep to your eyes, or slumber to your eye-lids*, (f) in the continued neglect of this important concern, *take with you even now words, and turn unto the Lord*; (g) and before you quit the place where you now are, fall upon your knees in his sacred presence and pour out your heart in such language, or at least to some such purpose, as this.

A PRAYER for one, who is tempted to delay applying to religion, though under some conviction of its importance.

“O THOU righteous and holy sovereign of heaven and earth! Thou *God, in whose hand my breath is, and whose are all my ways*! (h) I confess, I have been far from glorifying thee, or conducting myself according to the intimations, or the declarations of thy will. I have therefore reason to adore thy forbearance and goodness, that thou hast not long since stopped my breath, and cut me off from the land of the living. I adore thy patience, that I have not, months and years ago, been an inhabitant of hell; where ten thousand delaying sinners are now lamenting their folly, and will be lamenting it forever. But, O God, how possible is it, that this trifling heart of mine may, at length, betray me into the same ruin! and then, alas, into a ruin aggravated by all this patience and forbearance of thine! I am convinced, that, sooner or later, religion must be my serious care, or I am undone.

And

(f) Prov. vi. 4. (g) Hof. xiv. 2. (h) Dan. v. 23.

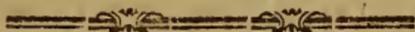
And yet, my foolish heart draws back from the yoke : Yet I stretch myself upon the bed of sloth, and cry out for a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep. (i) Thus does my corrupt heart plead for its own indulgence, against the convictions of my better judgment. What shall I say ? O Lord, save me from myself ! Save me from the artifices and deceitfulness of sin : Save me from the treachery of this perverse and degenerate nature of mine, and fix upon my mind what I have now been reading !

“ O Lord, I am not now instructed in truths, which were before quite unknown. Often have I been warned of the uncertainty of life, and of the greater uncertainty of the day of salvation : And I have formed some light purposes, and have begun to take a few irresolute steps in my way towards a return unto thee. But, alas, I have been only, as it were, *fluttering about religion*, and have never fixed upon it. All my resolutions have been scattered, like smoke, or dispersed, like a cloudy vapour before the wind. O that thou wouldst now bring these things home to my heart, with a more powerful conviction than it hath ever yet felt ! O that thou wouldst pursue me with them, even when I flee from them ; if I should ever grow mad enough to endeavour to escape them any more ! May thy spirit address me, in the language of effectual terror ; and add all the most powerful methods, which thou knowest to be necessary, to awaken me from this lethargy, which must otherwise be mortal ! May the sound of these things be in mine ears, *when I go out, and when I come in, when I lie down, and when I rise up !* (k) And if the repose of the night, and the business of the day, be for a while interrupted by the impression, be it so, O God ! if I may but thereby carry on my business with thee to better purpose, and at length secure a repose in thee, instead of all that terror which I now find, when *I think upon God and am troubled.* (l)

“ O Lord, *my flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.* (m) I am afraid, lest even now, that I have begun to think of religion, thou shouldst cut me off,

(i) Prov. vi. 10. (k) Deut. vi. 7. (l) Psal. lxxvii. 3.
(m) Psal. cxix. 120.

off, in this critical and important moment, before my thoughts grow to any ripeness ; and blast in eternal death, the first buddings and openings of it in my mind. But *O spare me*, I earnestly intreat thee ; for thy mercies sake spare me a little longer ! It may be, through thy grace, I shall return. It may be, if thou continuest thy patience towards me a while longer, there may be *some better fruit* produced by this *cumberer of the ground*. (n) And may the remembrance of that long forbearance, which thou hast already exercised towards me, prevent my continuing to trifle with thee, and with my own soul ! From this day, O Lord, from this hour, from this moment, may I be able to date more lasting impressions of religion, than have ever yet been made upon my heart, by all that I have ever read, or all that I have heard ! *Amen.*”



CHAP. IV.

THE SINNER ARRAIGNED AND CONVICTED.

Conviction of guilt necessary. §. 1. *A charge of rebellion against God advanced.* §. 2. *Where it is shewn, (1.) That all men are born under God's law.* §. 3. (2) *That no man hath perfectly kept it.* §. 4. *An appeal to the reader's conscience on this head, that he hath not.* §. 5. (3) *That to have broken it, is an evil inexpressibly great :* §. 6. *Illustrated by a more particular view of the aggravations of this guilt, arising, (1.) From knowledge.* §. 7. (2) *From divine favours received.* §. 8. (3) *From convictions of conscience overborne.* §. 9. (4) *From the strivings of God's spirit resisted.* §. 10. (5) *From vows and resolutions broken.* §. 11. *The charge summed up, and left upon the sinner's conscience.* §. 12. *The sinner's confession under a general conviction of guilt.*

§. 1. **AS** I am attempting to lead you to true religion, and not merely to some superficial form of it, I
 (n) Luke xiii. 7, 8. f am

am sensible, I can do it no otherwise, than in the way of deep humiliation. And therefore, supposing you are persuaded, through the divine blessing on what you have before read, to take it into consideration, I would now endeavour, in the first place, with all the seriousness I can, to make you heartily sensible of your guilt before God. For I well know, that unless you are convinced of this, and affected with the conviction, all the provisions of gospel grace will be slighted, and your soul infallibly destroyed, in the midst of the noblest means appointed for its recovery. I am fully persuaded, that thousands live and die in a course of sin, without feeling upon their hearts any sense that they are sinners; though they cannot, for shame, but own it in words. And therefore, let me deal faithfully with you, though I may seem to deal roughly; for complaisance is not to give law to addressees, in which the life of your soul is concerned.

§. 2. Permit me therefore, O sinner, to consider myself at this time, as an advocate for God; as one employed in his name, to plead against thee, and to charge thee with nothing less, than being *a rebel* and *a traitor*, against the sovereign majesty of heaven and earth. However thou mayest be dignified or distinguished among men; if the noblest blood ran in thy veins; if thy seat were among princes, and thine arm were *the terror of the mighty, in the land of the living*; (a) it would be necessary, thou shouldst be told, and told plainly, *thou hast broken the law of the king of kings*, and by the breach of it art become obnoxious to his righteous condemnation.

§. 3. Your conscience tells you, that you were born the natural subjects to God; born under the indispensable obligations of his law. For it is most apparent, that the constitution of our rational nature, which makes you capable of receiving law from God, binds you to obey it. And it is equally evident and certain, that you have not exactly obeyed this law; nay, that you have violated it in many aggravated instances.

§. 4. Will you dare to deny this? Will you dare to assert your innocence? Remember, it must be a complete innocence: Yes, and a perfect righteousness too; or it

can

(a) Ezek. xxxii. 27.

can stand you in no stead, further than to prove, that, though a condemned sinner, you are not quite so criminal as some others, and will not have quite so hot a place, in hell, as they. And when this is considered, will you plead *not guilty* to the charge? Search the records of your own conscience; for God searches them: Ask it seriously, "have you never in your lives sinned against God?" Solomon declared, that in his day, *there was not a just man upon earth, that did good, and sinned not*: (b) And the Apostle Paul, that *all had sinned, and come short of the glory of God*; (c) that *both jews and gentiles*, (which you know, comprehended the whole human race,) *were all under sin*. (d) And can you pretend any imaginable reason, to believe the world is grown so much better since their days, that any should now plead their own case as an exception? Or will you, however, presume to arise, in the face of the omniscient majesty of heaven, and say, *I am the man*?

§. 5. Supposing, as before, you have been free from those gross acts of immorality, which are so pernicious to society, that they have generally been punishable by human laws; can you pretend, that you have not, in smaller instances, violated the rules of piety, of temperance, and of charity? Is there any one person, who has intimately known you, that would not be able to testify, you had said, or done something amiss? Or if others could not convict you, would not your own heart do it? Does it not prove you guilty of pride, of passion, of sensuality; of an excessive fondness for the world, and its enjoyments; of mourning, or at least of secretly repining, against God, under the strokes of his afflictive providence; of mispending a great deal of your time; of abusing the gifts of God's bounty, to vain, if not (in some instances) to pernicious purpose; of mocking him, when you have pretended to engage in his worship, *drawing near to him with your mouth and your lips, while your heart has been far from him*? (e) Does not conscience condemn you of some one breach of the law at least? And by one breach of it you are in a sense, a scriptural sense, *become guilty of all*; (f) and are as incapable of being justified before God by

(b) Eccles. vii. 20. (c) Rom. iii. 23. (d) Rom. iii. 9.
 (e) Isai. xxix. 13. (f) Jam. ii. 10.

any obedience of your own, as if you had committed ten thousand offences. But, in reality, there are ten thousand, and more, chargeable to your account. When you come to reflect on all your sins of negligence, as well as on those of commission; on all the instances, in which you have failed to do good, when it was in the power of your hand to do it; (g) on all the instances, in which acts of devotion have been omitted, especially in secret; and on all those cases, in which you have shewn a stupid disregard to the honour of God, and to the temporal and eternal happiness of your fellow-creatures: When all these, I say, are reviewed, the number will swell beyond all possibility of account, and force you to cry out, *mine iniquities are more than the hairs of my head.* (h) They will appear in such a light before you that your own heart will charge you with countless multitudes; and how much more than *that God, who is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things!* (i)

§. 6. And say, sinner, is it a little thing, that you have presumed to set light by the authority of the God of heaven, & to violate his law, if it had been by mere carelessness & inattention? How much more heinous, therefore, is the guilt, when in so many instances you have done it knowingly, & wilfully? Give me leave seriously to ask you, and let me intreat you to ask your own soul, *against whom hast thou magnified thyself? Against whom hast thou exalted thy voice,* (k) or *lifted up thy rebellious hand?* On whose law, O sinner, hast thou presumed to trample? and whose friendship, and whose enmity hast thou thereby dared to affront? Is it a man like thyself, that thou hast insulted? Is it only a temporal monarch? Only one, *who can kill thy body, and then hath no more that he can do?* (l) Nay, sinner, thou wouldst not have dared to treat a temporal prince, as thou hast treated *the king eternal, immortal, and invisible.* (m) No price could have hired thee, to deal by the majesty of an earthly sovereign, as thou hast dealt by *that God,* before whom the *cherubim* and *seraphim* are continually bowing. Not one opposing or complaining, disputing or murmuring word is heard among all the celestial legions, when the intimations of his will are published to them. And *who art thou,* O wretched

(g) Prov. iii. 27. (h) Psal. xl. 12. (i) 1 John iii. 20.
 (k) 2 Kings xix. 22. (l) Luke xii. 4. (m) 1 Tim. i. 17.

ed man; *who art thou*, that thou shouldst oppose him? That *thou* shouldst oppose and provoke a *God* of infinite power and terror, who needs but exert one single act of his sovereign will, and thou art in a moment stripped of every possession; cut off from every hope: destroyed and rooted up from existence, if that were his pleasure; or, what is inconceivably worse, consigned over to the severest and most lasting agonies? Yet, this is the God, whom thou hast offended; whom thou hast affronted to his face, presuming to violate his express laws in his very presence; this is the God, before whom thou standest as a convicted criminal; convicted, not of one or two particular offences, but of thousands and ten thousands; of a course and series of rebellions and provocations, in which thou hast persisted, more or less, ever since thou wast born; and the particulars of which have been attended, with almost every conceivable circumstance of aggravation. Reflect on particulars; and deny the charge, if you can.

§. 7. If *knowledge* be an *aggravation of guilt*, thy guilt O sinner, is greatly aggravated! For thou wast born in *Emmanuel's land*, and God hath *written to thee the great things of his law*, yet *thou hast accounted them as a strange thing*. (n) Thou hast *known to do good*, and *hast not done it*; (o) and therefore *to thee* the omission of it has been sin indeed. *Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard?* (p) Wast thou not early taught the will of God, in thine infant years? Hast thou not since received repeated lessons, by which it has been inculcated again and again, in public, and in private, by preaching and reading the word of God? Nay, hath not thy duty been, in some instances, so plain, that even without any instruction at all, thine own reason might easily have inferred it? And hast thou not also been warned of the consequences of disobedience? Hast thou not *known the righteous judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death?* [q] Yet thou hast, perhaps, *not only done the same, but hast taken pleasure in those that do them*; hast chosen them for thy most intimate friends and companions; so as thereby to
strengthen,

(n) Hof. viii. 12.

(o) Jam. iv. 17,

(p) Isai. xl. 28.

(q) Rom. i. 32.

strengthen, by the force of example and converse, the hands of each other in your iniquities.

§. 8. Nay more, if divine love and mercy be any aggravation of the sins committed against it, thy crimes, O sinner, are heinously aggravated. Must thou not acknowledge it, *O foolish creature, and unwise?* Hast thou not been *nourished and brought up by him as his child, and yet hast rebelled against him?* (r) Did not God take you out of the womb? (s) Did he not watch over you in your infant days, and guard you from a multitude of dangers, which the most careful parent or nurse could not have observed, or warded off? Has he not given you your rational powers? and is it not by him you have been favoured with every opportunity of improving them? Has he not every day supplied your wants, with an unwearied liberality; and added, with respect to many, who will read this, the delicacies of life, to its necessary supports? Has he not heard your cry when trouble came upon you; (t) and frequently appeared for your deliverance, when in the distresses of nature you have called upon him for help? Has he not rescued you from ruin, when it seemed just ready to swallow you up; and healed your diseases, when it seemed to all about you, that *the residue of your days was cut off in the midst?* (u) Or if it have not been so, is not this long continued and uninterrupted health, which you have enjoyed for so many years, to be acknowledged as an equivalent obligation? Look round upon all your possessions, and say, what one thing have you in the world, which his goodness did not give you, and which it hath not thus far preserved to you? And to all this, the kind notices of his will which he hath sent you; the tender exhortations which he hath used with you, to bring you to a wiser and a better temper; and the discoveries and gracious invitations of his gospel, which you have heard, and which you have despised: And then say, whether your rebellion has not been aggravated by the vilest ingratitude, and whether that aggravation can be accounted small?

§. 9. Again, if it be any *aggravation of sin* to be committed against conscience, thy crimes, O sinner have been so aggravated.

(r) Isai. i. 2. (s) Psal. xxii. 9. (t) Job xxvii. 9.
 (u) Psal. cii. 24. Isai. xxxviii. 10.

aggravated. Consult the records of it; and then dispute the fact if you can. *There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the almighty giveth him understanding;* (w) and that understanding will act, and a secret conviction of being accountable to its maker and preserver, is inseparable from the actings of it. It is easy to object to human remonstrances, and to give things false colourings before men: But the heart often condemns, while the tongue excuses. Have you not often found it so? Has not conscience remonstrated against your past conduct, and have not these remonstrances been very painful too? I have been assured by a gentleman of undoubted credit, that when he was in the pursuit of all the gayest sensualities of life, and was reckoned one of the happiest of mankind, he has seen *a dog* come into the room where he was among his merry companions, and has groaned inwardly, and said, "O that I had been *that dog!*" And hast thou, sinner, felt nothing like this? Has *thy conscience* been so *stupified*, so *seared with a hot iron*, (x) that he has never cried out of any of the violences which have been done it? Has it never warned thee of the fatal consequences of what thou hast done in opposition to it? These warnings are, in effect, *the voice of God*; they are the admonitions which he gave thee by his vicegerent in thy breast. And when *his sentence for thy evil works* is executed upon thee in everlasting death, thou shalt hear that voice speaking to thee again, in a louder tone, and a severer accent than before: And thou shalt be tormented with its *upbraidings* through eternity, because thou wouldst not, in *time*, hearken to its *admonitions*.

§. 10. Let me add further, if it be any *aggravation*, that sin has been committed *after God has been moving by his spirit* on the mind, surely your sin has been attended with that aggravation too. Under the *Mosaic dispensation*, dark and imperfect as it was, *the spirit strove with the Jews*; else *Stephen* could not have charged it upon them, that, through all their generations, *they had always resisted*. (y) Now surely we may much more reasonably apprehend, that he strives with sinners under the gospel, and have you never experienced any thing of this kind, even when there has been

been no external circumstance to awaken you, nor any pious teacher near you? Have you never perceived some secret impulse upon your mind, leading you to think of religion, urging you to an immediate consideration of it, sweetly inviting you to make trial of it, and warning you that you would lament this stupid neglect? O sinner, why were not these happy motions attended to? Why did you not, as it were, spread out all the sails of your soul, to catch that heavenly, that favourable breeze? But you have carelessly neglected it: You have overborne these kind influences: How reasonably then might *the sentence have gone forth* in righteous displeasure. *My spirit shall no more strive?* (2) And indeed, who can say, that it is not *already gone forth*? If you feel no secret agitation of mind, no remorse, no awakening, while you read such a remonstrance as this, there will be room, great room to suspect it.

§. 11. There is indeed *one aggravation more*, which may not attend your guilt; I mean, that of being committed *against solemn covenant-engagements*: A circumstance, which has lain heavy on the consciences of many, who, perhaps, in the main series of their lives, have served God with great integrity. But let me call you to think, *to what is this owing?* Is it not, that you have never personally made any solemn profession of devoting yourself to God at all? have never done any thing, which has appeared to your own apprehension an action by which you made a covenant with him; though you have heard so much of his covenant, though you have been so solemnly and so tenderly invited into it? And in this view, how monstrous must this circumstance appear, which at first was mentioned as some alleviation of guilt? Yet I must add, that you are not, perhaps, altogether so free from guilt on this head, as you may at first imagine. I will not insist on the covenant, which your parents made in your name, when they devoted you to God in *baptism*; though it is really a weighty matter, and by calling yourself *a christian* you have professed to own and avow what they then did. But I would remind you, of what may have been more personal and express. Has your heart been, even from
your

your youth, hardened to so uncommon a degree, that you have never cried to God in any season of danger and difficulty? And did you never mingle vows with those cries? Did you never promise, that if God would hear and help you in that hour of extremity, you would forsake your sins, and serve him as long as you lived? He heard and helped you, or you had not been reading these lines; and, by such deliverances, did, as it were, bind down your vows upon you; and therefore your guilt in the violation of them remains before him, though you are stupid enough to forget them. Nothing is forgotten, nothing is overlooked by him; and the day will come when the record shall be laid *before you too*.

§. 12. And now, O sinner, think seriously with thyself *what defence* thou wilt make to all this! Prepare thine apology; call thy witnesses; make thine appeal, from him whom thou hast thus offended, to some superior judge, if such there be. Alas, those apologies are so weak and vain, that one of thy fellow-worms may easily detect and confound them; as I will endeavour presently to shew thee. But thy foreboding conscience already knows the issue. Thou art *convicted*; convicted of the most aggravated offences. Thou *hast not humbled thine heart, but lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven*; [a] and *thy sentence shall come forth from his presence*. [b] Thou hast violated his known law; thou hast *despised and abused* his numberless mercies; thou hast *affronted conscience* his vicegerent in thy soul; thou hast *resisted and grieved the spirit*; thou hast *trifled with him* in all thy pretended submission; and in one word, and that his own, *thou hast done evil things as thou couldst*. [c] Thousands are, no doubt, already in hell, whose guilt never equalled thine; and it is astonishing, that God has spared thee to read this representation of the case, or to make any pause upon it. O, waste not so precious a moment, but enter, as attentively, and as humbly as thou canst, into those reflections which suit a case so lamentable, and so terrible as thine!

G

The

[a] Dan. v. 22, 23. [b] Psal. xvii. 2. [c] Jer. iii. 5.

The CONFESSION of a sinner, convinced in general of his guilt.

“ O God ! thou *injured sovereign*, thou all penetrating and almighty judge ! What shall I say to this charge ! Shall I pretend, I am wronged by it : and stand on the defence in thy presence ? I dare not do it ; for *thou knowest my foolishness, and none of my sins are hid from thee.* [d] My conscience tells me, that a denial of my crimes would only increase them, and add new fuel to the fire of thy deserved wrath. *If I justify myself, mine own mouth will condemn me ? if I say, I am perfect, it will also prove me perverse.* [e] For *innumerable evils have compassed me about : Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up : They are, as I have been told in thy name, more than the hairs of my head ; and therefore my heart faileth me.* [f] I am more guilty, than it is possible for another to declare or represent. *My heart speaks more, than any other accuser. And thou, O Lord, art much greater than my heart, and knowest all things.* [g]

“ What has my life been, but a course of rebellion against thee ? It is not this, or that particular action alone, I have to lament. Nothing has been right, in its principles, and views, and ends. *My whole soul has been disordered.* All my thoughts, my affections, my desires, my pursuits, have been wretchedly alienated from thee. I have acted, as if I had hated thee, who art infinitely the loveliest of all beings ; as if I had been contriving, how I might tempt thee to the uttermost, and weary out thy patience, marvellous as it is. *My actions have been evil ; my words yet more evil than they ; and O blessed God, my heart how much more corrupt than either !* What an inexhausted *fountain of sin* has there been in it ? *A fountain of original corruption*, which mingled its bitter streams with the days of early childhood ; and which, alas, flows on even to this day, beyond what *actions, or words* could express. I see this to have been the case, with regard to what I can particularly survey. But O, how many months, and years, have I forgotten ? Concerning which I only know this in the general, that they are much like
those

[d] Pſal. lxi. 5.

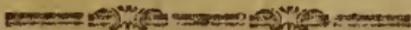
[e] Job ix. 20.

[f] Pſal. xl. 12.

[g] 1 John iii. 20.

those I can remember ; except it be, that I have been growing *worse and worse*, and provoking thy patience more and more, though every new exercise of it was more and more wonderful.

“ And how am I astonished, that thy forbearance is still continued ! It is, *because thou art God, and not man.* [h] Had I, a sinful worm, been thus injured, I could not have endured it. Had I been a prince, I had long since done justice on any rebel, whose crimes had borne but a distant resemblance to mine ; had I been a parent, I had long since cast off the ungrateful child, who had made me such a return, as I have all my life long been making to thee, O thou *father of my spirit !* The flame of natural affection would have been extinguished ; and his sight, and his very name, would have become hateful to me. Why then, O Lord, am I not *cast out from thy presence ?* [i] Why am I not sealed up under an irreversibile sentence of destruction ! That I live, I owe to thine indulgence. But O ! if there be yet any way of deliverance, if there be yet any hope for so guilty a creature, may it be opened upon me by thy gospel, and thy grace ! And if any farther alarm, humiliation, and terror, be necessary to my security and salvation, may I meet them, and bear them all ! *Wound* mine heart, O Lord, so that thou wilt but afterwards *heal it ;* and *break it in pieces,* if thou wilt but at length condescend to *bind it up !*”



CHAP. V.

THE SINNER STRIPPED OF HIS VAIN PLEAS.

The vanity of those pleas, which sinners may secretly confide in, so apparent, that they will be ashamed at last to mention them before God. §. 1. 2. Such as (1.) That they descended from pious parents. §. 3. (2.) That they had attended to the speculative part of religion. §. 4. (3.) That they had entertain-

ed

[h] Hof. x. 9.

[i] Jer. lii. 3.

ed sound notions. §. 5. (4.) That they had expressed a zealous regard to religion, and attended the outward forms of worship with those they apprehended the purest Churches. §. 6, 7. (5.) That they had been free from gross immoralities. §. 8. [6.] That they did not think the consequence of neglecting religion would have been so fatal. §. 9. [7.] That they could not do otherwise than they did. §. 10. Conclusion, §. 11. with the meditation of a convinced sinner, giving up his vain pleas before God.

§. 1. **M**Y last discourse left the sinner in a very alarming, and a very pitiable circumstance; a criminal convicted at the bar of God, disarmed of all pretences to perfect innocence and sinless obedience, and consequently obnoxious to the sentence of a holy law, which can make no allowance for any transgression, no, not for the least; but pronounces death, and a curse, against every act of disobedience: How much more then against those numberless and aggravated acts of rebellion, of which, O sinner, thy conscience hath condemned thee before God? I would hope, some of my readers will ingenuously fall under the conviction, and not think of making any apology: For sure I am, that humbly to plead guilty at the divine bar, is the most decent, and, all things considered, the most prudent thing that can be done in such an unhappy circumstance. Yet I know the treachery, and the self-flattery, of a sinful and corrupted heart. I know what *excuses* it makes, and how, when it is driven from one refuge, it flies to another, to fortify itself against full conviction, and to persuade, not merely another, but itself, "that if it has been in some instances to blame, it is not quite so criminal as was represented: That there are at least considerations that plead in its favour, which, if they cannot justify, will in some degree excuse." A secret *reserve* of this kind, sometimes, perhaps, scarce formed into a distinct reflection, breaks the force of conviction, and often prevents that deep humiliation before God, which is the happiest token of approaching deliverance. I will therefore examine into some of these particulars; and for that purpose would seriously ask thee, O sinner, what thou

thou hast to offer *in arrest of judgment*? What *plea* thou canst urge *for thyself*, why *the sentence of God* should not go *forth against thee*, and why thou shouldst not fall into the hands of his justice?

§. 2. But this I must premise, that the question is not, how thou wouldst answer to me, a weak sinful worm like thyself, who am shortly to stand with thee at the same bar: (*The Lord grant, that I may find mercy of the Lord in that day!*) [a] But, what thou wilt reply to thy judge? What couldst thou plead, if thou wast now actually before his tribunal; where to multiply vain words, and to frame idle apologies, would be but to increase thy guilt and provocation? Surely the very thought of his presence must supersede a thousand of those trifling excuses, which now sometimes impose on *a generation that are pure in their own eyes*, though they *are not washed from their filthiness*; [b] or, while they are conscious of their own impurities *trust in words that cannot profit*, [c] and *lean upon broken reeds*. [d]

§. 3. You will not, to be sure, in such a circumstance, plead “that you are *descended from pious parents*.” That was indeed your privilege; and woe be to you that you have abused it, and *forsaken the God of your fathers*, [e] *Ismael* was immediately descended from *Abraham the friend of God*; and *Esau* was the son of *Isaac*, who was born according to the promise: Yet you know, they were both cut off from the blessing, to which they apprehended they had a kind of hereditary claim. You may remember, that our Lord does not only speak of one, who could call *Abraham father*, who was *tormented in flames*; [f] but expressly declares, that *many of the children of the kingdom shall be shut out of it*; and when others come from the most distant parts *to sit down in it*, shall be distinguished from their companions in misery, only by louder accents of *lamentation*, and more furious *gnashing of the teeth*. [g]

§. 4. Nor will you then presume to plead, “that you had exercised your thoughts about the speculative parts of religion;” for to what end can this serve, but to increase

g

your

[a] 2 Tim. i. 18. [b] Prov. xxx. 12. [c] Jer. vii. 8.

[d] Isai. xxxvi. 6. [e] 2 Chron. vii. 22. [f] Luke xvi. 24.

[g] Matt. viii. 11, 12.

your condemnation? Since you have broken God's law, since you have contradicted the most obvious and apparent obligations of religion, to have enquired into it, and argued upon it, is a circumstance that proves your guilt more audacious. What? did you think religion was merely an exercise of men's wit, and the amusement of their curiosity? If you argued about it, on the principles of common sense, you must have judged and proved it to be a practical thing; and if it was so, why did not you practise accordingly? You knew the particular branches of it: why then did you not attend to every one of them? To have pleaded an unavoidable ignorance, would have been the happiest plea that could have remained for you: Nay, an actual, though faulty ignorance, would have been some little allay of your guilt. But if, by your own confession, you have *known your master's will, and have not done it*, you bear witness against yourself, that you deserve *to be beaten with many stripes*. [h]

§. 5. Nor yet again, will it suffice to say, "that you have had right notions, both of the doctrines, and the precepts of religion." Your advantage for practising it was therefore the greater: But understanding, and acting right, can never go for the same thing, in the judgment of God, or of man. In *believing there is one God*, you have *done well*; but the *devils also believe, and tremble*. [i] In *acknowledging Christ to be the son of God, and the holy one*, you have *done well* too; but you know *the unclean spirits* made this very orthodox confession, [k] and yet they are *reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness unto the judgment of the great day*. [l] And will you place any secret confidence in that which might be pleaded by the infernal spirits, as well as by you?

§. 6. But perhaps you may think of pleading "that you have actually done something in religion." Having judged what faith was the soundest, and what worship the purest, you entered yourselves into those societies where such articles of faith was professed, and such forms of worship were practised; and among these you have signalized yourselves, by the exactness of your attendance, by

[h] Luke xii. 47. [i] Jam. ii. 19. [k] Luke iv. 34, 41.
[l] Jud. ver. 6.

the zeal with which you have espoused their cause, and by the earnestness with which you have contended for such principles and practices."—O sinner, I much fear, that this zeal of thine, about the circumstantial of religion, will swell thine account, rather than be allowed in abatement of it. He, that searches thine heart, knows, from whence it arose, and how far it extended. Perhaps he sees, that it was all hypocrisy; an artful veil, under which thou wast carrying on thy mean designs for this world; while the sacred names of God and religion were profaned and prostituted in the basest manner; and if so thou art cursed with a distinguished curse, for so daring an insult on the divine omniscience, as well as justice. Or perhaps the earnestness with which you have been *contending for the faith* and worship, *which was once delivered to the saints*, [m] or which it is possible you may rashly have concluded to be that, might be mere pride and bitterness of spirit: And all the zeal you have expressed might possibly arise from a confidence in your own judgment, from an impatience of contradiction, or from a secret malignity of spirit which delighted itself in condemning, and even in worrying others; yea, which (if I may be allowed the expression,) fiercely preyed upon religion, as the tyger upon the lamb, to turn it into a nature most contrary to its own. And shall this screen you before the great tribunal? Shall it not rather awaken the displeasure, it is pleaded to avert?

§. 7. But say, that this zeal for notions and forms has been ever so well intended, and, so far as it has gone, ever so well conducted too; what will that avail towards vindicating thee in so many instances of negligence and disobedience as are recorded against thee in the book of God's remembrance? Were the revealed doctrines of the gospel to be earnestly maintained, (as indeed they ought) and was the great practical purpose for which they were revealed to be forgot? Was the very *mint*, and *annise*, and *cummin* to be tithed, and were the *weightier matters of the law* to be omitted; [n] even that *love to God*, which is its *first and great command*? [o] O how wilt thou be able to vindicate even the *justest sentence* thou hast passed on others for their

[m] Jud. ver. 3. [n] Mat. xxiii. 23. [o] Mat. xxii. 38.

their infidelity, or for their disobedience, without being *condemned out of thine own mouth!* [p]

§. 8. Will you then plead “ your fair moral character, your works of righteousness and of mercy ?” Had your obedience to the law of God been complete, the plea might be allowed, as important and valid. But I have supposed and proved above, that conscience testifies to the contrary ; and you will not now dare to contradict it. I add farther, had these works of yours, which you now urge proceeded from a sincere love to God, and a genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you would not have thought of pleading them, any otherwise than as an evidence of your interest in the gospel-covenant, and in the blessings of it, procured by the righteousness and blood of the redeemer : And that faith, had it been sincere, would have been attended with such deep humility, and with such solemn apprehensions of the divine holiness and glory, that instead of pleading any works of your own before God, you would rather have implored his pardon, for the mixture of sinful imperfection attending the very best of them. Now, as you are a stranger to this humbling and sanctifying principle, (which here, in this address, I suppose my reader to be,) it is absolutely necessary you should be plainly and faithfully told, that neither sobriety, nor honesty, nor humanity will justify you before the tribunal of God, when he *lays judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet,* (q) and examines all your actions, and all your thoughts, with the strictest severity. You have not been a drunkard, an adulterer, or a robber. So far it is well. You stand before a righteous God, who will do you ample justice ; and therefore will not condemn you for drunkenness, adultery, or robbery. But you have forgotten him your parent, and your benefactor ; you have *cast off fear and restrained prayer before him ;* (r) you have despised the blood of his son, and all the immortal blessings that he purchased with it. For this therefore you are judged, and condemned. And as for any thing that has looked like virtue and humanity in your temper and conduct, the exercise of it has in a great measure been its own reward, if there were any thing more

than

(p) Luke xix. 22. (q) Isai. xxviii. 17. (r) Job xv. 4.

than form and artifice in it ; and the various bounties of divine providence to you, amidst all your numberless provocations, have been a thousand times more than an equivalent for such defective and imperfect virtues as these. You remain therefore chargeable with the guilt of a thousand offences, for which you have no excuse, though there are some other instances in which you did not grossly offend. And those good works, in which you have been so ready to trust, will no more vindicate you in his awful presence, than a man's kindness to his poor neighbours would be allowed as a plea, in arrest of judgment, when he stood convicted of high treason against his prince.

§. 9. But you will, perhaps, be ready to say, "you did not expect all this : You did not think the consequences of neglecting religion would have been so fatal." And why did you not think it ? Why did you not *examine* more attentively, and more impartially ? Why did you suffer the pride and folly of your vain heart, to take up with such superficial appearances, and trust the light suggestions of your own prejudiced mind against the express declaration of *the word of God* ? Had you reflected on his character, as the supreme governor of the world, you would have seen the necessity of such a day of retribution, as we are now referring to. Had you regarded the scripture, the divine authority of which you professed to believe, every page might have taught you to expect it. "You did not think of religion." And of what were you thinking, when you forgot, or neglected it ? Had you too much employment of another kind ? Of what kind, I beseech you ? What end, could you propose by any thing else, of equal moment ? Nay, with all your engagements, conscience will tell you, that there have been seasons, when, for want of thought, time and life have been a burden to you : Yet you guarded against thought, as an enemy, and cast up (as it were) an intrenchment of inconsideration around you on every side, as if it had been to defend you from the most dangerous invasion. God knew you were *thoughtless* ; and therefore he sent you *line upon line, and precept upon precept*, (s) in such plain language, that it needed no genius or study to understand it.

(s) Isai. xxviii. 10.

it. He tried you too with afflictions, as well as with mercies, to awaken you out of your fatal lethargy : and yet, when awakened, you would lie down again upon the bed of sloth. And now, pleasing as your dreams might be, *you must lie down in sorrow.* (t) Reflection has at last overtaken you, and must be heard as a tormentor, since it might not be heard as a friend.

§. 10. But some may perhaps imagine, that one important apology is yet unheard, and that there may be room to say, “you were, by the necessity of your nature, impelled to those things which are now charged upon you as crimes ; whereas it was not in your power to have avoided them, in the circumstances in which you are placed.” If this will do any thing, it indeed promises to do much ; so much, that it will amount to nothing. If I were disposed to answer you upon the folly and madness of your own principles, I might say, that the same consideration, which proves it was necessary for you to offend, proves also that it is necessary for God to punish you ; and that indeed, he cannot but do it : And I might farther say, with an excellent writer of our own age, * “that the same principles, which destroy the *injustice of sins*, destroy the *injustice of punishments* too.” But if you cannot admit this, if you should still reply in spight of principle, that it must be unjust to punish you for an action utterly and absolutely unavoidable ; I really think, you would answer right. But in that answer you would contradict your own scheme, (as I observed above ;) and I leave your conscience to judge what sort of a scheme that must be, which would make *all kinds of punishment unjust* : For the argument will on the whole be the same, whether with regard to *human punishment* or *divine*. It is a scheme full of confusion and horror. You would not, I am sure, take it from a servant, who had robbed you, and then fired your house : You would never inwardly believe, that he could not have helped it, or think, that he had fairly excused himself by such a plea. And I am persuaded, you would be so far from presuming to offer it to God at the great day, that you would not venture to turn it into a
prayer

(t) Isai. l. 11.

* *Bp. of Bristol's Analogy &c. pag. 135. Octavo Edit.*

prayer even now. Imagine, that you saw a malefactor dying, with such words as these in his mouth : “ O God, it is true, I did indeed rob and murder my fellow creatures ; but thou knowest, that, as my circumstances were ordered, I could not do otherwise : My will was irresistibly determined by the motives which thou didst set before me ; and I could as well have shaken the foundations of the earth, or darken the sun in the firmament as have resisted the impulse which bore me on.” I put it to your conscience, whether you would not look on such a speech as this with detestation, as one enormity added to another. Yet if the excuse would have any weight in your mouth, it would have equal weight in his ; or would be equally applicable to any the most shocking occasion. But indeed it is so contrary to the plainest principles of common reason, that I can hardly persuade myself, any one could seriously and thoroughly believe it ; and should imagine my time very ill employed here, if I were to set myself to combat those pretences to argument, by which the wantonness of human wit has attempted to varnish it over.

§. 11. You see then, on the whole, the vanity of all your pleas, and how easily the most plausible of them might be silenced, by a mortal man, like yourself : How much more then by him, who *searches all hearts*, and can, in a moment, flash in upon the conscience a most powerful and irresistible conviction ? What then can you do, while you stand convicted in the presence of God ? What should you do, but *hold your peace* under an inward sense of your inexcusable guilt, and prepare yourself to hear the sentence which his law pronounces against you ? You must feel the execution of it, if the gospel does not at length deliver you ; and you must feel something of the terror of it, before you can be excited to seek to that gospel for deliverance.

The MEDITATION of a Convinced Sinner, giving up his vain pleas before God.

“ DEPLORABLE condition, to which I am indeed reduced ! *I have sinned ; and what shall I say unto thee, O thou preserver of men ?* (u) What shall I dare to say ? Fool that I was, to amuse myself with such trifling excuses as these,

(u) Job vii. 20.

these,

these, and to imagine, they could have any weight in thy tremendous presence; or that I should be able so much as to mention them there! I cannot presume to do it, I am silent and confounded. My hopes, alas, are slain; and my soul itself is ready to die too; so far as an immortal soul can die: And I am almost ready to say, *O that it could die entirely!* I am indeed a criminal in the hand of justice, quite disarmed, and stripped of the weapons in which I trusted. Dissimulation can only add provocation to provocation. I will therefore plainly and freely own it. I have acted, as if I *thought* God was altogether such a one as myself: But he hath said, *I will reprove thee; I will set thy sins in order before thine eyes,* (x) will marshal them in battle array. And O, what a terrible kind of host do they appear? and how do they surround me beyond all possibility of escape! O my soul, they have, as it were, taken thee prisoner; and they are bearing thee away to the divine tribunal.

“Thou must appear before it! Thou must see the awful *eternal judge*, who *tries the very reins*; (y) and who needs no other evidence, for he has *himself been witness* (z) to all thy rebellion. Thou must see him, O my soul, sitting in judgment upon thee: and when he is *strict to mark iniquity*, (a) how wilt thou *answer him for one of a thousand!* (b) And if thou canst not answer him, in what language will he *speak to thee!* Lord, as things at present stand, I can expect no other language than that of condemnation. And what a condemnation is it! Let me reflect upon it! Let me read my sentence, before I hear it finally and irreversibly passed! I know, he has recorded it in his word; and I know in the general, that the representation is made with a gracious design. I know, that he would have us alarmed, that we may not be destroyed. Speak to me therefore, O God, while thou speakest not for the last time, and in circumstances when thou wilt hear me no more. Speak in the language of effectual terror, so that it be not to speak to me in final despair. And let *thy word*, however painful in its operation, be *quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.* (c) Let me not vainly
flatter

(x) Psal. l. 21.

(y) Jer. xvii. 10.

(z) Jer. xxix. 23.

(a) Psal. cxxx. 3.

(b) Job ix. 3.

(c) Heb. iv. 12.

flatter myself: Let me not be left a wretched prey to those who would *prophecy smooth things to me*, (d) till I am sealed up under wrath, and feel thy justice piercing my soul, and *the poison of thine arrows drinking up all my spirits*. (e)

“ Before I enter upon *the particular view*, I know in the general, that *it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. (f) O thou living God, in one sense I am *already fallen into thine hands*. I am become obnoxious to thy displeasure, justly obnoxious to it; and whatever thy sentence may be, when it *comes forth from thy presence*, (g) I must condemn myself, and justify thee. Thou canst not treat me with more severity, than *mine iniquities have deserved*: And how bitter soever *that cup of trembling* may be, (h) which thou shalt appoint for me, I give judgment against myself, that I deserve *to wring out the very dregs of it*.” (i)



CHAP. VI.

THE SINNER SENTENCED.

The sinner called upon to hear his sentence. §. 1, 2. God's law does now in general pronounce a curse: §. 3. It pronounces death, §. 4. and being turned into hell. §. 5. The judgment day shall come. §. 6. The solemnity of that grand process described, according to scriptural representations of it. §. 7, 8. with a particular illustration of the sentence, depart accursed, &c. §. 9. The execution will certainly and immediately follow. §. 10. The sinner warned to prepare for enduring it. §. 11. The reflection of a sinner struck with the terror of this sentence.

§. 1. **H**EAR, O sinner, and I will speak (a) yet once more, as *in the name of God*, of God, thine almighty judge;

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| (d) Isai. xxx. 10. | (e) Job vi. 4. | (f) Heb. x. 31. |
| (g) Psal. xvii. 2. | (h) Isai. li. 17. | (i) Psal. lxxv. 8. |
| (a) Job xlii. 4. | | |

judge ; who, if thou dost ^{not} attend to his servants, will e'er long speak unto thee in a more immediate manner, with an energy and terror which thou shalt not be able to resist.

§. 2. Thou hast been *convicted*, as in his presence. Thy *pleas* have been *over-ruled* ; or rather, they have been silenced. It appears before God, it appears to thine own conscience, that thou hast nothing more to offer in *arrest of judgment* ; therefore *hear thy sentence*, and summon up, if thou canst, all the powers of thy soul to bear the execution of it. *It is indeed a very small thing to be judged by man's judgment ; but he that now judgeth thee is the Lord.* (b) Hear therefore, and tremble, while I tell thee, *how he will speak to thee* ; or rather, while I shew thee, from express scripture, how he doth *even now speak* ; and what is *the authentic and recorded sentence of his word* ; even of his word, who hath said ; *heaven and earth shall pass away ; but not one tittle of my word shall ever pass away.* [c]

§. 3. The law of God speaks, not to thee alone, Oh sinner, nor to thee by any particular address ; but, in a most universal language, it speaks to all transgressors, and levels its terrors against all offences ; great or small, without any exception. And this is its language : *Cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* [d] This is its voice to the whole world ; and this it speaks to thee. Its awful contents are thy personal concern, Oh reader ; and thy conscience knows it. Far from *continuing in all things that are written therein to do them*, thou canst not but be sensible, *that innumerable evils have compassed thee about.* [e] It is then manifest, *thou art the man*, whom it conderns ; thou art even now *cursed with a curse*, as God emphatically speaks ; [f] with *the curse of the most high God* : Yea, *all the curses which are written in the book of the law, are pointed against thee.* [g] God may righteously execute any of them upon thee in a moment ; and though thou at present feelest none of them, yet, if infinite mercy doth not prevent, it is but a little while, and they will *come into thy bowels*
like

[b] 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4. [c] Mat. v. 18. [d] Gal. iii. 10.

[e] Psal. xl. 12. [f] Mal. iii. 9. [g] Deut. xxix. 20.

like water, till thou art burst asunder with them, and shall penetrate like oil into thy bones. [h]

§. 4. Thus saith the Lord, *the soul that sinneth shall die.* [i] But thou *hast sinned*, and therefore thou art under a sentence of death. And, Oh unhappy creature, *of what a death!* What will the end of these things be? That the agonies of dissolving nature shall seize thee? That thy soul shall be torn away from thy languishing body, and thou return to the dust from whence thou wast taken? [k] This is indeed *one awful effect of sin.* In these affecting characters has God, through all nations and all ages of men, written the awful register and memorial of his holy abhorrence of it, and righteous displeasure against it. But alas, all this solemn pomp and horror of dying is but the opening of the dreadful scene. It is but a rough kind of stroke, by which the fetters are knocked off, when the criminal is led out to torture and execution.

§. 5. Thus saith the Lord, *the wicked shall be turned into hell, even all the nations that forget God.* [l] Though there be *whole nations* of them, their multitudes and their power shall be no defence to them. They shall be *driven into hell* together; into that *flaming prison*, which divine vengeance hath prepared; into *tophet* which is ordained of old, even for royal sinners as well as for others, so little can any human distinction protect! *He hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone shall kindle it,* [m] and the flaming torrent shall flow in upon it so fast, that it shall be turned into a sea of liquid fire; or, as the scripture also expresses it, *a lake burning with fire and brimstone for ever and ever.* [n] *This is the second death;* and the death, to which thou, Oh sinner, by the word of God art doomed.

§. 6. And shall *this sentence* stand upon record in vain? Shall *the law* speak it, and *the gospel* speak it? And shall it never be pronounced more audibly? and will God never require and execute the punishment? He will Oh, sinner, require it; and he will execute it; though he may seem for a while to delay. For well dost thou know, that *he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the whole world*

in

[h] Psal. cix. 18. [i] Ezek. xviii. 4. [k] Psal. civ. 29.

[l] Psal. ix. 17. [m] Isai. xxx. 33. [n] Rev. xxi. 8.

in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, of which he has given us assurance in having raised him from the dead. [o] And when God judgeth the world, O reader, whoever thou art, he will judge thee. And while I remind thee of it, I would also remember, that he will judge me. And knowing the terror of the Lord, [p] that I may deliver my own soul, [q] I would with all plainness and sincerity labour to deliver thine.

§. 7. I therefore repeat the solemn warning: Thou, O sinner, shalt stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. [r] Thou shalt see that pompous appearance; the description of which is grown so familiar to thee, that the repetition of it makes no impression on thy mind. But surely, stupid as thou now art, the shrill trumpet of the arch-angel shall shake thy very soul: And if nothing else can awaken and alarm thee, the convulsions and flames of a dissolving world shall do it.

§. 8. Dost thou really think, that the intent of Christ's final appearance is only to recover his people from the grave, and to raise them to glory and happiness? Whatever assurance thou hast, that there shall be a resurrection of the just; thou hast the same, that there shall also be a resurrection of the unjust; [s] that he shall separate the rising dead one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, [t] with equal certainty, and with infinitely greater ease. Or can you imagine, that he will only make an example of some flagrant and notorious sinners, when it is said, that all the dead, both small and great, shall stand before God; [u] and that even he, who knew not his master's will, and consequently seems of all others to have had the fairest excuse for his omission to obey it, yet even he for that very omission, shall be beaten, though with fewer stripes? [w] Or can you think, that a sentence to be delivered with so much pomp and majesty, a sentence, by which the righteous judgment of God is to be revealed, and to have its most conspicuous and final triumph, will be inconsiderable; or the punishment to which it shall consign the sinner, be slight or tolerable? There would have

[o] Acts xvii. 31. [p] 2 Cor. v. 11. [q] Ezek. xxxiii. 9.

[r] 2 Cor. v. 10. [s] Acts xxiv. 15. [t] Matt. xxv. 32.

[u] Rev. xx. 12. [w] Luke xii. 48.

have been little reason to apprehend that, even if we had been left barely to our own conjectures, what that sentence should be. But this is far from being the case: *Our Lord Jesus Christ*, in his infinite condescension and compassion, has been pleased to give us *a copy of the sentence*, and no doubt, *a most exact copy*; and the words which contain it, are worthy of being inscribed on every heart. *The King*, amidst all the splendor and dignity in which he shall then appear, *shall say unto those on his right-hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!* [x] And *where the word of a king is, there is power*, indeed. [y] And these words have *a power*, which may justly animate the heart of the humble christian, under the most over-whelming sorrow, and may fill him with *joy unspeakable and full of glory*. [z] To be pronounced *the blessed of the Lord!* to be called to *a kingdom!* to the immediate and everlasting *inheritance of it!* and of *such a kingdom!* so well *prepared*, so glorious, so compleat, so exquisitely fitted for the delight and entertainment of such creatures so formed and so renewed, that it shall appear worthy the eternal counsels of God to have contrived it, worthy his eternal love to have prepared it, and to have delighted itself with the views of bestowing it upon his people: Behold, *a blessed hope* indeed! *a lively glorious hope*, to which we are *begotten again by the resurrection of Christ from the dead*, [a] and formed by the sanctifying influence of the spirit of God upon our minds. But it is a hope, from which thou, O sinner, art at present excluded; and methinks, that might be grievous: To reflect, “these gracious words shall Christ speak to some; to multitudes, but not to me: On me there is no blessedness pronounced: For me there is no kingdom prepared.” But is that all? Alas, sinner, our Lord hath given thee a dreadful counterpart to this. He has told us, what he will *say to thee*, if thou continuest what thou art; *to thee*, and *all the nations* of the impenitent and unbelieving world, be they ever so numerous, be the rank of particular criminals ever so great. He shall say it to *the kings of the earth*, who have been rebels against him, to

h

the

[x] Matt. xxv. 34. [y] Eccles. viii. 4. [z] 1 Pet. i. 8.
[a] 1 Pet. i. 3.

the great and rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, as well as to every bondman, and every freeman, of inferior rank; [b] DEPART FROM ME, ACCURSED, INTO EVERLASTING FIRE, PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS. [c] O pause upon these weighty words, that thou mayest enter into something of the importance of them!

§. 9. He will say, DEPART; you shall be *driven from his presence*, with disgrace and infamy: FROM HLM, the source of life and blessedness, in a nearness to whom all the inhabitants of heaven continually rejoice: You shall depart ACCURSED; you have broken God's law, and its curse falls upon you; and you are, and shall be, under that curse, that abiding curse; from that day forward you shall be regarded by God, and all his creatures, as an accursed and abominable thing; as the most detestable, and the most miserable part of the creation. You shall GO INTO FIRE: And O consider, into *what fire!* Is it merely into one fierce blaze, which shall consume you in a moment, though with exquisite pain? that were terrible. But O, such terrors are not to be named with these. *Thine*, sinner, is EVERLASTING FIRE: It is that, which our Lord hath in such awful terms described, as prevailing there, *where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*; and then says it a second time, *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*; and again in wonderful compassion, a third time, *where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*. (d) Nor was it *originally prepared*, or principally intended *for you*: It was PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS; for those first grand rebels, who were immediately upon their fall doomed to it; and since you have taken part with them in their apostacy, you must sink with them into that flaming ruin; and sink so much the deeper, as you have despised a saviour, who was never offered to them. These must be your companions, and your tormentors, with whom you must dwell for ever. And *is it I* that say this? or says not the law, and the gospel, the same? Does not the Lord Jesus Christ expressly say it, who is *the faithful and true witness*, (e)

even

(b) Rev. vi. 15. (c) Matt. xxy. 41. (d) Mark ix. 44, 46, 48. (e) Rev. iii. 14.

even he, who himself is to pronounce the sentence ?

§. 10. And when it is thus pronounced, and pronounced by him, shall it not also be executed ? Who could imagine the contrary ? who could imagine, there should be all this pompous declaration, to fill the mind only with vain terror ; and that this sentence should vanish into smoke ? You may easily apprehend, that this would be a greater reproach to the divine administration, than if sentence were never to be passed. And therefore, we might easily have inferred the execution of it, from the process of the preceding judgment. But lest the treacherous heart of a sinner should deceive him with so vain a hope the assurance of that execution is immediately added in very memorable terms, it shall be done, it shall immediately be done. *Then, on that very day, while the sound of it is yet in their ears, the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment :* (f) And thou, O reader, whoever thou art, being found in their number, *shall go away with them ;* shalt be driven on, among all these wretched multitudes, and plunged with them into eternal ruin. The wide gates of hell shall be opened to receive thee ; they shall be shut against thee *for ever* to inclose thee ; and be fast barred, by the almighty hand of divine justice, to prevent all hope, all possibility of escape for ever.

§. 11. And now, *prepare thyself to meet the Lord thy God :* (g) Summon up all the resolution of thy mind, to endure such a sentence, such an execution as this : For *he will not meet thee as a man ;* (h) whose heart may sometimes fail him, when about to exert a needful act of severity, so that compassion may prevail against reason and justice. No, *he will meet thee as a God,* whose schemes and purposes are all immoveable as his throne, I therefore testify to thee in his name, this day, that *if God be true,* he will thus speak ; and that if he be able, he will thus act. And, on supposition of thy continuance in thine impenitence and unbelief, thou art brought into this miserable case ; that *if God be not* either false or weak, thou art undone, thou art eternally undone.

The

(f) Matt. xxv. 46.

(g) Amos iv. 12.

(h) Isai. xlvii. 3.

The REFLECTION of a sinner, struck with the terror of this sentence.

“WRETCH that I am? What shall I do? or whither shall I flee? *I am weighed in the balance, and am found wanting.* (i) This is indeed *my doom*; the doom I am to expect from the mouth of Christ himself; from the mouth of *Him*, that died for the redemption and salvation of men. Dreadful sentence! and so much the more dreadful, when considered in that view? To what shall I look to save me from it? To whom shall I call? Shall I say *to the rocks, fall upon me, and to the hills, cover me?* (k) What should I gain by that? Were I indeed overwhelmed with rocks and mountains, they could not conceal me from the notice of his eye; and his hand could reach me with as much ease there as any where else.

“Wretch indeed that I am! O that I had never been born! Oh that I had never known the dignity and prerogative of the rational nature! Fatal prerogative indeed, that renders me obnoxious to condemnation and wrath! Oh that I had never been instructed in the will of God at all, rather than that being thus instructed, I should have disregarded and transgressed it! Would to God, I had been allied to the meanest of the human race, to them that come nearest to the state of the brutes, rather than that I should have had my lot in *cultivated life*, amidst so many of the improvements of reason, and (dreadful reflection!) amidst so many of the advantages of religion too! and thus to have perverted all to my own destruction!—Oh that God would *take away* this *rational soul*! But alas, it will live forever; will live to *feel the agonies of eternal death*. Why have I seen the beauties and glories of a world like this, to exchange it for that flaming prison! Why have I tasted so many of my Creator’s bounties, to wring out at last the dregs of his wrath! Why have I known the delights of social life and friendly converse, to exchange them for the horrid company of devils and damned spirits in tophet! O *who can dwell with them in devouring flames! who can lie down with them in everlasting, everlasting, everlasting burnings!* (l) But
(i) Dan. v. 27. (k) Luke xxiii. 30. (l) Isai. xxxiii 14.

“ But whom have I to blame in all this, but *myself* ? What have I to accuse, but my own stupid incorrigible folly ? On what is all this terrible ruin to be charged, but on this one fatal cursed cause, that having broken God’s law, I rejected *his gospel* too ?

“ Yet *stay*, Oh my soul, in the midst of all these doleful, foreboding complaints. Can I say, that I have *finally rejected the gospel* ? Am I not to this day under the sound of it ? The sentence is not yet *gone forth against me*, in so determinate a manner as to be utterly irreversible.— Thro’ all this gloomy prospect one ray of hope breaks in, and *it is possible* I may yet be delivered.

“ Reviving thought ! *Rejoice* in it, Oh my soul, though it be *with trembling* ; and turn immediately to that God, who, though provoked by ten thousand offences, has not yet *sworn in his wrath, that thou shalt never* be permitted to hold farther intercourse with him, or to *enter into his rest*. (m)

“ I do then, Oh blessed Lord, prostrate myself in the dust before thee. I own, I am a condemned and miserable creature. But my language is that of the humble *Publican, God be merciful unto me a sinner* ! (n) Some general and confused apprehensions I have of a way, by which I may *possibly escape*. O God, whatever that way is, shew it me I beseech thee ! Point it out so plainly, that I may not be able to mistake it ! And Oh, reconcile my heart to it, be it ever so humbling, be it ever so painful !

“ Surely, Lord, I have much to learn ; but be thou my teacher ! *Stay* for a little thine uplifted hand ; and in thine infinite compassion *delay the stroke*, till I enquire a little farther, how I may finally avoid it !”

(m) Psal. xcvi. 11. (n) Luke xviii. 13.



CHAP. VII.

THE HELPLESS STATE OF THE SINNER UNDER CONDEMNATION.

The sinner urged to consider how he can be saved from this impending

pending ruin. §. 1, 2. (1.) *Not by any thing he can offer.*
 § 3..(2.) *Nor by any thing he can endure.* §. 4. (3.)
Nor by any thing he can do in the course of future duty. §.
 5. (4.) *Nor by any alliance with fellow-sinners, on earth,*
er in hell. §. 6, 8. (5.) *Nor by any interposition, or in-*
tercession of angels or saints in his favour. §. 9. *Hint of*
the only method, to be afterwards more largely explained. Ibid.
The lamentation of a sinner in this miserable condition.

§. 1. **SINNER**, thou hast heard *the sentence of God*, as it stands upon record in his sacred and immutable word. And wilt thou lie down under it in everlasting despair? Wilt thou make no attempt to be delivered from it, when it speaks nothing less than eternal death to thy soul? If a criminal, condemned by human laws, has but the least shadow of hope, that he may possibly escape, he is all attention to it. If there be a friend, who he thinks can help him, with what strong importunity does he intreat the interposition of that friend? And even while he is before the Judge, how difficult is it often to force him away from the bar, while the cry of *mercy, mercy, mercy*, may be heard, though it be never so unseasonable? A mere *possibility* that it may make some impression, makes him eager in it, and unwilling to be silenced and removed.

§. 2. Wilt thou not then, Oh sinner, 'ere yet *execution* is done, that execution which may perhaps be done this very day, wilt thou not cast about in thy thoughts, what measures may be taken for deliverance? Yet what measures can be taken? Consider attentively, for it is an affair of moment. Thy wisdom, thy power, thy eloquence, or thine interest, can never be exerted on a greater occasion. If thou canst *help thyself*, do. If thou hast any secret source of relief, *go not out of thyself* for other assistance. If thou hast *any sacrifice* to offer; if thou hast *any strength* to exert; yea if thou hast any allies on earth, or in the invisible world, who can defend and deliver thee; take thine own way, so that thou mayest but be delivered at all, and we may not see thy ruin. But say, O sinner, in the presence of God, what sacrifice thou wilt present, what strength thou wilt exert, what allies thou wilt have recourse

recourse to, on so urgent, so hopeless an occasion: For hopeless must I indeed pronounce it if such methods are taken.

§. 3. The justice of God is injured: Hast thou any atonement to make to it? If thou wast brought to an enquiry and proposal like that of the awakened sinner, *wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?* (a) Alas, wert thou as great a prince as Solomon himself, and couldst thou indeed purchase such sacrifices as these, there would be no room to mention them. *Lebanon would not be sufficient to burn, nor all the beasts thereof for a burnt offering.* (b) Even under that dispensation, which admitted and required sacrifices in some cases, *the blood of bulls and of goats*, though it exempted the offender from farther temporal punishment, *could not take away sin*, (c) nor prevail by any means to *purge the conscience* in the sight of God. And *that soul*, that had done ought *presumptuously*, was not allowed to bring any *sin-offering* or *trespass-offering* at all, but was condemned to *die without mercy*. (d) Now God and thine own conscience know, that thine offences have not been merely the errors of ignorance and inadvertency, but that thou *hast sinned with an high hand* in repeated aggravated instances, as thou hast acknowledged already.—Shouldst thou add, with the wretched sinner described above, *shall I give my first-born for my transgression; the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* (e) What could the blood of a beloved child do in such a case, but dye thy crimes so much the deeper, and add a yet unknown horror to them? Thou hast offended a being of infinite majesty; and if that offence is to be *expiated by blood*, it must be by *another kind of blood*, than that which flows in the veins of thy children, or in thine own.

§. 4. Wilt thou then suffer thyself, till thou hast made full satisfaction? But where shall that satisfaction be made?—Shall it be by any calamities to be endured in this mortal momentary life? Is the justice of God then est-

teemed

(a) Mic. vi. 6, 7.

(b) Isai. xl. 16.

(c) Heb. x. 4.

(d) Numb. xv. 30.

(e) Mic. vi. 7.

teemed so little a thing, that the sorrows of a few days should suffice to answer its demands?—Or dost thou think of future sufferings in the invisible world? If thou dost, *that is not deliverance*; and with regard to that I may venture to say, when thou hast *made full satisfaction*, thou wilt be *released*: When thou hast *paid the uttermost farthing* of that debt, thy *prison doors* shall be *opened*. In the mean time, thou must *make thy bed in hell*: (f) And O unhappy man, wilt thou lie down there, with a secret hope, that the moment will come, when the rigour of divine justice will not be able to inflict any thing more than thou hast endured, and when thou mayest claim thy discharge as a matter of right? It would indeed be well for thee, if thou could carry down with thee such a hope, false and flattering as it is: But alas thou wilt see things in so just a light, that to have no comfort but this, will be eternal despair. That one word of thy sentence, EVERLASTING FIRE; that one declaration, *the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*; will be sufficient to strike such a thought into black confusion, and to overwhelm thee with hopeless agony and horror.

§. 5. Or do you think that your *future reformation*, and *diligence in duty for the time to come*, will procure your *discharge* from this sentence? Take heed, sinner, what kind of obedience thou thinkest of offering to an holy God. That must be spotless and complete, which his infinite sanctity can approve and accept, if he consider thee in thyself alone: There must be no inconstancy, no forgetfulness, no mixture of sin, attending it. And wilt thou, enfeebled as thou art, by so much original corruption, and so many sinful habits contracted by innumerable actual transgressions, undertake to render such an obedience, and that for all the remainder of thy life? In vain wouldst thou attempt it, even for one day. New guilt would immediately plunge thee into new ruin. But if it did not; if from this moment to the very end of thy life all were as complete obedience as the law of God required from Adam in paradise, would that be sufficient to *cancel past guilt*? Would it discharge an old debt, that thou hadst not contracted a new one? *Offer this to thy neighbor,*
and

(f) Psal. cxxxix. 8.

and see if he will accept it for payment ; and if he will not, wilt thou presume to offer it to thy God !

§. 6. But I will not multiply words on so plain a subject. While I speak thus, time is passing away, death presses on, and judgment is approaching. And what can save thee from these awful scenes, or what can protect thee in them ? Can *the world* save thee ? that vain delusive idol of thy wishes and pursuits, to which thou art sacrificing thine eternal hopes ? Well dost thou know, that it will utterly forsake thee, when thou needest it most ; and that not one of its enjoyments can be carried along with thee into the invisible state : No, not so much as a trifle to remember it by ; if thou couldst desire to remember so inconstant, and so treacherous a friend, as the world has been.

§. 7. And when you are dead, or when you are dying, can your *sinful companions* save you ? Is there any one of them, if he were ever so desirous of doing it, that *can give unto God a ransom for you*, (g) to deliver you from going down to the grave, or from going down to hell ? Alas, you will probably be so sensible of this, that when you lie on the border of the grave, you will be unwilling to see, or to converse with those, that were once your favourite companions. They will afflict you rather than relieve you, even then : How much less can they relieve you before the bar of God, when they are overwhelmed with their own condemnation ?

§. 8. As for *the powers of darkness*, you are sure they will be far from any ability, or inclination to help you. Satan has been watching and labouring for your destruction, and he will triumph in it. But if there could be any thing of an amicable confederacy between you, what would that be, but an association in ruin ? For the *day of judgment of ungodly men*, will also be *the judgment of these rebellious spirits* ; and the *fire* into which, thou, O sinner, *must depart*, is that which was prepared for the devil and his angels. (h)

§. 9. Will *the celestial spirits* then save thee ? will they interpose their power, or their prayers, in thy favour ? An interposition of power, when sentence is gone forth

I

against

(g) Psal. xlix. 7.

(h) Matt. xxv. 41.

against thee, were an act of rebellion against heaven, which these holy and excellent creatures would abhor. And when the final pleasure of the judge is known, instead of interceding in vain for the wretched criminal, they would rather, with ardent zeal for the glory of their Lord, and cordial acquiescence in the determination of his wisdom and justice, *prepare to execute it*. Yea, difficult as it may at present be to conceive it, it is a certain truth, that the *servants of Christ*, who now most tenderly love you, and most affectionately seek your salvation; not excepting those, who are allied to you in the nearest bonds of nature or of friendship; even they shall put their *Amen* to it. Now indeed *their bowels yearn over you*, and *their eye poureth out tears* on your account: Now they expostulate with you, and plead with God for you, if by any means, while yet there is *hope*, you may be *plucked as the fire-brand out of the burning*. (i) But alas, their remonstrances you will not regard; and as for their prayers, what should they ask for you? What but this, that you may see yourselves to be undone? and that, utterly despairing of any help from yourselves, or from any created power, you may lie before God in humility and brokenness of heart; that submitting yourselves to his righteous judgment, and in an *utter renunciation* of all *self-dependance*, and of all *creature-dependance*, you may lift up an humble look towards him, as almost *from the depths of hell*, if peradventure he may have compassion upon you, and may himself direct you to that only method of rescue, which, while things continue as in present circumstances they are, neither earth, nor hell, nor heaven can afford you.

The LAMENTATION of a sinner, in this miserable condition.

“ O DOLEFUL, uncomfortable, helpless state! O wretch that I am, to have reduced myself to it! Poor, empty, miserable, abandoned creature! Where is my pride, and the haughtiness of my heart? Where are my idol deities, *whom have I loved and served, after whom I have walked, and whom I have sought*, (k) whilst I have
been

(i) Amos iv. 11.

(k) Jer. viii. 2.

been multiplying my transgressions against the majesty of heaven? Is there no heart to have compassion upon me? Is there no hand to save me? *Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me, (l) hath seized me!* I feel it pressing me hard, and *what shall I do?* Perhaps they have pity upon me: But alas, how feeble a compassion! Only, if there be *any where* in the whole compass of nature *any help*, tell me *where it may be found!* O point it out; direct me towards it; or rather, confounded and astonished as my mind is, take me by the hand, and lead me to it!

“O ye *ministers of the Lord*, whose office it is to guide and comfort distressed souls, *take pity upon me!* I fear I am a pattern of many other helpless creatures, who have the like need of your assistance. Lay aside your other cares to care for my soul; to care for this precious soul of mine, which lies as it were bleeding to death, (if that expression may be used,) while you perhaps hardly afford me a look; or glancing an eye upon me, *pass over to the other side.* (m) Yet, alas, in a case like mine, what can your interposition avail if it be alone? *If the Lord do not help me, how can ye help me?* (n)

“O *God of the spirits of all flesh*, (o) I lift up mine eyes unto thee, and *cry unto thee as out of the belly of hell.* (p) I cry unto thee at least from the borders of it. Yet while I lie before thee in this infinite distress, I know that thine almighty power and boundless grace can still find out a way for my recovery.

“Thou art *he*, whom I have most of all *injured and affronted*; and yet *from thee alone* must I now *seek redress.* *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight;* (q) so that *thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest*, though thou shouldst this moment adjudge me to eternal misery. And yet I find something that secretly draws me to thee, as if I might find rescue there, where I have deserved the most aggravated destruction. Blessed be God, *I have destroyed myself; but in thee is my help*, (r) if there can be help at all.

“I

(l) Job xix. 21. (m) Luke x. 31. (n) 2 Kings vi. 27.

(o) Numb. xvi. 2. (p) Jonah ii. 2. (q) Psal. li. 4.

(r) Hof. xiii. 9.

“I know in the general, that *thy ways are not as our ways, nor thy thoughts as our thoughts*; but are as high above them, as the heavens are above the earth. (s) *Have mercy therefore upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies!* (t) *O point out the path to the city of refuge! O lead me thyself in the way everlasting!* (u) *I know in general, that thy gospel is the only remedy, O teach thy servants to administer it! O prepare mine heart to receive it! and suffer not, as in many instances, that malignity which has spread itself through all my nature, to turn that noble medicine into poison!”*

(s) *Isai. lv. 8, 9.* (t) *Psal. li. 1.* (u) *Psal. cxxxix. 24.*



CH A P. VIII.

NEWS OF SALVATION BY CHRIST BROUGHT TO THE
CONVINCED AND CONDEMNED SINNER.

The awful things which have hitherto been said, intended not to grieve, but to help. §. 1. After some reflection on the pleasure with which a minister of the gospel may deliver the Message with which he is charged, §. 2. and some reasons for the repetition of what is in speculation so generally known. §. 3. The author proceeds briefly to declare the substance of these glad tidings; viz. that God, having in his infinite compassion sent his son to die for sinners; is now reconcilable through him: §. 4—6. So that the most heinous transgressions shall be entirely pardoned to believers, and they made complete and eternally happy. §. 7, 8. The sinner's reflection on this good news.

§. 1. **M**Y dear reader! It is the great design of the gospel, and where ever it is cordially received, it is the glorious effect of it, to fill the heart with sentiments of love; to teach us to abhor all unnecessary rigour and severity, and to delight, not in the grief, but in the happiness

pineness of our fellow-creatures. I can hardly apprehend, how he can be a christian, who takes pleasure in the distress which appears even in a brute ; much less in that of a human mind ; and especially, in such distress as the thoughts I have been proposing must give, if there be any due attention to their weight and energy. I have often felt a tender regret, while I have been representing these things ; and I could have wished from mine heart, that it had not been necessary to have placed them in so severe and so painful a light. But now I am addressing myself to a part of my work, which I undertake with unutterable pleasure ; and to that, which indeed I had in view, in all those awful things which I have already been laying before you. I have been shewing you, that, if you hitherto have lived in a state of impenitency and sin, you are condemned by God's righteous judgment, and have in yourself no spring of hope, and no possibility of deliverance : But I mean not to leave you under this sad apprehension, to lie down and die in despair, complaining of that cruel zeal, which has *tormented you before the time.* (a)

§. 2. Arise, O thou dejected soul, that art prostrate in the dust before God, and trembling under the terrors of his righteous sentence ; for I am commissioned to tell thee, that though *thou hast destroyed thyself, in God is thine help.* (b) I bring thee *good tidings of great joy,* (c) which delight mine own heart, while I proclaim them, and will, I hope, reach, and revive thine ; even the tidings of salvation, by the blood and righteousness of the REDEEMER. And I give it thee, for thy greater security, in the words of a gracious and forgiving God, that *he is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing to them their trespasses.* (d)

§. 3. This is the best news that ever was heard, the most important message which God ever sent to his creatures : And though I doubt not at all, but living, as you have done, in a christian country, you have heard it often, perhaps a thousand and a thousand times ; I will, with all simplicity and plainness, repeat it to you again,

i

and

(a) Matt. viii. 29. (b) Hof. xiii. 9. (c) Luke ii. 10.

(d) 2 Cor v. 19.

and repeat it as if you had never heard it before. If thou, O sinner, shouldst now for the first time feel it, then will it be *as a new gospel*, unto thee, though so familiar to thine ear; nor shall it be grievous for me to speak what is so common, *since to you it is safe* and necessary.

(e) They, who are most deeply and intimately acquainted with it, instead of being cloyed and satiated, will hear it with distinguished pleasure; and as for those who have hitherto slighted it, I am sure they have need to hear it again. Nor is it absolutely impossible, that some one soul at least may read these lines, who hath never been clearly and fully instructed in this important doctrine, though his everlasting all depends on knowing and receiving it. I will therefore take care, that such a one shall not have it to plead at the bar of God, that, though he lived in a christian country, he was never plainly and faithfully taught the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ, *the way, the truth, and the life, by whom alone we come unto the father.* (f)

§. 4. I do therefore testify unto you this day, that the holy and gracious majesty of heaven and earth, foreseeing the fatal apostacy into which the whole human race would fall, did not determine to deal in a way of strict and rigorous severity with us, so as to consign us over to universal ruin and inevitable damnation: But on the contrary, he determined to enter into a treaty of peace and reconciliation, and to publish to all, whom the gospel should reach, the express offers of life and glory, in a certain method, which his infinite wisdom judged suitable to the purity of his nature, and the honour of his government. This method was indeed a most astonishing one, which, familiar as it is to our thoughts and our tongues, I cannot recollect and mention without great amazement. He determined to send *his own son* into the world, *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person*, (g) partaker of his own divine perfections and honours, to be not merely a teacher of righteousness, and a messenger of grace, but also a sacrifice for the sins of men; and would consent to his saving them, on no other condition but this, that he should not only labour, but die in the cause.

§. 5.

(e) Phil. iii. 1. (f) John xiv. 6. (g) Heb. i. 3.

§. 5. Accordingly, at such a period of time as infinite wisdom saw most convenient, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in human flesh; and after he had gone through incessant, and long continued fatigues, and borne all the preceding injuries, which the ingratitude and malice of men could inflict, he voluntarily *submitted himself to death, even the death of the cross*; (h) and having been *delivered for our offences, was raised again for our justification*. (i) After his resurrection, he continued long enough on earth to give his followers most convincing evidences of it, and then *ascended into heaven in their sight*; (k) and *sent down his spirit* from thence upon his apostles, to enable them, in the most persuasive and authoritative manner, to *preach the gospel*. (l) And he has given it in charge to them, and to those who in every age succeed them in this part of their office, that it should be published *to every creature*; (m) that all who believe in it may be saved, by virtue of its abiding energy, and the immutable power and grace of its divine author, who is *the same yesterday, to day, and forever*. (n)

§, 6. This gospel do I therefore now preach, and proclaim unto thee, O reader, with the sincerest desire, that, through divine grace, it may *this very day* be *salvation to thy soul*. (o) Know therefore and consider it, whosoever thou art, that as surely as these words are now before thine eyes, so sure it is, that the incarnate son of God was *made a spectacle to the world, and to angels and to men*; (p) his back torn with scourges, his head with thorns, his limbs stretched out as on a rack, and nailed to the cursed tree; and in this miserable condition he was hung up by his hands and his feet, as an object of public infamy and contempt. Thus did he die, in the midst of all the taunts and insults of his cruel enemies, who thirsted for his blood! and, which was the saddest circumstance of all, in the midst of these agonies, with which he closed the most innocent, perfect, and useful life that was ever spent upon earth, he had not those supports of the divine presence, which sinful men have often experienced, when they

(h) Phil. ii. 8. (i) Rom. iv. 25. (k) Acts i. 9—11.
 (l) Luke xxiv. 40. (m) Mark xvi. 15. (n) Heb. xiii. 8.
 (o) Luke xix. 9. (p) 1 Cor. iv. 9.

have been suffering for the testimony of their conscience. They have often burst out into transports of joy and songs of praise, while their executioners have been glutting their hellish malice, and more than savage barbarity, by making their torments artificially grievous, but the crucified Jesus cried out, in the distress of his spotless and holy soul, *my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?* (q)

§. 7. Look upon our dear Redeemer ! Look up to this mournful, dreadful, yet in one view, delightful spectacle ; and then ask thine own heart, do I believe that Jesus suffered and died thus ? And why did he suffer and die ? Let me answer in God's own words, *he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed : It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief, when he made his soul an offering for sin ; for the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.* (r) So that I may address you in the words of the apostle, *be it known unto you therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins* (s) as it was his command, just after he rose from the dead, that *repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem ;* (t) the very place, where his blood had so lately been shed in such a cruel manner. I do therefore testify to you, in the words of another inspired writer, that *Christ was made sin*, that is, a sin-offering, *for us, though he knew no sin, that he may be made the righteousness of God in him ;* (u) that is, that through the righteousness he has fulfilled and the atonement he has made, we might be accepted by God as righteous, and be not only pardoned, but received into his favour. *To you is the word of this salvation sent ;* (x) and to you, O reader, are the blessings of it even now offered by God ; sincerely offered ; so that, after all that I have said under the former heads, it is not your having broken the law of God, that shall prove your ruin, if you do not also reject his gospel. It is not all those legions of sins, which rise up in battle array against you, that shall be able to destroy you, if unbelief do not lead them on,

and

(q) Matt. xxvii. 46. (r) Isai. liii. 5, 6, 10. (s) Acts xiii. 38. (t) Luke xxiv. 47. (u) 2 Cor. v. 21. (x) Acts xiii. 26.

and final impenitence do not bring up the rear. I know, that guilt is a timorous thing; I will therefore speak in the words of God himself; nor can any be more comfortable: *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life, (y); and he shall never come into condemnation. (z)* There is therefore now no condemnation, no kind or degree of it, to them, to any one of them, *who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. (a)* You have indeed been a very great sinner, and your offences have truly been attended with most heinous aggravations; nevertheless you may rejoice in the assurance, that *where sin hath abounded, there shall grace much more abound (b); that where sin hath reigned unto death, where it has its most unlimited sway, and most unresisted triumph, there shall righteousness reign to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (c)* That righteousness, to which, on believing in him, thou wilt be entitled, shall not only break those chains, by which sin is (as it were) dragging thee at its chariot-wheels with a furious pace to eternal ruin: but it shall clothe thee with the robes of salvation, shall fix thee on a throne of glory, where thou shalt live and reign forever among the princes of heaven; shalt reign in immortal beauty and joy, without one remaining scar of divine displeasure upon thee; without any single mark, by which it could be known, that thou hadst ever been obnoxious to wrath, and a curse; except it be an anthem of praise *to the Lamb that was slain, and has washed thee from thy sins in his own blood. (d)*

§. 8. Nor is it necessary, in order to thy being released from guilt, and intitled to this high and compleat felicity, that thou shouldst, before thou wilt venture to apply to Jesus, bring any good works of thine own to recommend thee to his acceptance. It is indeed true, that if thy faith be sincere, it will certainly produce them: But I have the authority of the word of God to tell thee, that if thou this day sincerely *believest* in the name of the *Son of God*, thou shalt *this day* be taken under his care, and be numbered among those of *his sheep*, to whom, he hath graciously declared, that *he will give eternal life, and that they shall*

(y) John iii. 36. (z) John v. 24 (a) Rom. viii. 1.
 (b) Rom. v. 20. (c) Rom. v. 21. (d) Rev. i. 5.

shall never perish. (e) Thou hast no need therefore to say, *Who shall go up into heaven, or who shall descend into the deep for me? For the word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thine heart.* (f) With this joyful message I leave thee; with this *faithful saying, indeed worthy of all acceptation,* (g) with this gospel, O sinner, which is my life; and which, if thou dost not reject it, will be thine too.

The sinner's REFLECTION on this good news.

“O MY soul, how astonishing is the message, which thou hast this day received! I have indeed often heard it before; and it is grown so common to me, that the surprize is not sensible. But reflect, O my soul, what it is thou hast heard; and say, whether *the name of the Saviour,* whose message it is, may not well be called *wonderful counsellor,* (h) when he displays before thee *such wonders of love,* and proposes to thee *such counsels of peace!*

“Blessed Jesus, is it indeed thus! Is it not the fiction of the human mind? Surely it is not! What human mind could have invented or conceived it? Is it a plain, certain fact, that thou didst leave the magnificence and joy of the heavenly world, in compassion to such a wretch as I! O hadst thou, from that height of dignity and felicity, only looked down upon me for a moment, and sent some gracious word to me for my direction and comfort, even by the least of thy servants, justly might I have prostrated myself in grateful admiration, and have kissed *the very footsteps of him, that published the salvation.* [i] But didst thou condescend to be thyself the messenger? What grace had that been, though thou hadst but once in person made the declaration, and immediately returned back to the throne, from whence divine compassion brought thee down! But this is not all the triumph of thine illustrious grace. It not only brought thee down to earth, but kept thee here, in a frail and wretched tabernacle, for long successive years: And at length, it cost thee thy life, and stretched thee out as a malefactor upon the cross, after thou hadst borne insult and cruelty, which it may justly wound

(e) John x. 28. (f) Rom. x. 6, 7, 8. (g) 1 Tim. i. 15.

(h) Isai. ix. 6. [i] Isai. lii. 7.

wound my heart so much as to think of. And thus thou hast atoned injured justice and *redeemed me to God with thine own blood.* [k]

“What shall I say? *Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief!* [l] It seems to put faith to the stretch to admit, what it indeed exceeds the utmost stretch of imagination to conceive. Blessed, forever blessed be thy name, O thou Father of mercies, that thou hast contrived the way! Eternal thanks to the *lamb that was slain*, and to that kind providence that sent the word of this salvation to me! O let me not, for ten thousand worlds, *receive the grace of God in vain!* [m] O impress this gospel upon my soul, till its saving virtue be diffused over every faculty! Let it not only be heard, and acknowledged, and professed, but felt! Make it *thy power to my salvation;* [n] and raise me to that humble tender gratitude, to that active unwearied zeal in thy service, which becomes one *to whom so much is forgiven,* [o] and forgiven upon such terms as these!

“I feel a sudden glow in mine heart, while these tidings are sounding in mine ears: But, O, let it not be a slight superficial transport! O let not this, which I would fain call my *christian joy*, be as that *foolish laughter*, with which I have been so madly enchanted, *like the crackling blaze of thorns under a pot!* [p] O teach me to secure this mighty blessing, this glorious hope, in the method which thou hast appointed! and preserve me from mistaking the joy of nature, while it catches a glimpse of its rescue from destruction, for that consent of grace, which embraces and insures the deliverance.”

[k] Rev. v. 9. [l] Mark ix. 24. [m] 2 Cor. vi. 1.
[n] Rom. i. 16. [o] Luke vii. 47. [p] Eccles. vii. 6.

C H A P. IX.

A MORE PARTICULAR ACCOUNT OF THE WAY, BY WHICH
THIS SALVATION IS TO BE OBTAINED.

An enquiry into the way of salvation by Christ being supposed,
§. I *The*

§. 1. *The sinner is in general directed to repentance and faith ;*
 §. 2. *and urged to give up all self-dependance, §. 3. and to seek salvation by free grace. §. 4. A Summary of more particular directions is proposed : §. 5. (1.) That the sinner should apply to Christ, §. 6. with deep abhorrence of his former sins, §. 7. and a firm resolution of forsaking them. §. 8. (2.) That he solemnly commit his soul into the hands of Christ, the great vital act of faith, §. 9. which is exemplified at large, §. 10. (3.) that he make it in fact the governing care of his future life to obey and imitate Christ. §. 11. This the only method of obtaining Gospel salvation. §. 12. The sinner deliberating on the expediency of accepting it.*

§. 1. **I** NOW consider you, my dear reader, as coming to me with the enquiry, which the *Jews* once addressed to our Lord ; *What shall we do, that we may work the works of God ?* (a) What method shall I take, to secure that redemption and salvation, which I am told Christ has procured for his people ? I would answer it as seriously, and carefully as possible ; as one that knows, of what importance it is to you to be rightly informed ; and that knows also, how strictly he is to answer to God, for the sincerity and care with which the reply is made. May I be enabled to *speak as his oracle*, (b) that is, in such a manner, as faithfully to echo back what the sacred oracles teach.

§. 2. And here, that I may be sure to follow the safest guides, and the fairest examples, I must preach salvation to you, in the way of *repentance towards God, and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*. (c) That good old doctrine, which the apostles preached, and which no man can pretend to change, but at the peril of his own soul, and of theirs who attend to him.

§. 3. I suppose, that you are, by this time, convinced of your guilt and condemnation, and of your own inability to recover yourself. Let me nevertheless urge you to feel that conviction yet more deeply, and to impress it with yet greater weight upon your soul ; that you have undone yourself, and that *in yourself is not your help found*. (d)

Be

(a) John vi. 28. (b) 1 Pet. iv. 11. (c) Acts xx. 21.

(d) Hof. xiii. 9.

Be persuaded therefore, expressly, and solemnly, and sincerely to give up all self-dependance ; which, if you do not guard against it, will be ready to return secretly, before it is observed, and will lead you to attempt building up what you have just been destroying.

§. 4. Be assured, that if ever you are saved, you must ascribe that salvation entirely ‘to the free grace of God.’ If, guilty and miserable as you are, you are not only accepted, but crowned, you must ‘lay down your crown’ with all humble acknowledgment ‘before the throne.’ (e) ‘No flesh must glory in his presence ; but he, that glorieth, must glory in the Lord : For of him are we in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.’ (f) And you must be sensible, you are in such a state, as having none of these in yourself, to need them in another. You must therefore be sensible, that you are ignorant and guilty, polluted and enslaved ; or, as our Lord expresses it, with regard to some who were under a christian profession, that as a sinner, ‘you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.’ (g)

§. 5. If these views be deeply impressed upon your mind, you will be prepared to receive what I am now to say. Hear therefore in a few words your duty, your remedy, and your safety ; which consists in this, “that you must apply to Christ, with a deep abhorrence of your former sins, and a firm resolution of forsaking them ; forming that resolution in the strength of his grace, and fixing your dependance on him, for your acceptance with God, even while you are proposing to do your very best, and when you have actually done the best you ever will do in consequence of that purpose.”

§. 6. The first and most important advice that I can give you in present circumstances, is, ‘that you look to Christ, and apply yourself to him.’ And here, ‘say not in your heart, who shall ascend into heaven, to bring him down to me ?’ (h) or who shall ‘raise me up thither,’ to present me before him ? ‘The blessed ‘Jesus by whom all things consist,’ (i) by whom the whole system of them is

K

supported,

(e) Rev. iv. 10. (f) 1 Cor. i. 29, 30, 31. (g) Rev. iii. 12

(h) Rom. x. 6. (i) Col. i. 17.

supported, "forgotten as he is by most that bear his name," "is not far from any of us :'" (k) Nor could he have promised to have been, 'where-ever two or three are met together in his name,' (l) but in consequence of those *truly divine perfections* by which he is every where present. Would you therefore, O sinner, desire to be saved? Go to the saviour. Would you desire to be delivered? Look to that great deliverer: And though you should be so overwhelmed with guilt, and shame, and fear, and horror, that you should be incapable of speaking to him, fall down in this speechless confusion at his feet; and 'behold him, *as the lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.*' (m)

§. 7. Behold him therefore with an attentive eye, and say, whether the sight does not touch, and even melt thy very heart! Dost thou not feel, what a foolish, and what a wretched creature thou hast been; that for the sake of such low and sordid gratifications and interests, as those which thou hast been pursuing, thou shouldst thus 'kill the prince of life?' (n) Behold 'the deep wounds,' which he bore for thee. 'Look on him whom thou hast pierced, and *surely thou must mourn,*' (o) unless thine heart be hardened into stone. Which of thy past sins canst thou reflect upon, and say, "for this it was worth my while, thus to have injured my saviour, and to have exposed the son of God to such sufferings?" And what future temptations can arise so considerable, that thou shouldst say, "for the sake of this, I will crucify my Lord again?" (p) Sinner, thou must repent; thou must repent of every sin; and must forsake it. But if thou doest it to any purpose, I well know it must be as 'at the foot of the cross.' Thou must 'sacrifice every lust, even the dearest;' though it should be like 'a right hand, or a right eye :'" (q) And therefore that thou mayest, if possible, be animated to it, I have led thee to that altar, on which 'Christ himself was sacrificed for thee, an offering of a sweet-smelling savour. (r) Thou must 'yield up thyself to God, as one alive from the dead :'" (s) And therefore

(k) Acts xvii. 27. (l) Matt. xviii. 20. (m) John i. 29.
 (n) Acts iii. 15. (o) Zach. xii. 10. (p) Heb. vi. 6.
 (q) Matt. v. 29, 30. (r) Eph. v. 2. (s) Rom. vi. 13.

therefore I have shewed thee at what a price he purchased thee ; for ‘ thou wast not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the son of God, that lamb without blemish and without spot.’ (t) And now I would ask thee, as before the lord, what does thine own heart say to it? Art thou grieved for thy former offences? Art thou willing to forsake thy sins? Art thou willing to become the chearful, thankful servant of him, who hath ‘ purchased thee with his own blood?’

§. 8. I will suppose such a purpose as this rising in thine heart. How determinate it is, and how effectual it may be, I know not: What different views may arise hereafter, or how soon the present sense may wear off. But this I assuredly know, that thou wilt never see reason to change these views ; for however thou mayest alter, the Lord ‘ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.’ (u) And the reasons, that now recommend repentance and faith as fit and as necessary, will continue invariable, as long as the perfections of the blessed God are the same, and as long as his son continues the same.

§. 9. But while you have these views and these purposes, I must remind you, that this is not all that is necessary to your salvation. You must not only purpose, but, as God gives opportunity, you must act, as those who are convinced of the evil of sin, and of the necessity & excellency of holiness. And that you may be enabled to do so in other instances, you must in the first place, & as the first great ‘work of God, as our Lord himself calls it, believe in him whom God hath sent :’ (x) You must confide in him ; ‘ must commit your soul into the hands of Christ, to be saved by him in his own appointed method of salvation.’ This is ‘ the great act of saving faith ;’ and I pray God, that you may experimentally know what it means ; so as to be able to say, with the apostle Paul, in the near views of death itself, ‘ I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day ;’ (y) that great decisive day, which, if we are Christians, we
have

(t) 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. (u) Heb. xiii. 8. (x) John vi. 29.
(y) 2 Tim. i. 12.

have always in view. To this I would urge you; and O that I could be so happy as to engage you to it, while I am illustrating it in this, and the following addresses; be assured, you must not apply yourselves *immediately to God*, as absolutely or in himself considered, *in the neglect of a mediator*. It will neither be acceptable to him, nor safe for you, to rush into his presence, without any regard to his own son, whom he hath appointed to introduce sinners to him. And if you come otherwise, you come as one *who is not a sinner*. The very manner of presenting the address will be interpreted as a denial of that guilt, with which he knows you are chargeable: And therefore he will not admit you, nor so much as look upon you. And accordingly, *our Lord*, knowing how much every man living was concerned in this, says in the most universal terms; ‘no man cometh unto the father but by me.’ (z)

§. 10. Apply therefore to this glorious redeemer, amiable, as he will appear, to every believing eye in the blood which he shed upon the cross, and in the wounds which he received there. Go to him, O sinner, this day, this moment, with all thy sins about thee. *Go just as thou art*; for if thou wilt never apply to him, till thou art first righteous and holy, thou wilt never be righteous and holy at all; nor canst be so on this supposition, unless there were some way of being so without him; and then, there would be no occasion for applying to him for righteousness and holiness. It were indeed as if it should be said, that a sick man should defer his application to a physician, till his health be recovered: Let me therefore repeat it without offence, *go to him just as thou art*, and say, O that thou mayest this moment be enabled to say it from thy very soul! “Blessed Jesus, I am surely one of the most sinful, and one of the most miserable creatures, that ever fell prostrate before thee: Nevertheless I come, because I have heard that thou didst once say, ‘come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ (a) I come, because I have heard, thou didst graciously say, ‘him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.’ (b) O thou prince of peace, O thou king of glory, I am a condemn-

(z) John xiv. 6.

(a) Matt. xi. 28.

(b) John vi. 37.

ed miserable sinner. I have ruined my own soul, and I am condemned for ever, if thou dost not help me and save me. I have broken thy father's law, and thine, for thou art 'one with him.' (c) I have deserved condemnation and wrath; and I am, even at this very moment, under a sentence of everlasting destruction: A destruction, which will be aggravated by all the contempt which I have cast upon thee, O thou bleeding *lamb of God*; for I cannot, and will not dissemble it before thee, that I have wronged thee, most basely and ungratefully wronged thee, under the character of a favour, as well as of a Lord. But now, I am willing to submit to thee; and I have brought my poor trembling soul, to lodge it in thine hands, if thou wilt condescend to receive it; and if thou dost not, it must perish. O Lord, I lie at thy feet: Stretch out 'thy golden sceptre, that I may live!' (d) Yea, 'if it please the king, let the life of my soul be given me at my petition!' (e) I have no treasure, wherewith to purchase it: I have no equivalent to give thee for it: But if that compassionate heart of thine can find a pleasure in saving one of the most distressed creatures under heaven, that pleasure thou mayest here find. O Lord, I have foolishly attempted to be mine own favour; but it will not do. I am sensible the attempt is vain; and therefore I give it over, and *look unto thee*. On thee, blessed Jesus, who art sure and steadfast, do I desire to fix my anchor. On thee, as the only sure foundation, would I build my eternal hopes. To thy teaching, O thou unerring *prophet of the Lord*, would I submit: Be thy doctrine ever so mysterious, it is enough for me, that thou thyself hast said it. To thine atonement, obedience, and intercession, O thou holy and ever-acceptable high priest, would I trust. And to thy government, O thou exalted sovereign, would I yield a willing, delightful subjection: In token of reverence and love, I 'kiss the son;' (f) I kiss the ground before his feet. I admit thee, O my favour, and welcome thee with unutterable joy, to the throne in my heart. Ascend it, and reign there for ever! Subdue mine enemies, O Lord, for they are thine;

k

and

(c) John x. 30. (d) *Esth.* iv. 11. (e) *Esth.* vii. 3.(f) *Psal.* ii. 12.

and make me thy faithful, thy zealous servant; *faithful to death, and zealous to eternity!*"

§. 11. Such as this must be the language of your very heart before the Lord. But then remember, that in consequence hereof it must be the language of your life too. The unmeaning words of the lips would be a vain mockery. The most affectionate transport of the passions, should it be transient and ineffectual, would be but like *a blaze of straw*, presented instead of incense at his altar. With such humility, with such love, with such cordial self-dedication and submission of soul, must thou often prostrate thyself, in the presence of Christ; and then thou must go away, and keep him in thy view; must go away and live unto God through him, 'denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,' and behaving thyself 'soberly, righteously, and godly, in this vain *insnaring* world.' (g) You must make it your care, to shew your love by obedience; by forming yourself as much as possible, according to the temper and manner of Jesus, in whom you believe. You must make it the great point of your ambition, and a nobler view you cannot entertain, to be *a living image of Christ*; that so far as circumstances will allow, even those who have heard and read but little of him, may, by observing you, in some measure see and know 'what kind of a life that of the blessed Jesus was.' And this must be your constant care, your prevailing character, as long as you live. You must *follow him*, whithersoever he leads you; must *follow* with a cross on your shoulder, when he commands you to 'take it up;' (h) and so must 'be faithful even to the death, expecting the crown of life.' (i)

§. 12. This, so far as I have been able to learn from the word of God, is the way to safety and glory; the surest, the only way you can take. It is the way, which every faithful minister of Christ has trod, and is treading; and the way, to which, as he tenders the salvation of his own soul, he must direct others. We cannot, we would not alter it, in favour of ourselves, or our dearest friends. It is the way, in which alone, so far as we can judge, it 'becomes the blessed God to save his apostate creatures.' And therefore, reader, I beseech and intreat you seriously to consider it; and let your own conscience answer, as (g) Tit. ii. 12. (h) Matt. xvi. 24. (i) Rev. ii. 10. in

in the presence of God, whether you are willing to acquiesce in it, or not. But know, that 'to reject it' is thine eternal death. For as 'there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved,' (k) but this of Jesus of Nazareth, so there is no other method but this, in which Jesus himself will save us.

The sinner deliberating on the expediency of falling in with this method of Salvation.

“CONSIDER, O my soul, what answer wilt thou return to such proposals as these! Surely, if I were to speak the first dictate of this corrupt and degenerate heart, it would be, ‘this is a hard saying, and who can bear it?’ (l) To be thus humbled, thus mortified, thus subjected! To take such a yoke upon me, and to carry it as long as I live! To give up every darling lust, though dear to me as a right eye, and seemingly necessary as a right hand! To submit, not only my life, but my heart, to the command and discipline of another! To have a master there, and such a master as will controul many of its favourite affections, and direct them quite into another channel! A master, who himself represents his commands, by ‘taking up the cross and following him!’ To adhere to the strictest rules of godliness and sobriety, of righteousness and truth; not departing from them, in any allowed instance, great or small, upon any temptation, for any advantage, to escape any inconvenience and evil, no, not even for the preservation of life itself; but, upon a proper call of providence, to act as if I ‘hated even my own life!’ (m) Lord, it is hard to flesh and blood: And yet I perceive and feel, there is one demand yet harder than this.

“With all the precautions, with all these mortifications, the pride of my nature would find some inward recourse of pleasure, might I but secretly think, that I had been my own saviour; that my own wisdom, and my own resolution, had broken the bands and chains of the enemy; and that I had drawn out of my own treasures, the price with which my redemption was purchased.

But

(k) Acts iv. 12. (l) John vi. 60. (m) Luke xiv. 26.

But must I lie down before another, as guilty and condemned, as weak and helpless? And must the obligation be multiplied, and must a mediator have his share too? Must I *go to the cross* for my salvation, and seek my glory from the infamy of that? Must I be striped of every pleasing pretence to righteousness, and stand in this respect upon a level with the vilest of men? stand at the bar among the greatest criminals pleading guilty with them, and seeking deliverance by that very act of grace, whereby they have obtained it.

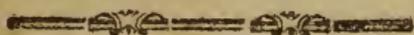
“ I dare not deliberately say, this method is unreasonable. My conscience testifies, that I have sinned, and cannot be justified before God, as an innocent, and obedient creature. My conscience tells me, that all these humbling circumstances are fit: That it is fit a convicted criminal should be brought upon his knees: That a captive rebel should give up the weapons of his rebellion, and bow before his sovereign, if he expect his life. Yea, my reason, as well as my conscience, tells me, that it is fit and necessary, that if I am saved at all, I should be saved from the power and love of sin, as well as from the condemnation of it; and that if sovereign mercy gives me a new life, after having deserved eternal death, it is most fit, I should ‘yield myself to God, as alive from the dead.’ (n) But, O ‘wretched man that I am, I feel a law in my members, that wars against the law of my mind,’ (o) and opposes the conviction of my reason and conscience. Who shall deliver me from this bondage? Who shall make me willing to do that, which I know in my own soul to be most expedient? O Lord, subdue my heart, and let it not be drawn so strongly one way, while the nobler powers of my mind would direct it another: conquer every licentious principle within, that it may be my joy to be so wisely governed, and restrained! Especially, subdue my pride, that lordly corruption, which so ill suits an impoverished and a condemned creature; that thy way of salvation may be amiable to me, in proportion to the degree in which it is humbling! I feel a disposition to ‘linger in Sodom, *but* O be merciful to me,

(n) Rom. vi. 13.

(o) Rom. vii. 23, 24.

me, and pull me out of it,' (p) before the storms of thy flaming vengeance fall, and there be no more escaping !”

(p) Gen. xix. 16.



CHAP. X.

THE SINNER SERIOUSLY URGED AND INTREATED TO ACCEPT OF SALVATION IN THIS WAY.

Since many who have been impressed with these things, suffer the impression to wear off in vain. §. 1. Strongly as the case speaks for itself, sinners are to be intreated to accept this salvation. §. 2. Accordingly the reader is intreated, (1) by the majesty and mercy of God : §. 3. (2) By the dying love of our Lord Jesus Christ : §. 4. (3.) By the regard due to fellow-creatures : §. 5. (4.) By the worth of his own immortal soul. §. 6. The matter is solemnly left with the reader, as before God. §. 7. The sinner yielding to these intreaties, and declaring his acceptance of salvation by Christ.

§. 1. **T**HUS far have I often known convictions and impressions to arise, if I might judge by the strongest appearances, which after all have worn off again. Some unhappy circumstances of external temptation ever joined by the inward reluctance of an un sanctified heart to this holy and humbling scheme of redemption, has been the ruin of multitudes. And ‘through the deceitfulness of sin, they have been hardened,’ (a) till they seem to have been ‘utterly destroyed, and that without remedy.’ (b) And therefore, O thou immortal creature, who art now reading these lines, I beseech thee, that while affairs are in this critical situation, while there are these balancings of mind, between accepting and rejecting that glorious gospel, which, in the integrity of my heart, I have now
been

(a) Heb. iii. 13. (b) Prov. xxix. 1.

been laying before you, you would once more give me an attentive audience, while I plead in God's behalf, shall I say? or rather in your own; while 'as an ambassador for Christ, and as though God did beseech you by me, I pray you in Christ's stead *that you would* be reconciled to God;' (c) and would not, after these awakenings and these enquiries, by a madness which it will surely be the doleful business of a miserable eternity to lament, 'reject this compassionate counsel of God towards you.'

§. 2. One would indeed imagine, there should be no need of importunity here. One would conclude, that as soon as perishing sinners are told, that an offended God is ready to be reconciled; that he offers them a full pardon for all their aggravated sins; yea, that he is willing to adopt them into his family now, that he may at length admit them to his heavenly presence; or should with the utmost readiness and pleasure embrace so kind a message, and fall at his feet in speechless transports of astonishment, gratitude, and joy. But alas, we find it much otherwise. We see multitudes quite unmoved, and the impressions which are made on many more are feeble and transient. Lest it should be thus with you, O reader, let me urge the message with which I have the honour to be charged: Let me intreat you to be reconciled to God, and to accept of pardon and salvation in the way in which it is so freely offered to you.

§. 3. I intreat you, "by the majesty of that God, in whose name I come;" whose voice fills all heaven with reverence and obedience. He speaks not in vain to legions of angels; but if there could be any contention among those blessed spirits, it would be, who should be first to execute his commands. O let him not speak in vain to a wretched mortal! I intreat you, "by the terrors of his wrath," who could speak to you in thunder; who could, by one single act of his will, cut off this precarious life of yours, and send you down to hell. I beseech you "by his mercies, by his tender mercies;" by the bowels of his compassion, which still yearn over you; as those of a parent over *a dear son*, over *a tender child*, whom notwithstanding his former ungrateful rebellions 'he earnestly
remembers

remembers still.' (d) I beseech and intreat you, by all this "parental goodness" that you do not, as it were, compel him to lose the character of the gentle parent, in that of the righteous judge ; so that, as he threatens with regard to those whom he had just called ' his sons and his daughters, a fire should be kindled in his anger, which should burn unto the lowest hell.' [e]

§, 4. I beseech you farther, " by the name and love of our dying saviour." I beseech you, by all the condescension of his incarnation ; by that poverty, to which he voluntarily submitted, ' that you might be enriched with eternal treasures ;' [f] by all the gracious invitations which he gave, which still sound in his word, and still coming, as it were, warm from his heart are ' sweeter than honey, or the honey comb. [g] I beseech you, by all his glorious works of power and of wonder which were also works of love. I beseech you, by the memory of the most benevolent person, and the most generous friend. I beseech you, by the memory of what he suffered as well as of what he said and did ; by *the agony* which he endured in the garden, when his body was covered ' with a dew of blood.' [h] I beseech you, by all the tender distress which he felt, when his dearest friends ' forsook him and fled,' [i] and his blood-thirsty enemies dragged him away, like the meanest of slaves, and like the vilest of criminals. I beseech you, by the blows and bruises, by the stripes and lashes, which this injured sovereign endured while in their rebellious hands ; by *the shame of spitting*, from which *he hid not* that kind and venerable ' countenance.' [k] I beseech you, by ' the purple robe, the sceptre of reed, and the crown of thorns *which this king of glory wore, that he might set us among the princes of heaven.* [l] I beseech you, by the heavy burthen of *the cross* under which he panted, and toiled, and fainted in the painful way to ' Golgotha,' [m] that he might free us from the burthen of our sins. I beseech you, by the remembrance of those rude *nails*, that tore the veins and arteries, the nerves and tendons

[d] Jer. xxxi. 20. [e] Deut. xxxii. 19, 22. [f] 2 Cor. viii. 9. [g] Psal. xix. 10. [h] Luke xxii. 44. [i] Matt. xxvi. 56. [k] Isai. l. 6. [l] Psal. cxiii. 8. [m] John xix. 17.

tendons of his sacred *hands and feet* ; and by that invincible, that triumphant goodness, which, while the iron pierced his flesh, engaged him to cry out, ‘ father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ [n] I beseech you, by the unutterable anguish which he bore, when *lifted up upon the cross*, and extended there as on a rack, for six painful hours, that you open your heart to those attractive influences, which have ‘ drawn to him thousands and ten thousands.’ [o] I beseech you, by all that insult and derision, which the ‘ Lord of glory bore there ;’ [p] by that parching *thirst*, which could hardly obtain the relief of ‘ vinegar ;’ [q] by that doleful cry, so astonishing in the mouth of ‘ the only begotten of the father, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?’ [r] I beseech you, by the grace that subdued and pardoned ‘ a dying malefactor ;’ [s] by that compassion for sinners, by that compassion for you, which wrought in his heart, long as its vital motion continued, and which ended not when ‘ he bowed his head, *saying*, it is finished, and gave up the ghost.’ [t] I beseech you, by the triumphs of that *resurrection*, by which he was ‘ declared to be the son of God with power, by the spirit of holiness which wrought to accomplish it ;’ [u] by that gracious tenderness which attempered all those triumphs, when he said to ‘ her out of whom he had cast seven devils, *concerning* his disciples *who had treated him so basely*, go tell my brethren, I ascend unto my father and your father, unto my God and your God.’ [x] I beseech you, by that condescension, with which he said to Thomas, when his unbelief had made such an unreasonable demand, ‘ reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thine hand, and put it to my side ; and be not faithless, but believing.’ [y] I beseech you, by that generous and faithful care of his people, which he carried up with him to the regions of glory, and which engaged him to send down ‘ his spirit, in that rich profusion of miraculous gifts, to spread the progress of his saving word.’ [z] I beseech

[n] Luke xxiii. 34. [o] John xii. 32. [p] Matt. xxvii. 39, 44. (q) John xix. 28, 29. (r) Matt. xxvii. 46. (s) Luke xxiii. 42, 43. (t) John xix. 30. (u) Rom. i. 4. (x) John xx. 17. (y) John xx. 27. (z) Acts ii. 33.

befeech you, by that voice of sympathy and power, with which he *said to Saul*, while injuring his church, ‘Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?’ (a) by that generous goodness, which spared that prostrate enemy, when he lay trembling at his feet, and raised him to so high a dignity, as to be ‘not inferior to the very chiefest apostles. (b) I beseech you, by the memory of all that Christ hath already done, by the expectation of all he will farther do for his people. I beseech you, at once, by the sceptre of his grace, and by that sword of his justice, with which all his incorrigible *enemies* shall be ‘slain before him,’ (c) that you do not trifle away these precious moments while his spirit is thus breathing upon you; that you do not lose an opportunity which may never return, and on the improvement of which your eternity depends.

§. 5. I beseech you, “by all the *bowels of compassion* which you owe to the *faithful ministers of Christ* ;” who are studying and labouring, preaching and praying, wearing out their time, exhausting their strength, and, very probably, shortning their lives, for the salvation of your soul, and of souls like yours. I beseech you, by the affection, with which *all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*, long to see you brought back to him. I beseech you, by the friendship of the living, and by the memory of the dead; by the ruin of those who have trifled away their days, and are perished in their sins, and by the happiness of those who have embraced the gospel, and are saved by it. I beseech you, by the great expectation of that important ‘day, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven;’ (d) by ‘the terrors of a dissolving world;’ (e) by ‘the sound of the arch-angel’s trumpet,’ (f) and ‘of that infinitely more awful sentence, come, ye blessed, and depart ye cursed, with which that grand solemnity shall close’ (g)

§. 6. I beseech you finally “by *your own precious and immortal soul* ;” by the sure prospect of a dying bed, or of a sudden surprize into the invisible state; and as you

L

would

- (a) Acts ix. 4. (b) 2 Cor. xii. 11. (c) Luke xix. 27.
 (d) 2 Thes. i. 7. (e) 2 Pet. iii. 10. (f) 1 Thes. iv. 16.
 (g) Matt. xxv. 34, 41.

would feel one spark of comfort, in your departing spirit, when *your flesh and your heart are failing*. I beseech you, by your own personal appearance before the tribunal of Christ, (for a personal appearance it must be, even to them who now sit on thrones of their own;) by all the transports of the blessed, and by all the agonies of the damned, the one or the other of which must be your everlasting portion. I affectionately intreat and beseech you in the strength of all these united considerations, as you will answer it to me, who may in that day be summoned to testify against you; and, which is unspeakably more, as you will answer it to your own conscience, as you will answer it to the eternal judge; that you dismiss not these thoughts, these meditations, and these cares, till you have brought matters to a happy issue; till you have made a resolute choice of Christ, and his appointed way of salvation, and till you have solemnly devoted yourself to God in the bonds of an everlasting covenant.

§. 7. And thus I leave the matter before you, and before the Lord. I have told you my errand: I have discharged my embassy. Stronger arguments I cannot use; more endearing and more awful considerations I cannot suggest. Chuse therefore, whether you will go out (as it were) clothed in sackcloth, to cast yourself at the feet of him who now sends you these equitable and gracious terms of peace and pardon; or, whether you will hold it out, till he appears sword in hand, to reckon with you for your treasons and your crimes, and for this neglected embassy among the rest of them. Fain would I hope the best; nor can I believe, that *this labour of love* shall be so entirely unsuccessful, that not one soul shall be brought to the foot of Christ, in cordial submission and humble faith. 'Take with you therefore words, and turn unto the Lord;' (h) and O that those which follow, might, in effect at least, be the genuine language of every one that reads them!

The sinner yielding to these intreaties, and declaring his acceptance of salvation by Christ.

“ BLESSED Lord, it is enough! It is too much!
(h) Hof. xiv. 2. surely

Surely there needs not this variety of arguments, this importunity of persuasion, to court me to be happy, to prevail upon me to accept of pardon, of life, of eternal glory. Compassionate favour, my soul is subdued; so that I trust, the language of thy grief is become that of my penitence, and I may say, 'my heart is melted like wax in the midst of my bowels.' (i)

"O gracious redeemer! I have already neglected thee too long. I have too often injured thee; have *crucified thee afresh* by my guilt and impenitence, as if I had taken pleasure in 'putting thee to an open flame.' (k) But my heart now bows itself before thee, in humble unfeigned submission, I desire to make no terms with thee but these, that I may be entirely thine. I cheerfully present thee with a blank, intreating thee, that thou wilt do me the honour to signify upon it, what is thy pleasure. Teach me, O Lord, *what thou wouldst have me to do!* For I desire to learn the lesson, and to learn it that I may practise it. If it be more than my feeble powers can answer, thou wilt, I hope, give me more strength; and in that strength I will serve thee. O receive a soul, which thou hast made willing to be thine!

"No more, O blessed Jesus, no more is it necessary to beseech and intreat me. Permit me rather to address myself to thee, with all the importunity of a perishing sinner, that, at length, sees and knows, 'there is salvation in no other!' (l) Permit me now, Lord, to come, and throw myself at thy feet, like a helpless outcast, that has no shelter but in thy generous compassion! like one *purged by the avenger of blood* and seeking earnestly an admittance 'into the city of refuge!' (m)

"I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait; and in thy word do I hope,' (n) that thou wilt 'receive me graciously.' (o) My soul confides in thy goodness, and adores it. I adore the patience, which has borne with me so long; and the grace, that now makes me heartily willing to be thine; to be thine on thine own terms, thine on any terms. O secure this treacherous heart to thyself! O unite me to thee in such inseparable bonds, that none
of

(i) Psal. xxii. 14.

(k) Heb. vi. 6.

(l) Acts iv. 12.

{m} Josh. xx. 2, 3.

(n) Psal. cxxx. 5.

(o) Hos. xiv. 2.

of the allurements of flesh and blood, none of the vanities of an ensnaring world, none of the solicitations of sinful companions, may draw me back from thee, and plunge me into new guilt and ruin! 'Be surety, O Lord, for thy servant for good;' (p) that I may still keep my hold on thee, and so on eternal life; till at length I know more fully, by joyful and everlasting experience, how complete a saviour thou art!" *Amen.*

(p) Psal. cxix. 122.



CHAP. XI.

A SOLEMN ADDRESS TO THOSE, WHO WILL NOT BE PERSUADED TO FALL IN WITH THE DESIGN OF THE GOSPEL.

Universal success not to be expected. §. 1. Yet, as unwilling absolutely to give up any, the author addresseth, (1) To those who doubt of the truth of Christianity, urging an enquiry into its evidences, and directing to proper methods for that purpose, §. 2,—4. (2) To those who determine to give it up without further examination, §. 5. and presume to set themselves to oppose it. §. 6. (3) To those who speculatively assent to Christianity as true, and yet will sit down without any practical regard to its most important and acknowledged truths. Such are dismissed with a representation of the absurdity of their conduct on their own principles; §. 7, 8. with a solemn warning of its fatal consequences; §. 9, 10, and a compassionate prayer, introduced §. 11, which concludes the chapter, and this part of the work.

§. 1. I WOULD humbly hope, that the preceding chapters will be the means of awakening some stupid and insensible sinners; the means of convincing them of their need of gospel salvation, and of engaging some cordially to accept it. Yet I cannot flatter myself so far, as to hope this should be the case with regard to all, into whose hands

hands this book shall come. What 'am I, alas, better than my fathers,' (a) or better than my brethren, who have in all ages been repeating their complaint, with regard to multitudes, that they 'have stretched out their hands all the day long to a disobedient and gainsaying people?' (b). Many such may, perhaps, be found, in the number of my readers: Many, on whom, neither consideration of terror, nor of love, will make any deep and lasting impression: Many, who, as our Lord learnt by experience to express it, 'when we pipe to them, will not dance, and when we mourn unto them, will not lament.' (c) I can say no more to persuade them, if they make light of what I have already said. Here therefore we must part; in this chapter I must take my leave of them: And, O that I could do it in such a manner, as to fix at parting, some conviction upon their hearts; that though I seem to leave them for a little while, and send them back to review again the former chapters, as those in which alone they have any present concern, they might soon, as it were, overtake me again, and find a suitability in the remaining part of this discourse, which at present they cannot possibly find. Unhappy creatures! I quit you, as a physician quits a patient whom he loves, and is just about to give over as incurable: He returns again and again, and re-examines the several symptoms, to observe whether there be not some one of them more favourable than the rest, which may encourage a renewed application.

§. 2. So would I once more return to you. You do not find in yourself any disposition to embrace the gospel, to apply yourself to Christ, to give yourself up to the service of God, and to make religion the business of your life. But if I cannot prevail upon you to do this, let me engage you, at least, to answer me, or rather to answer your own conscience. "Why you will not do it?" Is it owing to any secret disbelief of the great principles of religion? If it be, the case is different from what I have yet considered, and the cure must be different. This is not a place to combat with the scruples of infidelity. Nevertheless I would desire you seriously to enquire, "how far those scruples
1 extend."

(a) 1 Kings xix. 4. (b) Rom. x. 21. (c) Matt. xi. 17.

extend." Do they effect only some particular doctrines of the gospel, on which my argument hath turned? or do they affect the whole Christian revelation? Or do they reach yet farther, and extend themselves to natural religion, as well as revealed, so that it should be a doubt with you, whether there be any God, and providence, and future state, or not? As these cases are all different, so it will be of great importance to distinguish the one from the other; that you may know, on what principles to build as certain, in the examination of those concerning which you are yet in doubt. But whatever these doubts are, I would farther ask you, "how long have they continued, and what method have you taken to get them resolved?" Do you imagine, that in matters of such moment, it will be an allowable case for you to trifle on, neglecting to enquire into the evidence of these things, and then plead your not being satisfied in that evidence, as an excuse for not acting according to them? Must not the principles of common sense assure you, that if these things be true, as when you talk of doubting about them, you acknowledge it, at least, possible they may, they are of infinitely greater importance than any of the affairs of life, whether of business or pleasure, for the sake of which you neglect them? Why then do you continue indolent and unconcerned, from week to week, and from month to month; which probably conscience tells you is the case?

§. 3. Do you ask, "what method you should take to be resolved?" It is no hard question. Open your eyes: Set yourself to think: Let conscience speak; and verily do I believe, that if it be not feared in an uncommon degree, you will find shrewd forebodings of the certainty, both of natural and revealed religion, and of the absolute necessity of repentance, faith and holiness, to a life of future felicity. If you are a person of any learning, you cannot but know, by what writers, and in what treatises, these great truths are defended. And if you are not, you may find, in almost every town and neighbourhood, persons capable of informing you in the main evidences of Christianity, and of answering such scruples against it as unlearned minds may have met with. Set yourself then,

in the name of God, immediately to consider the matter. If you study at all, bend your studies close this way; and trifle not with mathematicks or poetry, or history, or law, or physick, which are all comparatively light as a feather, while you neglect this. Study the argument, as for your life; for much more than life depends on it. See how far you are satisfied, and why that satisfaction reaches no farther. Compare evidences on both sides. And above all, consider the design and tendency of the New-Testament. See to what it would lead you, and all them that cordially obey it; and then say, whether it be not good. And consider, how naturally its truth is connected with its goodness. Trace the character and sentiments of its authors, whose living image, if I may be allowed the expression, is still preserved in their writings. And then, ask your own heart, can you think this was a forgery; an impious cruel forgery? For such it must have been, if it were a forgery at all; a scheme to mock God, and to ruin men, even the best of men, such as revered conscience, and would abide all extremities for what they apprehended to be truth. Put the question to your own heart, can I, in my conscience, believe it to be such an imposture? Can I look up to an omniscient God, and say, "O Lord thou knowest, that it is in reverence to thee, and in love to truth and virtue, that I reject this book, and the method to happiness here laid down?"

§. 4. But there are difficulties in the way.—And what then? Have those difficulties never been cleared? Go to the living advocates for Christianity, to those of whose abilities, candor, and piety, you have the best opinion; if your prejudices will give you leave to have a good opinion of any such: Tell them your difficulties: Hear their solutions: Weigh them seriously, as those who know they must answer it to God: And while doubts continue, follow the truth as far as it will lead you, and take heed that you do not 'imprison it in unrighteousness.' (d) Nothing appears more inconsistent and absurd, than for a man solemnly to pretend dissatisfaction in the evidences of the gospel, as a reason why he cannot in conscience be a thorough Christian; when yet at the same time he vio-

lates

(d) Rom. i. 18.

lates the most apparent dictates of reason and conscience, and lives in vices condemned even by the heathens. O sirs, Christ has judged concerning such, and judged most righteously and most wisely : ' They do evil, and therefore they hate the light, neither come they to the light, lest their deeds should be made manifest and reprov'd.' (e) But there is a light, that will make manifest and reprove their works, to which they shall be compelled to come, and the painful scrutiny of which they shall be forced to abide.

§. 5. In the mean time, if you are determined to enquire no farther into the matter now, give me leave at least, from a sincere concern, that you may not heap upon your head more aggravated ruin, to intreat you, that you would be cautious how you expose yourself to yet greater danger, by what you must yourself own to be unnecessary, I mean, attempts to pervert others from believing the truth of the gospel. Leave them, for God's sake, and for your own, in possession of those pleasures, and those hopes, which nothing but Christianity can give them ; and act not, as if you were solicitous to add to the guilt of an infidel the tenfold damnation, which they, who have been the perverters and destroyers of the souls of others, must expect to meet, if that gospel which they have so adventurously opposed should prove, as it certainly will, a serious, and to them a dreadful truth.

§. 6. If I cannot prevail here, but the pride of displaying a superiority of understanding should bear on such a reader, even in opposition to his own favourite maxims of the innocence of error, and the equality of all religions consistent with social virtue, to do his utmost to trample down the gospel with contempt ; I would however dismiss him with one proposal, which I think the importance of the affair may fully justify. If you have done with your examination into Christianity, and determine to live and conduct yourself as if it were assuredly false, sit down then, and make a memorandum of that determination. Write it down ; " on such a day of such a year, I deliberately resolved, that I would live and die rejecting Christianity myself, and doing all I could to
 overthrow

(e) John iii. 20.

overthrow it. This day I determined, not only to renounce all subjection to, and expectation from, Jesus of Nazareth ; but also to make it a serious part of the business of my life, to destroy, as far as I possibly can, all regard to him in the mind of others, and to exert my most vigorous efforts, in the way of reasoning or of ridicule, to sink the credit of his religion, and if it be possible to root it out of the world ; in calm, steady defiance of that day, when his followers say, he shall appear in so much majesty and terror to execute the vengeance threatened to his enemies." Dare you write this, and sign it ? I firmly believe, that many a man, who would be thought a deist, and endeavours to increase the number, would not. And if you in particular dare not to do it, whence does that small remainder of caution arise ? The cause is plain. There is in your conscience some secret apprehension, that this rejected, this opposed, this derided gospel may after all prove true. And if there be such an apprehension, then let conscience do its office, and convict you of the impious madness of acting, as if it were most certainly and demonstrably false. Let it tell you at large, how possible it is that 'haply you may be found fighting against God :'
 (f) That, bold as you are in defying the terrors of the Lord, you may possibly fall into his hands ; may chance to hear that despised sentence, which when you hear it from the mouth of the eternal judge, you will not be able to despise : I will repeat it again, in spite of all your scorn, you may 'hear the king say to you, depart accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'
 (g) And now, go and pervert and burlesque the scripture, go and lampoon the character of its heroes, and ridicule the sublime discourses of its prophets and its apostles ; as some have done, who have left little behind them but the short lived monuments of their ignorance, their profaneness, and their malice. Go and spread like them the banners of infidelity, and pride thyself in the number of credulous creatures lifted under them. But take heed, lest the insulted Galilean direct a secret arrow to thine heart, and stop thy licentious breath before it has finished the next sentence thou wouldst utter against him.

§. 7.

(f) Acts v. 30.

(g) Matt. xxv. 41.

§. 7. I will now turn myself from the deist or the sceptick, and direct my address to the nominal Christian; if he may upon any terms be called a Christian, who feels not, after all I have pleaded, a disposition to subject himself to the government and the grace of that saviour, whose name he bears. O sinner, thou art turning away from my Lord, in whose cause I speak; but let me earnestly intreat thee seriously to consider, why thou art turning away, and to whom thou wilt go, from him, whom thou acknowledgest 'to have the words of eternal life.' (h) You call yourself a Christian, and yet will not by any means be persuaded to seek salvation in good earnest from and through Jesus Christ, whom you call your master and your Lord. How do you for a moment excuse this negligence to your own conscience? If I had urged you on any controverted point, it might have altered the case. If I had laboured hard to make you the disciple of any particular party of Christians, your delay might have been more reasonable: Nay, perhaps, your refusing to acquiesce might have been an act of apprehended duty to our common master. But is it matter of controversy amongst Christians, whether there be a great, holy, and righteous God; and whether such a being whom we agree to own, should be revered and loved, or neglected and dishonoured? Is it a matter of controversy, whether a sinner should deeply and seriously repent of his sins, or whether he should go on in them? Is it a disputed point amongst us, whether Jesus became incarnate, and died upon the cross, for the redemption of sinners, or no? and if it be not, can it be disputed by them who believe him to be the Son of God and the saviour of men, whether a sinner should seek to him, or neglect him? or whether one who professes to be a Christian, should depart from iniquity, or give himself up to the practice of it? Are the precepts of our great master written so obscurely in his word, that there should be room seriously to question, whether he require a devout, holy, humble, spiritual, watchful, self-denying life, or whether he allow the contrary? Has Christ, after all his pretensions of bringing life and immortality to light, left it

more

(h) John vi. 68.

more uncertain than he found it, whether there be any future state of happiness and misery, or for whom these states are respectively intended? Is it matter of controversy, whether God will, or will not, 'bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil?' (i) or whether at the conclusion of that judgment, 'the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal?' (k) You will not, I am sure, for very shame pretend any doubt about these things, and yet call yourself a Christian. Why then will you not be persuaded to lay them to heart, and to act as duty and interest so evidently require? O sinner, the cause is too obvious; a cause indeed quite unworthy of being called a reason. It is because thou art blinded and befuddled with thy vanities and thy lusts. It is because thou hast some perishing trifle, which charms thy imagination and thy senses, so that it is dearer to thee than God and Christ, than thine own soul and its salvation. It is in a word, because thou art still under the influence of that carnal mind, which, whatever pious forms it may sometimes admit and pretend, 'is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed can be.' (l) And therefore, thou art in the very case of those wretches, concerning whom our Lord said in the days of his flesh, 'ye will not come unto me that ye might have life,' (m) and therefore 'ye shall die in your sins.' (n)

§. 8. In this case I see not what it can signify, to renew those expostulations and addresses, which I have made in the former chapters. As our blessed redeemer says, of those who rejected his gospel, 'ye have both seen and hated both me and my father;' (o) so may I truly say with regard to you, I have endeavoured to shew you in the plainest and the clearest words both Christ and the Father; I have urged the obligations you are under to both; I have laid before you your guilt, and your condemnation; I have pointed out the only remedy; I have pointed out the rock, on which I have built my own eternal hopes, and the way in which alone I expect salvation. I have

recommended

(i) Eccles. xii. 14. (k) Matt. xxv. 46. (l) Rom. viii. 7.
 (m) John vi. 40. (n) John viii. 24. (o) John xv. 24.

recommended those things to you, which if God gives me an opportunity, I will with my dying breath earnestly and affectionately recommend to my own children, and to all the dearest friends that I have upon earth, who may then be near me; esteeming it the highest token of my friendship, the surest proof of my love to them. And if believing the gospel to be true, you resolve to reject it, I have nothing farther to say, but that you must abide by the consequence.—Yet as Moses when he went out from the presence of Pharaoh for the last time, finding his heart yet more hardened by all the judgments, and deliverances with which he had formerly been exercised, denounced upon him God's 'passing through the land in terror to smite the first-born with death, and warned of that great and lamentable cry which the sword of the destroying angel should raise throughout all his realms:' (p) So will I, sinner, now when I am quitting thee, speak to thee yet again, 'whether thou wilt hear, or whether thou wilt forbear,' (q) and denounce that much more terrible judgment, which the 'sword of divine vengeance, already whetted and drawn, and bathed as it were in heaven,' (r) is preparing against thee; which shall end in a much more doleful cry, though thou wert greater and more obstinate than that haughty monarch. Yes, sinner, that I may, with the apostle Paul, when turning to others who are more like to hear me, 'shake my raiment and say, I am pure from your blood;' (s) I will once more tell you, what the end of these things will be. And, O, that I could speak to purpose! O that I could thunder in thine ear such a peal of terror, as might awaken thee, and be too loud to be drowned in all the noise of carnal mirth, or to be deaden'd by those dangerous opiates, with which thou art contriving to stupify thy conscience!

§. 9. Seek what amusements and entertainments thou wilt, O sinner, I tell thee, if thou wert equal in dignity, and power, and magnificence, to the 'great monarch of Babylon, thy pomp shall be brought down to the grave, and all the sound of thy viols; the worm shall be spread under thee, and the worm shall cover thee.' (t) Yes, sinner,

(p) Exod. xi. 4, 6. (q) Ezek. ii. 7. (r) Isai. xxxiv. 5.
 (s) Acts xviii. 6. (t) Isai. xiv. 11.

ner, 'the end of these things is death;' [u] death in its most terrible sense to thee, if this continue thy governing temper. Thou canst not avoid it; and, if it be possible for any thing that I can say to prevent, thou shalt not forget it. Your 'strength is not the strength of stones, nor is your flesh of brass.' [x] You are accessible to diseases, as well as others; and, if some sudden accident do not prevent it, we shall soon see, how heroically you will behave yourself on a dying bed, and in the near views of eternity. You, that now despise Christ, and trifle with his gospel, we shall see you droop and languish; shall see all your relish for your carnal recreations, and your vain companions lost. And if perhaps one and another of them bolt in upon you, and is brutish and desperate enough to attempt to entertain a dying man, with a gay story, or a prophane jest, we shall see how you will relish it. We shall see, what comfort you will have in reflecting on what is past, or what hope in looking forward to what is to come. Perhaps trembling and astonished, you will then be enquiring in a wild kind of consternation, what you should do to be saved; calling for the ministers of Christ, whom you now despise for the earnestness with which they would labour to save your soul; and it may be, falling into a delirium, or dying convulsions, before they can come. Or perhaps we may see you flattering yourselves, through a long lingering illness, that you shall still recover, and putting off any serious reflection and conversation, for fear it should overset your spirits. And the cruel kindness of friends and physicians, as if they were in league with satan to make the destruction of your soul as sure as possible, may perhaps abet this fatal deceit.

§. 10. And if any of these probable cases happen, that is, in short, unless a miracle of grace snatch you as a brand out of the burning, when the flames have as it were already taken hold of you; all these gloomy circumstances, which pass in the chambers of illness and the bed of death, are but the fore-runners of infinitely more dreadful things. O, who can describe them! who can imagine them! When surviving friends are tenderly

M

mourning

[u] Rom. vi. 29.

[x] Job vi. 12.

mourning over the breathless corpse, and taking a fond farewell of it, before it is laid to consume away in the dark and silent grave, into what hands, O sinner, will thy soul be fallen! What scenes will open upon thy separate spirit, even before thy deserted flesh be cold, or thy sightless eyes are closed! It shall then know, what it is to return to God to be rejected by him, as having rejected his gospel and his son, and despised the only treaty of reconciliation; and that such a one, so amazingly condescending and gracious. Thou shalt know, what it is to be disowned by Christ, whom thou hast refused to entertain; and what it is, as the certain and immediate consequence of that, to be left in the hands of the malignant spirits of hell. There will be no more friendship then: None to comfort, none to alleviate thy agony and distress: But on the contrary, all around thee labouring to aggravate and increase them. Thou shalt pass away the intermediate years of the separate state, in dreadful expectation, and bitter outcries of horror and remorse. And then, thou shalt hear the trumpet of the arch-angel, in whatever cavern of that gloomy world thou art lodged. Its sound shall penetrate thy prison, where doleful and horrible as it is, thou shalt nevertheless wish, that thou mightest still be allowed to hide thy guilty head, rather than shew it before the face of that awful judge, before whom 'heaven and earth are fleeing away.' [y] But thou must come forth, and be reunited to a body, now formed forever to endure agonies, which in this mortal state would have dissolved it in a moment. You would not be persuaded to come to Christ before: You would stupidly neglect him, in spite of reason, in spite of conscience, in spite of all the tenderest sollicitations of the gospel, and the repeated admonitions of its most faithful ministers. But now, sinner, you shall have an interview with him; if that may be called an interview, in which you will not dare to lift up your head to view the face of your tremendous and inexorable judge. There at least, how distant soever the time of our life and the place of our abode may have been, there shall we see, how courageously 'your heart will endure, and how strong your hands

hands will be, when the Lord doth this.' [z] There shall I see thee, O reader, whoever thou art that goest on in thine impenitency, among thousands and ten thousands of despairing wretches, trembling and confounded. There shall I hear thy cries among the rest, rending the very heavens in vain. The judge will rise from the tribunal with majestic composure, and leave thee to be hurried down to those everlasting burnings, to which his righteous vengeance hath doomed thee, because thou wouldst not be saved from them. Hell shall shut its mouth upon thee for ever, and the sad echo of thy groans and outcries shall be lost amidst the hallelujahs of heaven to all that find mercy of the Lord in that day.

§. 11. This will most assuredly be the end of these things: And thou, as a Christian, professest to know, and to believe it. It moves my heart at least, if it moves not thine. I firmly believe, that every one, who himself obtains salvation and glory, will bear so much of his favour's image in wisdom and goodness, in zeal for God, and a steady regard to the happiness of the whole creation, that he will behold this sad scene with calm approbation, and without any painful commotion of mind. But as yet I am flesh and blood; and therefore my bowels are troubled, and mine eyes often overflow with grief, to think, that wretched sinners will have no more compassion upon their own souls; to think, that in spite of all admonition, they will obstinately run upon final everlasting destruction. It would signify nothing here, to add a prayer, or a meditation, for your use. Poor creature! you will not meditate! you will not pray! Yet as I have often poured out my heart in prayer over a dying friend, when the force of his distemper has rendered him incapable of joining with me; so will I now apply myself to God for you, O unhappy creature! And if you disdain so much as to read what my compassion dictates; yet I hope, they who have felt the power of the gospel on their own souls, as they cannot but pity such as you, will join with me in such cordial, though broken petitions, as these.

A Prayer

[z] Ezek. xxii. 14.

A Prayer in behalf of an impenitent sinner, in the case described above.

“ALMIGHTY God! ‘with thee all things are possible:’ [a] To thee therefore do I humbly apply myself in behalf of this dear immortal soul, which thou here seest perishing in its sins, and hardening itself against that everlasting gospel, which has been the power of God to the salvation of so many thousands and millions. Thou art witness, O blessed God, thou art witness to the plainness and seriousness, with which the message has been delivered. It is in thy presence that these awful words have been written; and in thy presence have they been read. Be pleased therefore to record it in the book of thy remembrance, that so ‘if this wicked man dieth in his iniquity, after the warning has been so plainly and so solemnly given him, his blood may not be required at my hand,’ [b] nor at the hand of that Christian friend, whoever he is, by whom this book has been put into his, with a sincere desire for the salvation of his soul. Be witness, O blessed ‘Jesus, in the day in which thou shalt judge the secrets of all hearts,’ [c] that thy gospel has been preached to this hardened wretch, and salvation by thy blood hath been offered him, though he continue to despise it. And may thine unworthy messenger be ‘unto God a sweet favour in Christ, in this very soul, even though it should at last perish!’ [d]

“But, O that, after all his hardness and impenitence, thou wouldst still be pleased, by the sovereign power of thine efficacious grace, to awaken and convert him! Well do we know, O thou Lord of universal nature, that he, who made the soul, can cause the sword of conviction to come near and enter into it. O that, in thine infinite wisdom and love, thou wouldst find out a way to interpose, and save this sinner from death, from eternal death! O that, if it be thy blessed will, thou wouldst immediately do it! Thou knowest, O God, he is a dying creature: Thou knowest, that if any thing be done for him, it must be done quickly: Thou seest, in the book
of

[a] Matt. xix. 26. [b] Ezek. xxxiii. 8, 9. [c] Rom. ii. 16.

[d] 2 Cor. ii. 15.

of thy wise and gracious decrees, a moment marked, which must seal him up in an unchangeable state: O that thou wouldst lay hold on him, while he is yet 'joined to the living, and hath hope!' [e] Thy immutable laws in the dispensation of grace forbid, that a soul should be converted and renewed after its entrance on the invisible world: O let thy sacred spirit work, while he is yet as it were within the sphere of his operations! Work, O God, by whatever method thou pleasest; only have mercy upon him! O Lord, have mercy upon him, that he sink not into those depths of damnation and ruin, on the very brink of which, he so evidently appears! O that thou wouldst bring him, if that be necessary, and seem to thee most expedient, into any depths of calamity and distress! O that, with Manasseh, he may be 'taken in the thorns, and laden with the fetters of affliction, if that may but cause him to seek the God of his fathers!' [f]

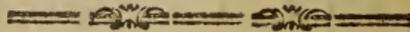
"But I prescribe not to thy infinite wisdom. Thou hast displayed thy power in glorious and astonishing instances; which I thank thee, that I have so circumstantially known, and by the knowledge of them have been fortified against the rash confidence of those, who weakly and arrogantly pronounce that to be impossible which is actually done. Thou hast, I know, done that by a single thought in retirement, when the happy man reclaimed by it hath been far from means, and far from ordinances, which neither the most awful admonitions, nor the most tender intreaties, nor the most terrible afflictions, nor the most wonderful deliverances had been able to effect.

"Glorify thy name, O Lord, and glorify thy grace, in the method which to thine infinite wisdom shall seem most expedient! Only grant, I beseech thee, with all humble submission to thy will, that this sinner may be saved! or if not, that the labour of this part may not be altogether in vain; but that if some reject it to their aggravated ruin, others may hearken and live! That those thy servants, who have laboured for their deliverance and happiness, may view them in the regions of

[e] Eccles. ix. 4. [f] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11, 12.

glory, as the spoils which thou hast honoured them as the instruments of recovering ; and may join with them in the hallelujahs of heaven, ‘ to him, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us of condemned rebels, and accursed polluted sinners, kings and priests unto God ; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever !’ *Amen.* [g]

[g] Rev. i. 5, 6.



CHAP. XII.

AN ADDRESS TO A SOUL SO OVERWHELMED WITH A SENSE OF THE GREATNESS OF ITS SINS, THAT IT DARES NOT APPLY ITSELF TO CHRIST WITH ANY HOPE OF SALVATION.

The case described at large, §. 1,—4. as it frequently occurs. §. 5. Granting all that the dejected soul charges on itself, §. 6. the invitations and promises of Christ give hope. §. 7. The reader urged, under all his burthens and fears, to an humble application to him : §. 8. Which is accordingly exemplified in the concluding reflection and prayer.

§. 1. **I** HAVE now done with those unhappy creatures who despise the gospel, and with those who neglect it. With pleasure do I now turn myself to those, who will hear me with more regard. Among the various cases, which now present themselves to my thoughts, and demand my tender, affectionate, respectful care, there is none more worthy of compassion, than that which I have mentioned in the title of this chapter ; none which requires a more immediate attempt of relief.

§. 2. It is very possible, some afflicted creatures may be ready to cry out, “ it is enough : Aggravate my grief, and my distress, no more. The sentence you have been so awfully describing, as what shall be passed and executed

executed on the impenitent and unbelieving, is my sentence; and the terrors of it are my terrors. For 'mine iniquities are gone up unto the heavens, and my transgressions have reached unto the clouds.' [a] My case is quite singular. Surely there never was so great a sinner as I. I have received so many mercies, I have enjoyed so many advantages, I have heard so many invitations of gospel-grace; and yet my heart has been so hard, and my nature is so exceeding sinful, and the number and aggravating circumstances of my provocations have been such, that I dare not hope. It is enough, that God hath supported me thus long; it is enough, that after so many years of wickedness, I am yet out of hell. Every day's reprieve is a mercy, at which I am astonished. I lie down, and wonder, that death and damnation have not seized me in my walks the day past. I arise, and wonder, that my bed hath not been my grave; wonder, that my soul is not separated from flesh, and surrounded with devils and damned spirits.

§. 3. "I have indeed heard the message of salvation; but alas, it seems no message of salvation to me. There are happy souls that have hope; and their hope is indeed in Christ, and the grace of God manifested in him. But then they feel in their hearts an encouragement to apply to him; whereas I dare not do it. Christ and grace are things, in which, I fear, I have no part, and must expect none. There are exceeding rich and precious promises in the word of God; but they are to me as a sealed book, and are hid from me as to any personal use. I know, Christ is able to save: I know, he is willing to save some. But that he should be willing to save me, such a polluted, such a provoking creature, as God knows, and as conscience knows, I have been, and to this day am; this I know not how to believe: And the utmost that I can do towards believing it, is to acknowledge that it is not absolutely impossible, and that I do not yet lie down in complete despair; though alas, I seem upon the very borders of it, and expect every day and hour to fall into it."

§. 4. I should not perhaps have entered so fully into
this

(a) Rev. xviii. 5.

this case, if I had not seen many in it ; and I will add, reader, for your encouragement, if it be your case, several who are now in the number of the most established, cheerful, and useful Christians. And I hope, divine grace will add you to the rest, if ‘ out of these depths you be enabled to cry unto God ;’ [b] and though, like *Jehnah*, you may seem to be ‘ cast out of his presence, yet still, with *Jonah*, you look towards his holy temple.’ [c]

§. 5. Let it not be imagined, that it is in any neglect of that blessed spirit, whose office it is to be the great comforter, that I now attempt to reason you out of this disconsolate frame : For it is as the great source of reason, that he deals with rational creatures ; and it is in the use of rational means and considerations, that he may most justly be expected to operate. Give me leave therefore, to address myself calmly to you, and to ask you, what reason you have for all these passionate complaints and accusations against yourself ? What reason have you to suggest, that your case is singular, when so many have told you, they have felt the same ? What reason have you to conclude so hardly against yourself, when the gospel speaks in such favourable terms ? Or what reason to imagine, that the gracious things it says are not intended for you ? You know indeed more of the corruptions of your own heart, than you know of the hearts of others ; and you make a thousand charitable excuses for their visible failings and infirmities, which you make not for your own. And it may be some of those, whom you admire as eminent saints when compared with you, are on their part humbling themselves in the dust as unworthy to be numbered among the least of God’s people, and wishing themselves like you, in whom they think they see much more good, and much less of evil than in themselves.

§. 6. But to suppose the worst, what if you were really the vilest sinner that ever lived upon the face of the earth ? What if your iniquities had gone up unto the heavens every day, and ‘ your transgressions had reached unto the clouds ;’ [d] reached thither with such horrid aggravations, that earth and heaven should have had rea-

son

[b] *Psal.* cxxx. 1. [c] *Jonah* ii. 4. [d] *Rev.* xviii. 5.

[e] *Gen.* xviii. 14.

son to detest you, as a monster of impiety? Admitting all this, 'is any thing too hard for the Lord?' [e] Are any sins, of which a sinner can repent, of so deep a dye, that the blood of Christ cannot wash them away? Nay, though it would be daring wickedness and monstrous folly, for any 'to sin that grace might abound,' [f] yet had you indeed raised your account beyond all that divine grace has ever yet pardoned, who should 'limit the holy one of Israel?' [g] or who should pretend to say, that it was impossible that God might for your very wretchedness chuse you out from others, to make you a monument of mercy, and a trophy of hitherto unparalleled grace? The apostle Paul strongly intimates this to have been the case, with regard to himself: And why might not you likewise, if indeed 'the chief of sinners, obtain mercy, that in you, as the chief, Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who shall hereafter believe?' [h]

§. 7. Gloomy as your apprehensions are, I would ask you plainly, do you in your conscience think, that Christ is not able to save you? What, is he not able to save even 'to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him?' [i] Yes, you will say, abundantly able to do it; but I dare not imagine, that he will do it. And how do you know, that he will not? He has helped the very greatest sinners of all that have yet applied themselves to him: And he has made the offers of grace and salvation in the most engaging and encouraging terms. 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink:' [k] 'Let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely:' [l] 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest:' [m] And once more, 'him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' [n] True, will you say, none that are given him by the father: Could I know, I were of that number, I could then apply cheerfully to him. But, dear reader, let me intreat you to look into the text itself, and see, whether that limitation

be

[f] Rom. vi. 1. [g] Psal. lxxviii. 41. [h] 1 Tim. i. 15, 16.

[i] Heb. vii. 25. [k] John vii. 37. [l] Rev. xxii. 17.

[m] Matt. xi. 28. [n] John vi. 37.

be expressly added there. Do you there read, none of them whom the father hath given me shall be cast out? The words are in a much more encouraging form: And why should you frustrate his wisdom and goodness, by such an addition of your own? 'Add not to his words lest he reprove thee:' (o) Take them as they stand, and drink in the consolation of them. Our Lord knew into what perplexity some serious minds might possibly be thrown by what he had before been saying, all that the father hath given me, shall come unto me; and therefore, as if it were on purpose to balance it, he adds those gracious words, him that cometh unto me I will in no wise, by no means, on no consideration whatsoever, cast out.

§. 8. If therefore you are already discouraged and terrified at the greatness of your sins, do not add to their weight and number that one greater and worse than all the rest, a distrust of the faithfulness and grace of the blessed Redeemer. Do not, so far as in you lies, oppose all the purposes of his love to you. O distressed soul, whom dost thou dread? To whom dost thou tremble to approach? Is there any thing so terrible, in a crucified redeemer, in the lamb that was slain? If thou carriest thy soul almost sinking under the burthen of its guilt, to lay it down at his feet, what dost thou offer him, but the spoil which he bled and died to recover and possess? And did he purchase it so dearly, that he might reject it with disdain? Go to him directly, and fall down in his presence, and plead that misery of thine, which thou hast now been pleading in a contrary view, as an engagement to your own soul to make the application, and as an argument with the compassionate saviour to receive you. Go, and be assured, that 'where sin hath abounded, there grace shall much more abound.' p Be assured, that if one sinner can promise himself a more certain welcome than another, it is not he that is least guilty and miserable, but he that is most deeply humbled before God, under a sense of that misery and guilt, and lies the lowest in the apprehension of it.

Reflection

(o) Prov. xxx. 6.

(p) Rom. v. 20.

Reflection on these encouragements, ending in an humble and earnest application to Christ for mercy.

“O MY soul, what sayest thou to these things? Is there not at least a possibility of help from Christ? And is there a possibility of help any other way? ‘Is any other name given under heaven, whereby we may be saved? I know there is none.’ (q) I must then say, like the ‘lepers of Israel, (r) if I sit here, I perish; and if I make my application in vain, I can but die.’ But peradventure, he may save my soul alive. I will therefore arise, and go unto him; or rather, believing him here by his spiritual presence, sinful and miserable as I am, I will this moment fall down on my face before him, and pour out my soul unto him.

“Blessed Jesus, I present myself unto thee, as a wretched creature, driven indeed by necessity to do it. For surely were not that necessity urgent and absolute, I should not dare for very shame, to appear in thine holy and majestic presence. I am fully convinced, that my sins and my follies have been inexcusably great; more than I can express, more than I can conceive. I feel a source of sin, in my corrupt and degenerate nature, which pours out iniquity, as a fountain sends out its water, and makes me a burthen and a terror to myself. Such aggravations have attended my transgressions, that it looks like presumption, so much as to ask pardon for them. And yet, would it not be the greater presumption to say, that they exceed thy mercy, and the efficacy of thy blood? to say that thou hast power and grace enough to pardon and save only sinners of a lower order, while such as I lie out of thy reach? Preserve me from that blasphemous imagination! Preserve me from that unreasonable suspicion! Lord, ‘thou canst do all things, neither is there any thought of mine heart withholden from thee.’ (s) Thou art indeed, as thy word declares, ‘able to save unto the uttermost.’ (t) And therefore, breaking through all the oppositions of shame and fear, that would keep me from thee, I come and lie down as
in

(q) Acts iv. 12.

(r) 2 Kings vii. 4.

(s) Job xlii. 2.

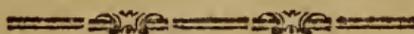
(t) Heb. vii. 25.

in the dust before thee. 'Thou knowest, O Lord, all my sins, and all my follies.' (u) I cannot, and I hope I may say, I would not, disguise them before thee, or set myself to find out plausible excuses. Accuse me, Lord, as thou pleasest; and I will ingeniously plead guilty to all thine accusations. I will own myself as great a sinner, as thou callest me: But I am still a sinner, that comes unto thee for pardon. If I must die, it shall be submitting, and owning the justice of the fatal stroke. If I perish, it shall be laying hold, as it were, on the horns of the altar; laying myself down at thy foot-stool, though I have been such a rebel against thy throne. Many have received a full pardon there; have met with favour even beyond their hopes. And are all thy compassions, O blessed Jesus, exhausted? And wilt thou now begin to reject an humble creature, who flies to thee for life, and pleads nothing but mercy and free grace? 'Have mercy upon me, O most gracious Redeemer, have mercy upon me, and let my life be precious in thy sight!' (x) O do not resolve to send me down to that state of final misery and despair, from which it was thy gracious purpose to deliver and save so many?

"Spurn me not away, O Lord, from thy presence, nor be offended when I presume to lay hold on thy royal robe, and say that 'I cannot and will not let thee go, till my suit is granted!' (y) O remember, that my eternity is at stake! Remember, O Lord, that all my hopes of obtaining eternal happiness, and avoiding everlasting, helpless, hopeless destruction, are anchored upon thee; they hang upon thy smiles, or drop at thy frown. O have mercy upon me, for the sake of this immortal soul of mine! Or, if not for the sake of mine alone, for the sake of many others, who may, on the one hand be encouraged by thy mercy to me, or on the other, may be greatly wounded and discouraged by my helpless despair! I beseech thee, O Lord, for thine own sake, and for the display of thy father's rich and sovereign grace! I beseech thee by the blood thou didst shed on the cross; I beseech thee by the covenant of grace and peace, into which the father did enter with thee for the salvation of believing
and

(u) Psal. lxxix. 5. (x) 2 Kings i. 14. (y) Gen. xxxii. 26.

and repenting sinners, save me ! Save me, O Lord, who earnestly desire to repent and believe ! I am indeed a sinner, in whose final and everlasting destruction thy justice might be greatly glorified : But O, if thou wilt pardon me, it will be a monument raised to the honor of thy grace, and the efficacy of thy blood, in proportion to the degree in which the wretch, to whom thy mercy is extended, was mean and miserable without it. Speak, Lord, by thy blessed spirit, and banish my fears ! Look upon me with love and grace in thy countenance, and say to me, as in the days of thy flesh thou didst to many an humble suppliant, thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace !”



CH A P. XIII.

THE DOUBTING SOUL MORE PARTICULARLY ASSISTED IN
ITS ENQUIRIES AS TO THE SINCERITY OF ITS
FAITH AND REPENTANCE.

Transient impressions liable to be mistaken for conversion, which would be a fatal error, §. 1. General scheme for self-examination, §. 2. Particular enquiries ; (1.) What views there have been of sin ? §. 3. (2.) What views there have been of Christ ? §. 4. As to the need the soul has of him : §. 5. And its willingness to receive him with a due surrender of heart to his service. §. 6. Nothing short of this, sufficient. §. 7. The soul submitting to divine examination the sincerity of its faith and repentance.

§. 1. **I**N consequence of all the serious things, which have been said in the former chapters, I hope it will be no false presumption to imagine, that some religious impressions may be made on hearts which had never felt them before ; or may be revived, where they have formerly grown cold and languid. Yet I am very sensible, and I desire that you may be so, how great danger there is of self-flattery on this important head ; and how neces-

fary it is to caution men, against too hasty a conclusion that they are really converted, because they have felt some warm emotion on their minds, and have reformed the gross irregularities of their former conduct. A mistake here might be infinitely fatal : It may prove the occasion of that false peace, which shall lead a man to ' bless himself in his own heart, and to conclude himself secure while all the threatenings and curses of God's law are sounding in his ears, and lie indeed directly against him : ' (a) While in the mean time he applies to himself a thousand promises, in which he has no share : which may prove therefore like generous wine to a man in an high fever, or strong opiates to one in a lethargy. The ' stony ground received the word with joy, and a promising harvest seemed to be springing up ; yet it soon withered away,' (b) and no reaper filled his arms with it. Now that this may not be the case with you, that all my labours and yours hitherto may not be lost, and that a vain dream of security and happiness may not plunge you deeper in misery and ruin, give me leave to lead you into a serious enquiry into your own heart ; that so you may be better able to judge of your case, and to distinguish between what is at most being only near the kingdom of heaven, and becoming indeed a member of it.

§. 2. Now this depends upon the sincerity of your faith in Christ, when faith is taken in its largest extent, as explained above ; that is, as comprehending repentance, and that steady purpose of new and universal obedience, of which, wherever it is real, faith will assuredly be the vital principle. Therefore to assist you in judging of your state, give me leave to ask you, or rather to intreat you to ask yourself, what views you have had, and now have, of sin, and of Christ ? And what your future purposes are, with regard to your conduct in the remainder of life, that may lie before you ? I shall not reason largely upon the several particulars I suggest under these heads, but rather refer you to your own reading and observation, to judge how agreeable they are to the word of God, the great rule, by which our characters must quickly be tried, and our eternal state unalterably determined.

§. 3.

(a) Deut. xxix. 19, 20. (b) Matt. xiii. 5, 6.

§. 3. Enquire seriously, in the first place, What views you have had of sin, and what sentiments you have felt in your soul with regard to it? There was a time, when it wore a flattering aspect, and made a fair enchanting appearance, so that all your heart was charmed with it, and it was the very business of your life to practise it. But you have since been undeceived, You have felt it 'bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder.' (c) You have beheld it with an abhorrence, far greater than the delight which it ever gave you. So far it is well. It is thus with every true penitent, and with some, I fear, who are not of that number. Let me therefore enquire farther, whence arose this abhorrence? Was it merely from a principle of self love? Was it merely because you had been wounded by it? Was it merely because you had thereby brought condemnation and ruin upon your own soul? Was there no sense of its deformity, of its baseness, of its malignity, as committed against the blessed God, considered as a glorious, a bountiful, and a merciful being? Were you never pierced by an apprehension of its vile ingratitude? And as for those purposes which have arisen in your heart against it, let me beseech you to reflect, how they have been formed, and how they have hitherto been executed. Have they been universal? Have they been resolute? And yet, amidst all that resolution, have they been humble? When you declared war with sin, was it with every sin? And is it an irreconcilable war, which you determine, by divine grace, to push on till you have entirely conquered it, or die in the attempt? And are you accordingly active in your endeavours to subdue and destroy it? If so, what are 'the fruits worthy of repentance which you bring forth'? (d) It does not, I hope, all flow away in floods of grief: Have you 'ceased to do evil? Are you learning to do well'? (e) Doth your reformation shew, that you repent of your sins; or do your renewed relapses into sin prove, that you repent even of what you call your repentance? Have you an inward abhorrence of all sin, and an unfeigned zeal against it? And doth that produce a care to guard against the occasions of it, and temptations to it? Do you watch against the circumstances that have

ensnared

(c) Prov. xxiii. 32. (d) Luke iii. 8. (e) Isai, i. 16, 17.

snared you? And do you particularly double your guard against 'that sin which most easily besets you?' (f) Is that laid aside, that the christian race may be run; laid aside with a firm determination, that you will return to it no more, that you will hold no more parley with it, that you will never take another step towards it?

§. 4. Permit me also farther to enquire, "What your views of Christ have been? What you think of him, and of your concern with him?" Have you been fully convinced, that there must be a correspondence settled between him, and your soul? And do you see and feel, that you are not only to pay him a kind of distant homage, and transient compliment, as a very wise, benevolent, and excellent person, whose name and memory you have a reverence for; but that, as he lives and reigns, as he is ever near you, and always observing you, so you must look to him, must approach him, must humbly transact business with him, and that business of the highest importance, on which your salvation depends?

§. 5. You have been brought to enquire, 'wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God?' (g) And once perhaps you were thinking of sacrifices, which your own stores might have been sufficient to furnish out. Are you now convinced, they will not suffice; and that you must have recourse to 'the lamb which God hath provided? Have you had a view of Jesus as taking away the sin of the world?' (h) as 'made a sin offering for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him?' (i) Have you viewed him, as perfectly righteous in himself; and despairing of being justified by any righteousness of your own, have you 'submitted to the righteousness of God?' (k) Has your heart ever been brought to a deep conviction of this important truth, that if ever you are saved at all, it must be thro' Christ; that if ever God extend mercy to you at all, it must be for his sake; that if ever you are fixed in the temple of God above, you must stand there as an everlasting trophy of that victory which Christ has gained over the powers of hell, who would otherwise have triumphed over you?

(f) Heb. xii. 1. (g) Mic. vi. 6.

§. 6.

(h) John i. 29. (i) 2 Cor. v. 21. (k) Rom. x. 3.

§. 6. Our Lord says, 'look unto me and be ye saved : ' (1) He says, 'if I be lifted up, I shall draw all men unto me.' (m) Have you looked to him, as the only saviour? Have you been drawn unto him, by that sacred magnet, the attractive influence of his dying love? Do you know what it is, to come to Christ, as a poor, 'weary and heavy laden sinner, that you may find rest?' (n) Do you know what it is, in a spiritual sense to 'eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the son of man;' (o) that is, to look upon Christ crucified as the great support of your soul, and to feel a desire after him, earnest as the appetite of nature after its necessary food? Have you known what it is, cordially to surrender yourself to Christ, as a poor creature whom love has made his property? Have you committed your immortal soul to him, that he may purify and save it; that he may govern it by the dictates of his word, and the influences of his spirit; that he may use it for his glory; that he may appoint it to what exercise and discipline he pleases, while it dwells here in flesh; and that he may receive it at death, and fix it among those spirits, who with perpetual songs of praise surround his throne and are his servants forever; Have you heartily consented to this; And do you, on this account of the matter, renew your consent? Do you renew it deliberately and determinately, and feel your whole soul, as it were saying amen, while you read this: If this be the case, then I can with great pleasure give you, as it were, the right hand of fellowship, and salute and embrace you, as a sincere disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, as one who is 'delivered from the power of darkness, and is translated into the kingdom of the son of God. (p) I can then salute you in the Lord, as one to whom, as a minister of Jesus, I am commissioned and charged to speak comfortably, and to tell you, not that I absolve you from your sins, for it is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment, but that the blessed God himself absolveth you; that you are one, to whom he hath said in his gospel, and is continually saying, 'your sins are forgiven you; (q)

n

therefore

(1) Isai. xlv. 22. (m) John xii. 32. (n) Matt. xi. 28.

(o) John vi. 53. (p) Col. i. 13. (q) Luke vii. 48.

therefore go in peace, and take the comfort of it.

§. 7. But if you are a stranger to these experiences, and to this temper which I have now described, the great work is yet undone ; you are an impenitent and unbelieving sinner, and ‘the wrath of God abideth on you.’ (r) However you may have been awakened and alarmed, whatever resolutions you may have formed for amending your life, how right soever your notions may be, how pure soever your forms of worship, how ardent soever your zeal, how severe soever your mortification, how humane soever your temper, how inoffensive soever your life may be, I can speak no comfort to you. Vain are all your religious hopes, if there has not been a cordial humiliation before the presence of God for all your sins ; if there has not been this avowed war declared against every thing displeasing to God ; if there has not been this sense of your need of Christ, and of your ruin without him ; if there has not been this earnest application to him, this surrender of your soul into his hands by faith, this renunciation of yourself, that you might fix on him the anchor of your hope ; if there has not been this unreserved dedication of yourself to be at all times, and in all respects, the faithful servant of God through him ; and if you do not with all this acknowledge, that you are an unprofitable servant, who have no other expectation of acceptance, or of pardon, but only through his righteousness and blood, and through the riches of divine grace in him ; I repeat it again, that all your hopes are vain, and you are ‘building on the sand.’ (s) The house you have already raised must be thrown down to the ground, and the foundation be removed and laid anew, or you and all your hopes will shortly be swept away with it, and buried under it in everlasting ruin.

The soul submitting to divine examination the sincerity of its repentance and faith.

“ O LORD God, thou ‘searchest all hearts, and triest the reins of the children of men.’ (t) ‘Search me, O Lord, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts ;

(r) John iii. 36. (s) Matt. vii. 26. (t) Jer. xvii. 10.

thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' (u) Doth not my conscience, O Lord, testify in thy presence, that my repentance and faith are such as have been described, or at least that it is my earnest prayer, that they may be so? Come therefore, O thou blessed spirit, who art the author of all grace and consolation, and work this temper more fully in my soul! O represent sin to mine eyes in all its most odious colours, that I may feel a mortal and irreconcilable hatred to it! O represent the majesty and mercy of the blessed God, in such a manner, that my heart may be alarmed, and that it may be melted! 'Smite the rock, that the waters may flow;' (x) waters of genuine, undisssembled, and filial repentance! Convince me, O thou blessed spirit, 'of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment!' (y) Shew me, that I have undone myself, but that 'my help is found in God alone,' (z) in God through Christ in whom alone he will extend compassions and help to me! According to thy peculiar office, 'take of Christ, and shew it unto me!' (a) Shew me his power to save! Shew me his willingness to exert that power! Teach my faith to behold him, as extended on the cross with open arms, and with a pierced bleeding side; and so telling me in the most forcible language, what room there is in his very heart for me! May I know what it is, to have my whole heart subdued by love; so subdued, as to be 'crucified with him;' (b) to be dead in sin, and dead to the world, 'but alive unto God through Jesus Christ!' (c) In his power and love may I confide! To him may I without any reserve commit my spirit! His image may I bear! His laws may I observe! His service may I pursue! And may I remain, through time and eternity, a monument of the efficacy of his gospel, and a trophy of his victorious grace!

"O blessed God! If there be any thing wanting towards constituting me a sincere Christian, discover it to me, and work it in me! Beat down, I beseech thee, every false and presumptuous hope, how costly soever that building may have been which is thus laid in ruins, and

(u) Psal. cxxxix. 23.

how

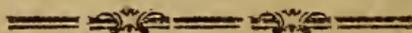
(x) Psal. lxxviii. 20. (y) John xvi. 8. (z) Hof. xiii. 9.

(a) John xvi. 15. (b) Rom. vi. 6. (c) Rom. vi. 11.

how proud soever I may have been of its vain ornaments ! Let me know the worst of my case, be that knowledge ever so distressful ; and if there be remaining danger, O let my heart be fully sensible of it, sensible while yet there is remedy !

“ If there be any secret sin yet lurking in my soul, which I have not sincerely renounced, discover it to me, and rend it out of my heart, though it should have shot its roots ever so deep, and should have wrap’d them all around it, so that every nerve should be pained by the separation ! Tear it away, O Lord, by a hand graciously severe ! And by degrees, yea, Lord, by speedy advances, go on, I beseech thee, to perfect what is still ‘lacking in faith ! (d) Accomplish in me ‘all the good pleasure of thy goodness : (e) Enrich me, O heavenly father, with all the graces of thy spirit : Form me to the compleat image of thy dear son : And then, for his sake ‘come unto me, and manifest thy gracious presence in my soul, (f) till it is ripened for that state of glory, for which all these operations are intended to prepare it ! *Amen !*”

(d) 1 Thef. iii. 10. (e) 2 Thef. i. 11. (f) John xiv. 21, 23.



C H A P. XIV.

A MORE PARTICULAR VIEW OF THE SEVERAL BRANCHES OF THE CHRISTIAN TEMPER ; BY WHICH THE READER MAY BE FARTHER ASSISTED, IN JUDGING WHAT HE IS, AND WHAT HE SHOULD ENDEAVOUR TO BE.†

The importance of the case engages to a more particular survey, what manner of spirit we are of. §. 1, 2. Accordingly the Christian temper is described, (1.) By some general views of it ;

† N. B. This chapter is almost an abridgment of that excellent book of Dr. Evans, intitled, *The Christian Temper*, so far as it relates to the description of it. For particular arguments, to enforce each part of this temper I must refer the reader to the book itself.

it ; as a new and divine temper, §. 3. As resembling that of Christ, §. 4. And as engaging us to be spiritually minded, and to walk by faith. §. 5. A plan of the remainder . §. 6. In which the Christian temper is more particularly considered, (II.) With regard to the blessed God ; as including fear, affection, and obedience. §. 7. Faith and love to Christ, §. 8, 9. Joy in him. §. 10. And a proper temper toward the holy spirit, particularly as a spirit of adoption, and of courage, §. 11.—13. (III.) With regard to ourselves ; as including preference of the soul to the body, humility, purity. §. 14. Temperance, §. 15. Contentment, §. 16. And patience. §. 17. (IV.) With regard to our fellow creatures ; as including love, §. 18. Meekness, §. 19. Peaceableness, §. 20. Mercy, §. 21. Truth, §. 22. And candor in judging, §. 23. (V.) General qualifications of each branch : §. 24. Such as sincerity, §. 25. Constancy, §. 26. Tenderness, §. 27. Zeal, §. 28. and prudence, §. 29. These things should frequently be recollected. §. 30. A review of all in a scriptural prayer.

§. 1. **W**HEN I consider the infinite importance of eternity, I find it exceedingly difficult to satisfy myself in any thing which I can say to men, where their eternal interests are concerned. I have given you a view, I hope, I may truly say, a just, as well as faithful view, of a truly Christian temper already. Yet for your farther assistance, I would offer it to your consideration in various points of light, that you may be assisted in judging of what you are, and of what you ought to be. And in this I aim, not only at your conviction, if you are yet a stranger to real religion, but at your farther edification, if by the grace of God you are by this time experimentally acquainted with it. Happy will you be, happy beyond expression, if, as you go on from one article to another, you can say, “This is my temper and character,” Happy in no inconsiderable degree if you can say, “This is what I desire, what I pray for, and what I pursue, in preference to every opposite view, though it be not what I have as yet attained.

§. 2. Search then, and try, ‘ what manner of spirit you are
are

are of.' (a) And may he that searcheth all hearts direct the enquiry, and enable you 'so to judge yourself, that you may not be condemned of the Lord!' (b)

§. 3. Know in the general, "that if you are a Christian indeed, you have been 'renewed in the spirit of your mind;' (c) so renewed, as to be regenerate, and born again." It is not enough, to have assumed a new name, to have been brought under some new restraints, or to have made a partial change in some particulars of your conduct. The change must be great and universal. Enquire then, whether you have entertained new apprehensions of things, have formed a practical judgment different from what you formerly did; whether the ends you propose, the affections which you feel working in your heart, and the course of action to which by those affections you are directed, be on the whole new or old? * Again, "if you are a Christian indeed, you are 'partaker of a divine nature;' (d) divine in its original, its tendency, and its resemblance." Enquire therefore, whether God hath implanted a principle in your heart, which tends to him, and which makes you like him. Search your soul attentively, to see if you have really the image there of God's moral perfections, of his holiness and righteousness, his goodness and fidelity; for 'the new man is after God created in righteousness and true holiness,' (e) and 'is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.' (f)

§. 4. For your farther assistance enquire, "whether 'the same mind be in you which was also in Christ;' (g) whether you bear the image of God's incarnate Son, the brightest and fairest resemblance of the Father, which earth or heaven has ever beheld?" The blessed Jesus designed himself to be a model for all his followers; and he is certainly a model most fit for our imitation: An example in our own nature, and in circumstances adapted to general use? an example, recommended to us at once by
its

(a) Luke ix. 55. (b) 1. Cor. xi. 31, 32. (c) Eph. iv. 23.

* The reader may see these thoughts illustrated at large, in the three first of my sermons on regeneration.

(d) 2 Pet. i. 4. (e) Eph. iv. 24. (f) Col. iii. 10.
(g) Phil. ii. 5.

its spotless perfection, and by the endearing relations in which he stands to us, as our master, our friend, and our head; as the person by whom our everlasting state is to be fixed, and in a resemblance to whom our final happiness is to consist, if ever we are happy at all. Look then into the life and temper of Christ, as described and illustrated in the gospels, and search whether you can find any thing like it in your own life. Have you any thing of his devotion, love, and resignation to God? Any thing of his humility, meekness, and benevolence to men? Any thing of his purity and wisdom, his contempt of the world, his patience, his fortitude, his zeal? And indeed all the other branches of the Christian temper, which do not imply previous guilt in the person by whom they are exercised, may be called in to illustrate and assist your enquiries under this head.

§. 5. Let me add, "If you are a Christian, you are in the main 'spiritually minded, as knowing that is life and peace; whereas to be carnally minded is death.' h," Tho' you 'live in the flesh, you will not war after it;' (i) you will not take your orders, and your commands from it. You will indeed attend to its necessary interests, as matter of duty; but it will still be with regard to another and a nobler interest, that of the rational and immortal spirit. Your thoughts, your affections, your pursuits, your choice will be determined by a regard to things spiritual, rather than carnal.—In a word, "you will 'walk by faith, and not by sight.' (k)" Future, invisible, and in some degree incomprehensible objects will take up your mind. Your faith will act on the being of God, his perfections, his providences, his precepts, his threatnings, and his promises. It will act upon 'Christ, whom having not seen, you will love and honor. (l) It will act on that unseen world, which it knows to be eternal, and therefore infinitely more worthy of your affectionate regard than any of 'those things which are seen, and are temporal. m)

§. 6. These are general views of the Christian temper, on which I would intreat you to examine yourself: And now I would go on to lead you into a survey of the grand branches

(h) Rom. viii. 6. (i) 2 Cor. x. 3. (k) 2 Cor. v. 7.
 (l) 1 Pet. i. 8. (m) 2 Cor. iv. 18.

branches of it, as relating to God, our neighbor, and ourselves; and of those qualifications, which must attend each of these branches, such as sincerity, constancy, tenderness, zeal, and prudence. And I beg your diligent attention, while I lay before you a few hints with regard to each, by which you may judge the better, both of your state, and your duty.

§. 7. Examine then, I intreat you, “the temper of your heart, with regard to the blessed God.” Do you find there a reverential fear, and a supreme love and veneration for his incomparable excellencies, a desire after him as the highest good, and a cordial gratitude towards him as your supreme benefactor? Can you trust his care? Can you credit his testimony? Do you desire to pay an unreserved obedience to all that he commands, and an humble submission to all the disposals of his providence? Do you design his glory as your noblest end, and make it the great business of your life to approve yourself to him? Is it your governing care to imitate him, and to ‘serve him in spirit and in truth?’ (n)

§. 8. Faith in Christ I have already described at large; and therefore shall say nothing farther, either of that persuasion of his power and grace, which is the great foundation of it; or of that acceptance of Christ under all his characters, or that surrender of the soul into his hands, in which its peculiar and distinguishing nature consists.

§. 9. If this faith in Christ be sincere, “it will undoubtedly produce a love to him;” which will express itself, in affectionate thoughts of him; in strict fidelity to him; in a careful observation of his charge; in a regard to his spirit, to his friends, and to his interests; in a reverence to the memorials of his dying love, which he has instituted; and in an ardent desire after that heavenly world, where he dwells, and where he will at length ‘have all his people to dwell with him.’ (o)

§. 10. I may add, agreeably to the word of God, “that thus believing in Christ, and loving him, you will also rejoice in him;” in his glorious design, and in his complete fitness to accomplish it, in the promises of his word, and in the privileges of his people. It will be matter of joy to
you,

(n) John iv. 24. (o) John xvi. 24.

you that such a Redeemer has appeared in this world of ours ; and your joy for yourselves will be proportionable to the degree of clearness, with which you discern your interest in him, and relation to him.

§. 11. Let me farther lead you into some reflections on “ the temper of your heart towards the Blessed Spirit.” If ‘ we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his’ (p) If we are not ‘ led by the Spirit of God,’ we are not ‘ the children of God.’ [q] You will then, if you are a real christian, desire that you ‘ may be filled with the Spirit ;’ [r] that you may have every power of your soul subject to his authority ; that his agency on your heart may be more constant, more operative, and more delightful. And to cherish these sacred influences, you will often have recourse to serious consideration and meditation : You will abstain from those sins, which tend to grieve him : You will improve the tender seasons, in which he seems to breathe upon your soul ; you will strive earnestly with God in prayer, that you may have him ‘ shed on you’ still more ‘ abundantly through Jesus Christ :’ [s] And you will be desirous to fall in with the great end of his mission, which was ‘ to glorify Christ,’ [t] and to establish his kingdom.—“ You will desire his influences as the ‘ Spirit of adoption.’ to render your acts of worship free and affectionate, your obedience vigorous, your sorrow for sin overflowing and tender, your resignation meek, and your love ardent ; in a word, to carry you through life and death, with the temper of a child who delights in his father, and who longs for his more immediate presence.

§. 12. Once more, if you are a christian indeed, you will “ be desirous to obtain the spirit of courage.” Amidst all that humility of soul to which you will be formed, you will wish to commence a hero in the cause of Christ, opposing with a vigorous resolution the strongest efforts of the powers of darkness, the inward corruption of your own heart, and all the outward difficulties you may meet with in the way of your duty, while in the cause and in the strength of Christ you go on ‘ conquering and to conquer.

O

§. 13. All

[p] Rom. viii. 19. [q] Rom. viii. 14. [r] Eph. v. 18. [s] Tit. iii. 6. [t] John xvi. 14.

§. 13. All these things may be considered as 'branches of godliness;' of that godliness, which is 'profitable unto all things,' and hath 'the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come' [u].

§. 14. Let me now farther lay before you some branches of the christian temper, "which relate more immediately to ourselves." And here, if you are a christian indeed, you will undoubtedly "prefer the soul to the body, and things eternal to those that are temporal." Conscious of the dignity and value of your immortal part, you will come to a firm resolution to secure its happiness, whatever is to be resigned, whatever is to be endured in that view,---If you are a real christian, 'you will be also cloathed with humility.' [x] You will have a deep sense of your own imperfections, both natural and moral; of the short extent of your knowledge; of the uncertainty and weakness of your resolutions; and of your continual dependance upon God, and upon almost every thing about you. And especially, you will be deeply sensible of your guilt, : the remembrance of which will fill you with shame and confusion, even when you have some reason to hope it is forgiven. This will forbid all haughtiness and insolence in your behaviour to your fellow creatures, it will teach you, under afflictive providences with all holy submission to 'bear the indignation of the Lord,' as those that know they 'have sinned against him,' [y]—Again, If you are a christian indeed, you "will labour after purity of soul," and maintain a fixed abhorrence of all prohibited sensual indulgence. A recollection of past impurities will fill you with shame and grief; and you will endeavour for the future to guard your thoughts and desires as well as your words and actions, and to abstain, not only from the commission of evil, but 'from the distant appearance' and probable occasions 'of it;' [z] as conscious of the perfect holiness of that God with whom you converse, and of the 'purifying nature of that hope,' [a] which by his gospel he hath taught you to entertain.

§. 15. With this, is nearly allied "that amiable virtue, of temperance ;" which will teach you to guard against such

[u] 1 Tim. iv. 8. [x] 1 Pet. v. 5. [y] Mic. vii. 9.

[z] 1 Thess. v. 22. [a] 1 John iii. 3.

such a use of meats and drinks, as indisposes the body for the service of the soul ; or such an indulgence in either, as will rob you of that precious jewel, your time, or occasion an expence beyond what your circumstances will admit, and beyond what will consist with those liberalities to the poor, which your relation and theirs to God and each other will require. In short, you will guard against whatever would alienate the soul from communion with God, and would diminish its zeal and activity in his service.

§. 16. The divine philosophy of the blessed Jesus will also teach you ‘ a contented temper.’ It will moderate your desires of those worldly enjoyments, after which many feel such an insatiable thirst, ever growing with indulgence and success. You will guard against an immoderate care about those things, which would lead you into a forgetfulness of your heavenly inheritance. If providence disappoint your undertakings, you will submit. If others be more prosperous, you will not envy them ; but rather will be thankful for what God is pleased to bestow upon them, as well as for what he gives you. No unlawful methods will be used to alter your present condition ; and whatever it is, you will endeavour to make the best of it ; remembering, it is what infinite wisdom and goodness have appointed you, and that it is beyond all comparison better than you have deserved ; yea, that the very deficiencies and inconveniencies of it may conduce to the improvement of your future and compleat happiness.

§. 17. With contentment, if you are a disciple of Christ, “ you will join patience too,” and ‘ in patience will possess your souls.’ [b] You cannot indeed be quite insensible, either of afflictions, or of injuries ; but your mind will be calm and composed under them, and steady in the prosecution of proper duty, though afflictions press, and though your hopes, your dearest hopes, and prospects be delayed. Patience will prevent hasty and rash conclusions, and fortify you against seeking irregular methods of relief ; disposing you in the mean time, till God shall be pleased to appear for you, to go on steadily in the way of your duty ; ‘ committing yourself to him in well doing.’ [c] You will also be careful, that ‘ patience may have its perfect work,

[b] Luke xxi. 19. [c] 1 Pet. iv. 19.

work, [d] and prevail in proportion to those circumstances which demand its peculiar exercise. For instance, when the successions of evil are long and various, so that ‘deep calls to deep, and all God’s waves and billows seem to be going over you one after another;’ [e] when God touches you in the most tender part; when the reasons of his conduct to you are quite unaccountable; when your natural spirits are weak and decayed; when unlawful methods of redress seem near and easy; still your reverence for the will of your heavenly father will carry it against all, and keep you waiting quietly for deliverance in his own time and way.

N. B. *If this chapter seem too long to be read at once it may properly be divided here.*

§. 18. I have thus led you into a brief review of the christian temper, with respect to ‘God, and ourselves:’ Permit me now to add, ‘that the gospel will teach you another set of very important lessons with respect to ‘your fellow creatures.’ They are all summed up in this, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:’ [f] ‘and whatsoever thou wouldst’ [that is, whatsoever thou couldst in an exchange of circumstances fairly and reasonably desire,] ‘that others should do unto thee, do thou likewise the same unto them.’ [g] The religion of the blessed Jesus, when it triumphs in your soul, will conquer the predominancy of an irregular self-love, and will teach you candidly and tenderly to look upon your neighbour as another self. As you are sensible of your own rights, you will be sensible of his; as you support your own character you will support his. You will desire his welfare, and be ready to relieve his necessity, as you would have your own consulted by another. You will put the kindest construction upon his dubious words and actions: you will take pleasure in his happiness: you will feel his distress, in some measure as your own. And most happy will you be, when the obvious rule is familiar to your mind, when this golden law is written upon your heart; and when it is habitually and impartially consulted by you upon every occasion, whether great or small.

§ 19. The

[d] Jam. i. 4. [e] Psal. xlii. 7. [f] Rom. xiii. 9.

[g] Matth. vii. 12.

§ 19. The gospel will also teach you, ‘to put on meekness,’ [h] not only with respect to God, submitting to the authority of his word, and the disposal of his providence, as was urged before, but also with regard to your brethren of mankind. Its gentle instructions will form you to calmness of temper under injuries and provocations, so that you may not be angry without or beyond just cause. It will engage you to guard your words, lest you provoke and exasperate those you should rather study by love to gain, and by tenderness to heal. Meekness will render you slow in using any rough and violent methods, if they can by any means be lawfully avoided; and ready to admit, and even to propose, a reconciliation, after they have been entered into, if there yet may be hope of succeeding. So far as this branch of the christian temper prevails in your heart, you will take care to avoid every thing which might give unnecessary offence to others; you will behave yourself in a modest manner, according to your station; and it will work, both with regard to superiors and inferiors; teaching you duly to honour the one, and not to overbear or oppress, to grieve or insult the other. And in religion itself, it will restrain all immoderate sallies and harsh censures; and will command down that ‘wrath of man, which, instead of working, so often opposes the righteousness of God,’ [i] and shames and wounds that good cause in which it is boisterously and furiously engaged.

§ 20. With this is naturally connected “a peaceful disposition.” If you are a christian indeed, you will have such a value and esteem for peace, as to endeavour to obtain and preserve it ‘as much as lieth in you,’ [k] as much as you fairly and honourably can. This will have such an influence upon your conduct, as to make you not only cautious of giving offence, and slow in taking it, but earnestly desirous to regain peace as soon as may be, when it is in any measure broken; that the wound may be healed while it is green, and before it begins to rankle and fester. And more especially this disposition will engage you ‘to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of
o
peace

[h] Col. iii. 12. [i] James i. 20. [k] Rom. xii. 18.

peace,' [1] with all that in 'every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;' [m] whom if you truly love, you will also love all those whom you have reason to believe to be his disciples and servants.

§ 21. If you be yourselves indeed of that number, you will also "put on bowels of mercy." [n] The mercies of God, and those of the blessed Redeemer, will work on your heart, to mould it to sentiments of compassion and generosity, so that you will feel the wants and sorrows of others; you will desire to relieve their necessities, and, as you have opportunity, you will do good both to their bodies, and their souls; expressing your kind affections in suitable actions, which may both evidence their sincerity, and render them effectual.

§. 22. As a Christian, you will also maintain truth inviolable, not only in your solemn testimonies, when confirmed by an oath, but likewise in common conversation. You will remember, too, that your promises bring an obligation upon you, which you are by no means at liberty to break through. On the whole, you will be careful to keep a strict correspondence between your words and your actions, in such a manner as becomes a servant of the God of truth.

§, 23. Once more, as amidst the strictest care to observe all the divine precepts you will still find many imperfections, on account of which you will be obliged to pray, that "God would not enter into strict judgment with you," as well knowing 'that in his sight you cannot be justified:' [o] 'you will be careful not to judge others in such a manner as should awaken the severity of his judgment against yourself.' [p] You will not, therefore, judge them pragmatically, that is, when you have nothing to do with their actions; nor rashly, without inquiring into circumstances; nor partially, without weighing them attentively and fairly; nor uncharitably, putting the worst construction upon things in their own nature dubious, deciding upon intentions as evil, farther than they certainly appear to be so, pronouncing on the state of men, or on the whole of their character, from any particular

(1) Eph. iv. 3. [m] 1 Cor. i. 2. [n] Col. iii. 12.
[o] Psal. cxliii. 2. [p] Matth. vii. 1, 2.

cular action, and involving the innocent with the guilty. There is a moderation contrary to all these extremes, which the gospel recommends ; and if you receive the gospel in good earnest into your heart, it will lay the ax to the root of such evils as these.

§. 24. Having thus briefly illustrated the principal branches of the christian temper and character, I shall conclude the representation with reminding you of some general qualifications, which must be mingled with all, and give a tincture to each of them ; such as sincerity, constancy, tenderness, zeal, and prudence.

§ 25. Always remember, “ that sincerity is the very soul of true religion.” A single intention to please God, and to approve ourselves to him, must animate and govern all that we do in it. Under the influence of this principle you will impartially inquire into every intimation of duty, and apply to the practice of it so far as it is known to you. Your heart will be engaged in all you do. Your conduct in private and in secret will be agreeable to your most public behaviour. A sense of the divine authority will teach you to ‘ esteem all God’s precepts concerning all things to be right, and to hate every false way.’ [q]

§ 26. Thus are you “ in simplicity and godly sincerity to have your conversation in the world.’ (r) And you are also to charge it upon your soul to be “ steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.’ (s) There must not only be some sudden fits and starts of devotion, or of something which looks like it, but religion must be an habitual and permanent thing. There must be a purpose to adhere to it at all times. It must be made the stated and ordinary business of life. Deliberate and presumptuous sins must be carefully avoided ; a guard must be maintained against the common infirmities of life ; and falls of one kind or of another must be matter of proportionable humiliation before God, and must occasion renewed resolution for his service. And thus you are to go on to the end of your life, not discouraged by the length and difficulty of the way, nor allured on the one hand, or terrified on the other, by all the various temptations which may surround and assault you.

Your

(q) Psa. cxix. 128. (r) 2 Cor. i. 12. (s) 1 Cor. xv. 58:

Your soul must be fixed on this basis, and you are still to behave yourself as one who knows he serves an unchangeable God, and who expects from him ‘ a kingdom which cannot be moved.’ (t)

§. 27. Again, so far as the gospel prevails in your heart, “ your spirit will be tender and the stone will be transformed into flesh.” You will desire that your apprehension of divine things may be quick, your affections ready to take proper impressions, your conscience always easily touched, and, on the whole, your resolution pliant to the divine authority, and cordially willing to be, and to do, whatever God shall appoint. You will have a tender regard to the word of God, a tender caution against sin, a tender guard against the snares of prosperity, a tender submission to God’s afflicting hand: in a word, you will be tender wherever the divine honour is concerned; and careful neither to do any thing yourself, nor to allow any thing in another, so far as you have influence, by which God should be offended, or religion reproached.

§. 28. Nay, more than all this, you will, so far as true Christianity governs in your mind, ‘ exert an holy zeal in the service of your Redeemer and your Father. You will be zealously affected in every good thing,’ (u) in proportion to its apprehended goodness and importance. You will be zealous especially to correct what is irregular in yourselves and to act to the utmost of your ability for the cause of God. Nor will you be able to look with an indifferent eye on the conduct of others in this view; but, so far as charity, meekness, and prudence will admit, you will testify your disapprobation of every thing in it, which is dishonourable to God and injurious to men. And you will labour not only to reclaim men from such courses, but to engage them to religion, and to quicken them in it.

§. 29. And, once more, you will desire “ to use the prudence which God hath given you,” in judging what is, in present circumstances, your duty to God, your neighbour, and yourself; what will be, on the whole, the most acceptable manner of discharging it, and how far it may be most advantageously pursued; as remembering, that he is indeed the wisest and the happiest man
who,

(t) Heb. .xii. 28. (u) Gal. iv. 18.

who, by constant attention of thought, discovers the greatest opportunities of doing good, and with ardent and animated resolution breaks through every opposition that he may improve those opportunities.

§ 30. This is such a view of the Christian temper as could conveniently be thrown within such narrow limits ; and, I hope, it may assist many in the great and important work of self-examination. Let your own conscience answer how far you have already attained it, and how far you desire it : and let the principal topics here touched upon be fixed in your memory and in your heart, that you may be mentioning them before God in your daily addresses to the throne of grace, in order to receive from him all necessary assistances for bringing them into practice.

A PRAYER, chiefly in scripture language, in which the several branches of the Christian temper are most briefly enumerated, in the order laid down above.

Blessed God, I humbly adore thee, as the great ‘ Father of lights, and the giver of every good and every perfect gift.’ (x) From thee, therefore, I seek every blessing, especially those which may lead me to thyself, and prepare me for the eternal enjoyment of thee. I adore thee as ‘ the God who searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men.’ (y) Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts : see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.’ (z) ‘ May I know what manner of spirit I am of,’ (a) and be preserved from mistaking, where the error might be infinitely fatal !

May I, O Lord, ‘ be renewed in the spirit of my mind !’ (b) ‘ A new heart do thou give me, and a new spirit do thou put within me !’ (c) Make me partaker of a divine nature ;’ d and ‘ as he, who hath called me, is holy, may I be holy in all manner of conversation !’ (e) May ‘ the same mind be in me which was also in Christ Jesus ;’ f and may I ‘ so walk even as he walked !’ (g) Deliver me from being carnally minded, which is death ;”
and

(x) James i. 17. (y) Jer. xvii. 10. (z) Psal. cxxxix. 23. 24.

(a) Luke ix. 55. (b) Eph. iv. 23. (c) Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

(d) 2 Pet. i. 4. (e) 1 Pet. i. 15. (f) Phil. ii. 5. (g) 1 John ii. 6.

and make me 'spiritually minded, since that is life and peace!' (h) And may I, while I pass through this world of sense, 'walk by faith and not by sight;' (i) and be 'strong in faith, giving glory to God' (k)!

May 'thy grace,' O Lord, 'which hath appeared unto all men,' and appeared to me with such glorious evidence and lustre, 'effectually teach me to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly' (l)! 'Work in mine heart that godliness which is profitable unto all things;' (m) and teach me by the influences of thy blessed Spirit, to 'love thee, the Lord my God, with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my mind, and with all my strength?' (n) May I 'yield myself unto thee as alive from the dead;' (o) and 'present my body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable in thy sight, which is my most reasonable service.' (p) May I entertain the most faithful and affectionate regards to the blessed Jesus, thine incarnate Son, 'the brightness of thy glory, & the express image of thy person!' (q) Tho' I have not seen him, may I love him; and in 'him, tho' now I see him not, yet believing, may I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:' (r) And may 'the life which I live in the flesh,' be daily 'by the faith of the Son of God!' [s] May I 'be filled with the Spirit;' (t), and may I be led by it;' (u) and so may it be evident to others, and especially to my own soul, that I am a child of God, and an heir of glory. May I 'not receive the spirit of bondage unto fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby I may be enabled to cry, Abba, Father!' (x) May he work in me as 'the spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind.' (y) that so I may 'add to my faith virtue!' (z) May I 'be strong and very courageous,' (a) and quit myself 'like a man,' (b) and like a Christian, in the work to which I am called, and in that warfare which I had in view when I listed under the banner of the great Captain of my salvation!

Teach

- (h) Rom. viii. 6. (i) 2 Cor. v. 7. (k) Rom. iv. 20.
 (l) Tit. ii. 11. 12. (m) 1 Tim. iv. 8. (n) Mark xii. 30.
 (o) Rom. vi. 13. (p) Rom. xii. 1. (q) Heb. i. 3.
 (r) 1 Pet. i. 8. (s) Gal. ii. 20. (t) Eph. v. 18. (u) Rom. viii. 14.
 [x] Rom. viii. 15. [y] 2 Tim. i. 7. [z] 2 Pet. i. 5.
 (a) Josh. i. 7. (b) 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

Teach me, O Lord, seriously to consider the nature of my own soul, and to set a suitable value upon it ! May I ‘labour, not only,’ or chiefly, ‘for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to eternal life !’ (c) May I ‘humble myself under thy mighty hand,’ and be clothed with humility :’ (d) decked ‘with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which, in the sight of God, is of great price !’ e ‘May I be pure in heart, that I may see God,’ (f) ‘mortifying my members which are on the earth,’ (g) so that ‘if a right eye offend me, I may pluck it out ; and if a right hand offend me, I may cut it off !’ (h) ‘May I be ‘temperate in all things,’ (i) ‘content with such things as I have,’ (k) and instructed to be so in ‘whatsoever state I am !’ (l) May ‘patience also have its perfect work in me, that I may be’ in that respect ‘complete, and wanting nothing !’ (m)

Form me, O Lord, I beseech thee, to ‘a proper temper toward my fellow creatures !’ May I ‘love my neighbor as myself !’ n) and ‘whatsoever I would that others should do unto me, may I also do the same unto them !’ o) May I ‘put on meekness,’ p) under the greatest injuries and provocations ; and, ‘if it be possible, as much as lieth in me,’ may I ‘live peaceably with all men !’ q) May I be ‘merciful, as my father in heaven is merciful !’ (r) May I ‘speak the truth from my heart ;’ (s) and may I ‘speak it in love ;’ (t) guarding against every instance of a censorious and malignant disposition ; and taking care not ‘to judge’ severely, as I would ‘not be judged’ (u) with a severity, which thou, Lord, knowest, and which mine own conscience knows, I should not be able to support !

“ I intreat thee, O Lord, to work in me all those qualifications of the Christian temper, which may render it peculiarly acceptable to thee, and may prove ornamental to my profession in the world. Renew, I beseech thee,
‘a right

(c) John vi. 14. (d) 1 Pet. v. 5. 6. (e) 2 Pet. iii. 4.
(f) Matt. v. 9. (g) Col. iii. 5. (h) Matt. v. 29, 30.
(i) 1 Cor. ix. 25. (k) Heb. xiii. 5. (l) Phil. iv. 11.
(m) Jam. i. 4. (n) Gal. v. 14. (o) Matt. vii. 12.
(p) Col. iii. 12. [q) Rom. xii. 18. (r) Luke vi. 36.
(s) Psal. xv. 2. (t) Eph. iv. 15. (u) Matt. vii. 1.

‘ a right spirit within me ;’ x) make me ‘ an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no allowed guile !’ (y) And while I feast on ‘ Christ, as my passover sacrificed for me,’ may I ‘ keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth !’ z) Make me, I beseech thee, O thou almighty and unchangeable God, ‘ steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in thy work, as knowing that my labour shall not be’ finally ‘ in vain !’ a) May ‘ my heart be tender,’ b) easily impressed with thy word and providences; touched with an affectionate concern for thy glory, and sensible of every impulse of thy spirit ! May I be ‘ zealous for my God,’ c) with ‘ a zeal, according to knowledge’ (d) and ‘ charity ;’ (e) and teach me in thy service, to join ‘ the wisdom of the serpent,’ (f) with the boldness of the lion, and ‘ the innocence of the dove !’ Thus render me, by thy grace, a shining image of my dear Redeemer ; and at length bring me to wear the bright resemblance of his holiness and his glory in that world where he dwells ; that I may ascribe everlasting honours to him, and to thee, O thou Father of mercies, whose invaluable gift he is, and to thine holy spirit, through whose gracious influences I would humbly hope, I may call thee, my Father, and Jesus my Saviour ! *Amen.*

(x) Psal. li. 10. (y) John i. 47. (z) 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.
 (a) 1 Cor. xv. 58. (b) 2 Kings xxii. 19. (c) Numb. xxv. 13.
 (d) Rom. x. 2. (e) 1 Cor. xvi. 14. (f) Matt. x. 16.

CHAP. XV.

THE READER REMINDED HOW MUCH HE NEEDS THE ASSISTANCE OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD, TO FORM HIM TO THE TEMPER ASCRIBED ABOVE, AND WHAT ENCOURAGEMENT HE HAS TO EXPECT IT.

Forward resolutions may prove ineffectual. §. 1. Yet religion is not to be given up in despair, but divine grace sought § 2. A general view of its reality and necessity, from reason, § 3. and Scripture,

Scripture, § 4. The Spirit to be sought as the Spirit of Christ § 5 ; and in that view, the great strength of the soul, § 6. The encouragement there is to hope for the communication of it. § 7. A concluding exhortation to pray for it. § 8. And an humble address to God pursuant to that exhortation.

§ 1. I HAVE now laid before you a plan of that temper and character which the gospel requires, and, which, if you are a true Christian, you will desire and pursue. Surely there is in the very description of it, something which must powerfully strike every mind, which has any taste for what is truly beautiful and excellent. And I question not, but you, my dear reader, will feel some impression of it upon your heart. You will immediately form some lively purpose of endeavouring after it ; and perhaps you may imagine you shall certainly and quickly attain to it. You see how reasonable it is, and what desirable consequences necessarily attend it, and the aspect which it bears on your present enjoyment, and your future happiness ; and therefore are determined you will act accordingly. But give me leave seriously to remind you how many there have been, (would to God that several of the instances had not happened within the compass of my own personal observation !) ‘ whose goodness hath been like a morning cloud, ‘ and the early dew, which soon passeth away.’ (a. — There is not room indeed absolutely to apply the words of Joshua, taken in the most rigorous sense, when he said to Israel, (that he might humble their too hasty and sanguine resolutions, ‘ You cannot serve the Lord.’ (b) But I will venture to say, you cannot easily do it. Alas ! you know not the difficulties you have to break through, you know not the temptations, which satan will throw in your way ; you know not how importunate your vain and sinful companions will be to draw you back into the snare you may attempt to break ; and above all, you know not the subtle artifices which your own corruptions will practise upon, in order to recover their dominion over you. You think the views you now have of things will be lasting, because the principles

P

and

(a.) Hof. vi. 4.

(b) Joshua xxiv. 19.

and objects to which they refer are so; but perhaps to-morrow may undeceive you, or rather deceive you anew. To-morrow may present some trifle in a new dress, which shall amuse you into a forgetfulness of all this; nay, perhaps, before you lie down on your bed, the impressions you now feel may wear off. The corrupt desires of your own heart, now perhaps a little charmed down, and lying as it were dead, may spring up again with new violence, as if they had slept only to recruit their vigour; and if you are not supported by a better strength than your own, this struggle for liberty will only make your future chains the heavier, the more shameful, and the more fatal.

§ 2. What then is to be done? is the convinced sinner to lie down in despair? to say, 'I am a helpless captive, and by exerting myself with violence may break my limbs sooner than my bonds, and increase the evil I would remove?' God forbid! You cannot, I am persuaded, be so little acquainted with Christianity as not to know, that the doctrine of divine assistance bears a very considerable part in it. You have often, I doubt not, read of 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, as making us free from the law of sin and death;' (c) and have been told that 'through the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body (d):' you have read of 'doing all things through Christ who strengtheneth us (e):' whose 'grace is sufficient for us, and whose strength is made perfect through weakness (f):' permit me, therefore, now to call down your attention to this, as a truth of the clearest evidence, and the utmost importance.

§ 3. Reason, indeed, as well as the whole tenor of Scripture, agrees with this.* The whole created world has a necessary dependence on God: 'from him even the knowledge of the natural things is derived, (g); 'and skill in them is to be ascribed to him.' [h] Much more loudly does so great and so excellent a work, as the new forming the human mind, bespeak its divine author. When you consider how various the branches of the Christian temper
are

[c] Rom. viii. 2, [d] Rom. viii. 13. [e] Phil. iv. 13.
[f] 2 Cor. xii. 9. [g] Psal. xciv. 10. [h] Exod. xxxi. 3--6.

* See many of these thoughts much more largely illustrated in my seventh sermon on Regeneration.

are, and how contrary many of them also are to that temper which hath prevailed in your heart, and governed your life in time past, you must really see divine influences as necessary to produce and nourish them, as the influences of the sun and rain are to call up the variety of plants, and flowers, and grain, and fruits, by which the earth is adorned, and our life supported. You will yet be more sensible of this, if you reflect on the violent opposition which this happy work must expect to meet with, of which I shall presently warn you more largely, and which, if you have not already experienced, it must be because you have but very lately begun to think of religion.

§ 4. Accordingly, if you give yourself leave to consult scripture on this head, (and if you would live like a christian, you must be consulting it every day, and forming your notions and actions by it,) you will see, that the whole tenor of it teaches that dependence upon God which I am now recommending. You will particularly see, that the production of religion in the soul is matter of divine promise; that when it has been effected, scripture ascribes it to a divine agency, and that the increase of grace and piety in the hearts of those who are truly regenerate, is also spoken of as the work of God, who begins and carries it on until the day of Jesus Christ.' [i]

§ 5. In consequence of all these views, lay it down to yourself as a most certain principle, that no attempt in religion is to be made in your own strength. If you forget this, and God purposes finally to save you, he will humble you by repeated disappointments, till he teach you better. You will be ashamed of one scheme and effort, and of another, till you settle upon the true basis. He will also probably show you, not only in the general that your strength is to be derived from heaven; but particularly, that it is the office of the blessed Spirit to purify the heart, and to invigorate holy resolutions; and also, that in all these operations he is to be considered as the Spirit of Christ, working under his directions, and as a vital communication from him, under the character of the great head of the church, the grand treasurer and dispenser of these holy and beneficial influences. On which account

it

it is called the 'supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,' [k] who is 'exalted at the right hand of the Father, to give repentance and remission of sins;' [l] in 'whose grace alone we can be strong,' [m] and of whose fulness we receive, even grace for grace.' [n]

§ 6. Resolve, therefore, strenuously for the service of God, and for the care of your soul; but resolve modestly and humbly. 'Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men utterly fall; but they who wait on the Lord,' are the persons who renew their strength. [o] When a soul is almost afraid to declare in the presence of the Lord, that it will not do this or that which has formerly offended him; when it is afraid absolutely to promise that it will perform this or that duty with vigour and constancy; but only expresses its humble and earnest desire that it may by grace be enabled to avoid the one, or pursue the other; then so far as my observation or experience have reached, it is in the best way to learn the happy art to conquer temptation, and of discharging duty.

§ 7. On the other hand, let not your dependence upon this Spirit, and your sense of your own weakness and insufficiency for any thing spiritually good without his continued aid, discourage you from devoting yourself to God, and engaging in a religious life, considering what abundant reason you have to hope that these gracious influences will be communicated to you.—The light of nature, at the same time that it teaches the need we have of help from God in a virtuous course, may lead us to conclude, that so benevolent a being, who bestows on the most unworthy and careless part of mankind so many blessings, will take a peculiar pleasure in communicating to such as humbly ask them, those gracious assistances which may form their deathless souls into his own resemblance, and fit them for that happiness to which their rational nature is suited, and for which it was in its first constitution intended.—The word of God will much more abundantly confirm such an hope. You there hear divine wisdom crying, even to those who had trifled with her instructions,

[k] Phil. i. 19. [l] Acts v. 31. [m.] 2 Tim. ii. 17.

[n] John i. 16. [o.] Isa. xl. 30, 31.

structions, 'Turn ye at my reproof, and I will pour out my spirit upon you.' (p) You hear the apostle saying, 'Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.' (q) Yea, you there hear our Lord himself urging, in this sweet and convincing manner, 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly father give his holy Spirit unto them that ask him.' (r) This gift and promise of the spirit was given unto Christ, when he ascended up on high, in trust for all his true disciples. God hath 'shed it abroad upon us in him.' (s) And, I may add, that the very desire you feel after the farther communication of the spirit is the result of the first fruits of it already given; so that you may with peculiar propriety interpret it as a special call, to 'open your mouth wide that he may fill it.' (t) You thirst, and therefore you may cheerfully plead that Jesus hath invited you to come unto him and drink: with a promise, not only that 'you shall drink if you come unto him,' but also that 'out of your belly shall flow' as it were 'rivers of living water,' (u) for the edification and refreshment of others.

§ 8. Go forth, therefore, with humble cheerfulness, to the prosecution of all the duties of the christian life. Go, and prosper 'in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, and of his only.' (x)—And, as a token of further communications, may your heart be quickened to the most earnest desires after the blessings I have now been recommending to your pursuit! May you be stirred up to pour out your soul before God in such holy breathings as these! and may they be your daily language in his gracious presence!

An humble SUPPLICATION for the influence of divine grace, to form, and strengthen religion in the soul.

P

"BLESSED

(p) Prov. i. 23. (q) Heb. iv. 16. (r) Luke xi. 13.

(s) Tit. iii. 6. (t) Psalm lxxxi. 10. (u) John vii. 37, 38.

(x) Psalm. lxxi. 16.

“ BLESSED God ! I sincerely acknowledge before thee mine own weakness and insufficiency for any thing that is spiritually good. I have experienced it a thousand times ; and yet my foolish heart would again trust itself ; (y) and form resolutions in its own strength. But let this be the first fruits of thy gracious influence upon it, to bring it to an humble distrust of itself, and to a repose on thee !

“ Abundantly do I rejoice, O Lord, in the kind assurances which thou givest me of thy readiness to bestow liberally and richly so great a benefit. I do, therefore, according to thy condescending invitation, ‘ come with boldness to the throne of grace, that I may find grace to help in every time of need.’ (z) I mean not, O Lord God, to turn thy grace into wantonness or perverseness, (a) or to make my weakness an excuse for my negligence and sloth. I confess thou hast already given me more strength than I have used ; and I charge it upon myself, and not on thee, that I have not long since received still more abundant supplies. I desire for the future to be found diligent in the use of all appointed means ; in the neglect of which, I well know, that petitions like these would be a profane mockery, and might much more probably provoke thee to take away what I have, than prevail upon thee to impart more ; but firmly resolving to exert myself to the utmost, I earnestly intreat the communications of thy grace, that I may be enabled to fulfil that resolution.

“ Be surety, O Lord, unto thy servant for good ?” (b) Be pleased to shed abroad thy sanctifying influences on my soul, to form me for every duty thou requirest ! Implant, I beseech thee, every grace and virtue deep in mine heart ; and maintain the happy temper in the midst of those assaults, from within and from without, to which I am continually liable while I am still in this world, and carry about with me so many infirmities ! Fill my breast, I beseech thee, with good affections towards thee, my God, and towards my fellow creatures ? Remind me always of thy presence : and may I remember, that every secret sentiment of my soul is open to thee ! May I, therefore

(y) Prov. xxviii. 26. (z) Heb. iv. 16. (a) Jude v. 4.
 (b) Psal. cxix. 122.

fore guard against the first risings of sin, and the first approaches to it! and that satan may not find room for his evil suggestions. I earnestly beg thou, Lord, wouldst fill my heart by thine holy spirit, and take up thy residence there! ‘Dwell in me, and walk with me:’ (c) and let my body be the temple of the Holy Ghost! (d)

“May I be so ‘joined to Christ Jesus my Lord, as to be one spirit with him,’ (e) and feel his invigorating influences continually bearing me on, superior to every temptation, and to every corruption; that, while the ‘youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men utterly fall, I may so wait upon the Lord as to renew my strength; (f) and may go on from one degree of faith and love, and zeal, and holiness, to another, till I appear perfect before thee in Zion,’ (g) to drink in immortal vigour and joy from thee, as the everlasting fountain of both, ‘through Jesus Christ my Lord, in whom I have righteousness and strength,’ (h) and to whom I desire ever to ascribe the praise of all mine improvements in both! *Amen.*”

(c) 2. Cor. vi. 16. (d) 1 Cor. vi. 19. (e) 1 Cor. vi. 17. (f) Isa. xl. 30, 31. (g) Psal. lxxxiv. 7. (h) Isa. xlv. 24.

C H A P. XVI.

THE CHRISTIAN CONVERT WARNED OF, AND ANIMATED
AGAINST THOSE DISCOURAGEMENTS WHICH HE MUST
EXPECT TO MEET WITH ENTERING ON A RELIGIOUS
COURSE.

Christ has instructed his disciples to expect opposition and difficulties in the way to heaven § 1. Therefore. [I] A more particular view of them is taken, as arising, (1) From the remainders of indwelling sin, § 2. (2) From the world and especially from former sinful companions, § 3. (3) From the temptations and suggestions of satan, § 4. [II] The christian is animated and encouraged by various considerations to oppose them; particularly, by—the presence of God,—the aids of Christ,—the example of others, who though feeble have conquered,—and the crown of glory to be expected, § 5. 6. Therefore, though apostacy would be infinitely fatal, the christian

tian may press on cheerfully. § 7. Accordingly the soul, alarmed by these views, is represented as committing itself to God, in the prayer which concludes the chapter.

§. 1. **W**ITH the utmost propriety has our divine master required us to 'strive to enter in at the strait gate,' (a) thereby (as it seems) intimating not only that the passage is narrow, but that it is beset with enemies; beset on the right hand and on the left with enemies cunning and formidable. And be assured, O reader, that, whatever your circumstances in life are, you must meet and encounter them. It will, therefore, be your prudence to survey them attentively in your own reflections, that you may see what you are to expect; and may consider in what armour it is necessary you should be clothed, and with what weapons you must be furnished to manage the combat. You have often heard them marshalled, as it were under three great leaders, the flesh, the world, and the devil; and, according to this distribution, I would call you to consider the forces of each, as setting themselves in array against you. O that you may be excited to 'take to yourself the whole armour of God,' (b) and to 'quit yourself like a man' (c) and a christian!

§ 2. Let your conscience answer whether you do not carry about with you a corrupt and a degenerate nature? You will, I doubt not, feel its effects. You will feel, in the language of the apostle, (who speaks of it as the case of christians themselves,) 'the flesh lusting against the spirit, so that you will not be able,' in all instances; 'to do the things that you would,' (d) You brought irregular propensities into the world along with you; and you have so often indulged those sinful inclinations that you have greatly increased their strength; and you will find, in consequence of it, that these habits cannot be broken through without great difficulty. You will, no doubt, often recollect the strong figures in which the prophet describes a case like yours; and you will own that it is justly represented by that 'of an Ethiopian changing
' his

(a) Luke xiii, 24. (b) Eph. vi. 13. (c) 1 Cor. xvi 13;
(d) Gal. v. 17.

‘ his skin, and the leopard his spots.’ (e) It is indeed possible that at first you may find such an edge and eagerness upon your own spirits, as may lead you to imagine, that all opposition will immediately fall before you; but, alas! I fear, that in a little time these enemies, which seemed to be slain at your feet, will revive and recover their weapons; and renew the assault in one form or another. And perhaps your most painful combats may be with such as you had thought most easy to be vanquished; and your greatest danger may arise from some of those enemies from whom you apprehended the least; particularly, from pride, and from indolence of spirit; from a secret alienation of heart from God, and from an indisposition for conversing with him, through an immoderate attachment to things seen and temporal, which may be oftentimes exceeding dangerous to your salvation, though perhaps they be not absolutely and universally prohibited. In a thousand of these instances you must learn to ‘ deny yourself, or you cannot be Christ’s disciple.’ (f)

§ 3. You must also lay your account to find great difficulties from the world; from its manners, customs, and examples. The things of the world will hinder you one way; and the men of the world another. Perhaps you may meet with much less assistance in religion than you are now ready to expect from good men. The present generation of them is generally so cautious to avoid every thing that looks like ostentation, and there seems something so insupportably dreadful in the charge of enthusiasm, that you will find most of our Christian brethren studying to conceal their virtue and their piety much more than others study to conceal their vices and their profaneness. But while, unless your situation be singularly happy, you meet with very little aid one way, you will, no doubt, find great opposition another. The enemies of religion will be bold and active in their assaults, while many of its friends seem unconcerned; and one sinner will probably exert himself more to corrupt you than ten christians to secure and save you. They, who have once been your companions in sin, will try a thousand artful methods to allure you back again to their forsaken society. some of them
perhaps

(e) Jer. xiii. 23. (f) Matth. xvi. 24.

perhaps with an appearance of tender fondness ; and many more by the almost irresistible art of banter and ridicule, that boasted test of right and wrong, as it has been wantonly called, will be tried upon you, perhaps without any regard to decency, or even to common humanity. You will be derided and insulted by those whose esteem and affection you naturally desire : and may find much more propriety than you imagine in the expression of the Apostle, ‘ The trial of cruel mockings,’ (g) which some fear more than either sword or flames. This persecution of tongue you must expect to go through, and perhaps may be branded as a lunatic, for no other cause than that you now begin to exercise your reason to purpose, and will not join with those that are destroying their own souls in their wild career of folly and madness.

§. 4. And it is not at all improbable, that, in the mean time, Satan may be doing his utmost to discourage and distress you. He will, no doubt, raise in your imagination the most tempting idea of the gratifications, the indulgencies, and the companions, you are obliged to forsake ; and give you the most discouraging and terrifying view of the difficulties, severities, and dangers, which are (as he will persuade you) inseparable from religion. He will not fail to represent God himself, the fountain of goodness and happiness, an hard master, whom it is impossible to please. He will perhaps fill you with the most distressful fears, and with cruel and insolent malice glory over you as his slave, when he knows you are the Lord’s freeman. At one time he will study, by his vile suggestions, to interrupt you in your duties, as if they gave him an additional power over you : at another time he will endeavour to weary you of your devotion, by influencing you to prolong it to an immoderate and tedious length, lest his power should be exerted upon you when it ceases. In short, this practised deceiver has artifices, which it would require whole volumes to display, with particular cautions against each. And he will follow you with malicious arts and pursuits to the very end of your pilgrimage ; and will leave no method unattempted which may be likely to weaken your hands, and to sadden your heart ; that is,
through

(g) Heb. xi. 36.

through the gracious interposition of God, he cannot prevent your final happiness, he may at least impair your peace and your usefulness as you are passing to it.

§ 5. This is what the people of God feel ; and what you feel in some degree or other, if you have your lot and your portion among them. But, after all, be not discouraged : Christ is ‘ the captain of your salvation.’ (h) It is delightful to consider him under this view. When we take a survey of these hosts of enemies, we may lift up our head amidst them all, and say, ‘ more and greater is he that is with us, than all those that are against us.’ (i) Trust in the Lord, and you will be like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever.’ (k) When your enemies press upon you, remember you are to fight in the presence of God.’ (l) Endeavour therefore to act a gallant and resolute part ; endeavour to ‘ resist them stedfastly in the faith.’ (m) Remember he can give power to the faint, and ‘ increase strength to them that have no might.’ (n) He hath done it in ten thousand instances already ; and he will do it in ten thousand more. How many striplings have conquered their gigantic foes in all their most formidable armour, when they have gone forth against them, though but (as it were) ‘ with a staff and a sling, in the name of the Lord God of Israel.’ (o) How many women and children have trodden down the force of the enemy, and ‘ out of weakness have been made strong.’ (p)

§ 6. Amidst all the opposition of earth and hell, look upward, and look forward, and you will feel your heart animated by the view. Your general is near : he is near to aid you ; he is near to reward you. When you feel the temptation press the hardest, think of him who endured even the cross itself for your rescue. View the fortitude of your divine leader, and endeavour to march on in his steps. Harken to his voice, for he proclaims it aloud, ‘ behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me : (q) be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown

(h) Heb. ii. 10. (i) 2 Kings vi. 16 (k) Psal. cxxv. 2.

(l) Zech. x. 5. (m) 1 Pet. v. 9. (n) Isa. xl. 29.

(o) 1 Sam. xvii. 40. 45. (p) Heb. xi. 34. (q) Rev. xxii. 12.

crown of life." (r) And, Oh how bright will it shine! and how long will its lustre last! when the gems that adorn the crowns of monarchs, & pass (instructive thought) from one royal head to another through succeeding centuries, are melted down in the last flame, it is, "a crown of glory which fadeth not away," (s)

§ 7. It is indeed true, that 'such as turn aside to crooked paths will be led forth with the workers of iniquity,' (t) to that terrible execution, which the divine justice is preparing for them; and that it would have been 'better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after having known it to turn aside from the holy commandment.' (u) But I would, by divine grace, 'hope better things of you.' (x) And I make it my hearty prayer for you, my reader, that you may be 'kept by the mighty power of God,' kept as in a garrison, on all sides fortified in the securest manner, 'through faith unto salvation.' (y)

The SOUL, alarmed by a sense of these difficulties, committing itself to divine protection.

"BLESSED God, it is to thine almighty power that I flee. Behold me surrounded with difficulties and dangers, and stretch out thine omnipotent arm to save me, 'Oh thou that savest by thy right hand them that put their trust in thee, from them that rise up against them!' (z) This day do I solemnly put myself under thy protection; exert thy power in my favour, and permit me to 'make the shadow of thy wings my refuge!' (a) Let thy grace be sufficient for me, and thy strength 'be made perfect in my weakness!' [b] I dare not say, 'I will never forsake thee: I will never deny thee:' (c) but I hope I can truly say, O Lord, I would not do it; and that, according to my present apprehension and purpose, death would appear to me much less terrible than in any wilful and deliberate instance to offend thee.

O root

(r) Rev. ii. 10. (s) 1 Pet. v. 4. (t) Psalm cxxv. 5.
 [u] 2 Pet. ii. 21. [x] Heb. vi. 9. [y] 1 Pet. ii. 5.
 [z] Psal. xvii. 7. [a] Psal. lvii. 1. [b] 2 Cor. xii. 9.
 [c] Mark xiv. 31.

O root out those corruptions from my heart, which in an hour of pressing temptation might incline me to view things in a different light, and so might betray me into the hand of the enemy! strengthen my faith, O Lord, and encourage my hope! inspire me with an heroic resolution in opposing every thing that lies in my way to heaven; and let me set my face like a flint, [d] against all the assaults of earth and hell! 'If sinners intice me let me not consent: (e) 'if they insult me,' let me not regard it; 'if they threaten me,' let me not fear! rather may a holy and ardent, yet prudent and well governed zeal, take occasion from that malignity of heart which they discover, to attempt their conviction and reformation! At least, let me never be ashamed to plead thy cause against the most profane deriders of religion! make me to hear joy and gladness in my soul; and I will endeavour to 'teach transgressors thy ways, that sinners may be converted unto thee!' (f) Yea, Lord, while my fears continue, though I should apprehend myself condemned, I am condemned so righteously for my own folly, that I would be thine advocate though against myself.

"Keep me, oh Lord, now, and all times! never let me think, whatever age or station I attain, that I am strong enough to maintain the combat without thee! nor let me imagine myself, even in this infancy of religion in my soul, so weak, that thou canst not support me! wherever thou leadest me, there let me follow: and whatever station thou appointest me, there let me labour; there let me maintain the holy war against all the enemies of my salvation, and rather fall in it, than basely abandon it!

"And thou, oh glorious Redeemer, the captain of my salvation, the great author and finisher of my faith, (g) when I am in danger of denying thee, as Peter did, look upon me with that mixture of majesty and tenderness, (h) which may either secure me from falling, or may speedily recover me to God and my duty again! And teach me to take occasion, even from my miscarriages, to humble myself more deeply for all that has been amiss, and to redouble my future diligence and caution! Amen."

Q

Chap.

(d) Isai. 1. 7. (e) Prov. i. 10. (f) Psal. li. 8, 13.

(g) Heb. xii. 2. (h) Luke xxii. 61.

C H A P. XVII.

THE CHRISTIAN URGED TO, AND ASSISTED IN AN EXPRESS ACT OF SELF DEDICATION TO THE SERVICE OF GOD:

The advantages of such a surrender are briefly suggested. §. 1. advices for the manner of doing it; that it may be deliberate, cheerful, entire, and perpetual: §. 2, 3, 4. and that it be expressed with some affecting solemnity, §. 5. A written instrument to be signed and declared before God at some season of extraordinary devotion, proposed. §. 6, 7. The chapter concludes with a specimen of such an instrument, together with an abstract of it, to be used with proper and requisite alterations:

§. 1. **A**S I would hope, that notwithstanding all the views of opposition which do or may arise, yet in consideration of those noble supports and motives which have been mentioned in the two preceding chapters, you are heartily determined for the service of God, I would now urge you to make a solemn surrender of yourself unto it. Do not only form such a purpose in your heart, but expressly declare it in the divine presence. Such solemnity in the manner of doing it is certainly very reasonable in the nature of things: and surely it is highly expedient, for binding to the Lord such a treacherous heart as we know our own to be. It will be pleasant to reflect upon it, as done at such and such a time, with such and such circumstances of place and method, which may serve to strike the memory and the conscience. The sense of the vows of God which are upon you will strengthen you in an hour of temptation; and the recollection may also encourage your humble boldness and freedom in applying to him, under the character and relation of "your covenant God and father," as future exigencies may require.

§ 2. Do it therefore, but do it deliberately. Consider what it is that you are to do, and consider how reasonable it is that it should be done, and done cordially and cheerfully; 'not by constraint, but willingly.' (a) for, in this sense and in every other, 'God loves a cheerful giver.' (b)

Now,

[a] 1 Pet. v. 2.

[b] 2 Cor. ix. 7.

Now, surely there is nothing we should do with greater cheerfulness, or more cordial consent, than making such a surrender of ourselves to the Lord; to the God who created us, who brought us into this pleasant and well furnished world, who supported us in our tender infancy, who guarded us in the thoughtless days of childhood and youth, who has hitherto continually helped, sustained, and preserved us. Nothing can be more reasonable than that we should acknowledge him as our rightful owner and our sovereign ruler; than that we should devote ourselves to him as our most gracious benefactor, and seek him as our supreme felicity. Nothing can be more apparently equitable than that we, the product of his power, and the price of his son's blood, should be his, and his forever. If you see the matter in its just view, it will be the grief of your soul that you have ever alienated yourself from the blessed God and his service; so far will you be from wishing to continue in that state of alienation another year, or another day. You will rejoice to bring back to him his revolted creature; and as you have in times past "yielded your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," you will delight to yield yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and to employ 'your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.' [c]

§ 3. The surrender will also be as entire as it is cheerful and immediate. All you are, and all you have, and all you can do, your time, your possessions, your influence over others, will be devoted to him; that for the future it may be employed entirely for him, and to his glory. You will desire to keep back nothing from him; but will seriously judge that you are then in the truest and noblest sense your own when you are most entirely his. You are also, on this great occasion, to resign all that you have to the disposal of his wise and gracious providence; not only owning his power, but consenting to his undoubted right, to do what he pleases with you, and all that he has given you; and declaring an hearty approbation of all that he has done, and of all that he may farther do.

§ 4. Once more, let me remind you, that this surrender must be perpetual. You must give yourself up to
God,

God in such a manner, as never more to pretend to be your own : for the rights of God are, like his nature, eternal and immutable : and with regard to his rational creatures, are “ the same yesterday, to day, and forever.”

§ 5. I would further advise and urge, that this dedication may be made with all possible solemnity. Do it in express words. And perhaps it may be in many cases most expedient, as many pious divines have recommended, to do it in writing. Set your hand and seal to it. That on such a day of such a month and year, and at such a place, on full consideration and serious reflection, you came to this happy resolution, ‘ that whatever others might do, you would serve the Lord.’ [d]

§ 6. Such an instrument you may, if you please, draw up for yourself ; or if you rather chuse to have it drawn up to your hand, you may find something of this nature below, in which you may easily make such alterations as shall suit your circumstances, where there is any thing peculiar in them. But whatever you use, weigh it well, meditate attentively upon it, that you may ‘ not be rash with your mouth to utter any thing before God.’ [e] And when you determine to execute this instrument, let this transaction be attended with some more than ordinary religious retirement. Make it, if you conveniently can, a day of secret fasting and prayer ; and when your heart is prepared with a becoming awe of the divine majesty, with an humble confidence in his goodness, and an earnest desire of his favour, then present yourself on your knees before God, and read it over deliberately and solemnly ; and when you have signed it, lay it by in some secure place, where you may review it whenever you please ; and make it a rule with yourself to review it, if possible, at certain seasons of the year, that you may keep up the remembrance of it.

§ 7. At least, take this course ‘till you see your way clear to the table of the Lord, where you are to renew the same covenant, and to seal it with more affecting solemnities. And God grant that you may be enabled to keep it, and, in the whole of your conversation, to walk according to it ! May it be an anchor to your soul in every temptation, and a cordial to it in every affliction ! may

[d] Josh. xxiv. 15. [e] Eccles. v. 2.

the

the recollection of it embolden your addressees to the throne of grace now, and give additional strength to your departing spirit, in a consciousness that it is ascending to your covenant God and father, and to that gracious redeemer, whose power and faithfulness will securely 'keep what you commit to him until that day.' [f]

An example of self-dedication; or, a solemn form of renewing our covenant with God.

"ETERNAL and unchangeable Jehovah, thou great creator of heaven and earth, and adorable Lord of angels and men! I desire with the deepest humiliation and abasement of soul, to fall down at this time in thine awful presence; and earnestly pray, that thou wilt penetrate my very heart with a suitable sense of thine unutterable and inconceivable glories!

"Trembling may justly take hold upon me,' [g] when I a sinful worm, presume to lift up my head to thee, presume to appear in thy majestic presence on such an occasion as this. 'Who am I, O Lord God, or what is my house?' [h] what is my nature or descent, my character and desert, that I should speak of this, and desire that I may be one party in a covenant, where thou, "the king of kings, and Lord of lords," art the other? I blush and am confounded, even to mention it before thee. But, O Lord, great as is thy majesty, so also is thy mercy. If thou wilt hold converse with any of thy creatures, thy superlatively exalted nature must stoop, must stoop infinitely low. And I know, that in and through Jesus, the son of thy love, thou condescendest to visit sinful mortals, and to allow their approach to thee, and their covenant intercourse with thee; nay, I know that the scheme and plan is thine own; and that thou hast graciously sent to propose it to us; as none untaught by thee would have been able to form it, or inclined to embrace it, even when actually proposed.

"To thee therefore do I now come, invited by the name of thy son, and trusting in his righteousness and grace. Laying myself at thy feet 'with shame and confusion

[f] 2 Tim. i. 12. [g] Job. xxi. 6. [h] 2 Sam. vii. 18.

fusion of face, and smiting upon my breast,' I say, with the humble publican, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' [i] I acknowledge, O Lord, that I have been a great transgressor. 'My sins have reached unto heaven,' [k] and mine iniquities are lifted up unto the skies.' [l] The irregular propensities of my corrupted and degenerate nature have, in ten thousand aggravated instances, 'wrought to bring forth fruit unto death.' [m] And if thou shouldest be strict to mark mine offences, I must be silent under a load of guilt, and immediately sink into destruction. But thou hast graciously called me to return unto thee, though I have been 'a wandering sheep, a prodigal son, a backsliding child.' (n) Behold, therefore, O Lord, I come unto thee. I come, convinced not only of my sin, but of my folly. I come from my very heart ashamed of myself, and with an acknowledgement in the sincerity and humility of my soul, that 'I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.' (o) I am confounded myself at the remembrance of these things; but be thou 'merciful to my unrighteousness, and do not remember against me my sins and my transgressions.' (p) Permit me, O Lord, to bring back unto thee those powers and faculties which I have ungratefully and sacrilegiously alienated from thy service; and receive, I beseech thee, thy poor revolted creature, who is now convinced of thy right to him, and desires nothing in the whole world so much as to be thine!

"Blessed God, it is with the utmost solemnity that I make this surrender of myself unto thee. 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, I avouch the Lord this day to be my God;' (q) and I avouch and declare myself this day to be "one of his covenant children, and people." Hear, O thou God of heaven, and record it in 'the book of thy remembrance,' (r) that henceforth I am thine, entirely thine. I would not merely consecrate unto thee some of my powers, or some of my possessions; or give thee a certain proportion of my services, or all I am capable of for a limited time; but I would be wholly
thine,

(i) Luke xviii. 13. (k) Rev. xviii. 5. (l) Jer. li. 9.

(m) Rom. vii. 5. (n) Jer. iii. 22. (o) 1 Sam. xxvi 21.

(p) Heb. viii. 12. [q] Deut. xxvi. 17. [r] Mal. iii. 16.

thine, and thine forever. From this day do I solemnly renounce all the 'former lords,' which have had dominion over me; (s) every sin, and every lust; and bid, in thy name, an eternal defiance to the powers of hell, which have most unjustly usurped the empire over my soul, and to all the corruptions which their fatal temptations have introduced into it. The whole frame of my nature, all the faculties of my mind, and all the members of my body, would I present before thee this day, 'as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, unto God, which I know to be my most reasonable service.' [t] 'To thee I consecrate all my worldly possessions, in thy service I desire to spend all the remainder of my time upon earth, and beg thou wouldst instruct and influence me, so that, whether my abode here be longer or shorter, every year and month, every day and hour, may be used in such a manner, as shall most effectually promote thine honour, and subserve the schemes of thy wise and gracious providence. And I earnestly pray, that whatever influence thou givest me over others, in any of the superior relations of life in which I may stand, or in consequence of any peculiar regard which may be paid to me, thou wouldst give me strength and courage to exert myself to the utmost for thy glory: resolving, not only that I will myself do it, but that all others, so far as I can rationally and properly influence them, 'shall serve the Lord.' [u], In this course, O blessed God, would I steadily persevere to the very end of my life; earnestly praying, that every future day of it may supply the deficiencies, and correct the irregularities of the former; and that I may by divine grace, be enabled, not only to hold on in that happy way, but daily to grow more active in it!

"Nor do I only consecrate all that I am, and have to thy service; but I also most humbly resign and submit to thine holy and sovereign will, myself, and all that I can call mine. I leave, O Lord, to thy management and direction, all I possess, and all I wish; and set every enjoyment and every interest before thee, to be disposed of as thou pleasest. Continue, or remove, what thou hast given me; bestow or refuse what I imagine I want,

(s) Isa. xxvi. 13. (t) Rom. xii. 1. (u) Josh. xxiv. 15.

as thou, Lord, shalt see good ! And though I dare not say I will never repine, yet I hope I may venture to say that I will labour, not only to submit, but to acquiesce ; not only to bear what thou doest in thy most afflictive dispensations, but to consent to it, and to praise thee for it ; contentedly resolving, in all that thou appointest for me, my will into thine, and looking on myself as nothing, and on thee, O God, as the great eternal all, whose word ought to determine every thing, and whose government ought to be the joy of the whole rational creation.

“ Use me, O Lord, I beseech thee, as the instrument of thy glory, and honour me so far as, either by doing or suffering what thou shalt appoint, to bring some revenue of praise to thee, and of benefit to the world in which I dwell ! And may it please thee, from this day forward, to number me among ‘ thy peculiar people, that I may be no more a stranger and foreigner, but a fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household of God !’ (w) Receive, O heavenly father, thy returning prodigal ! Wash me in the blood of thy dear son ; clothe me with his perfect righteousness ; and sanctify me throughout by the power of thy spirit ! destroy, I beseech thee, more and more the power of sin in mine heart ! transform me more into thine own image, and fashion me to the resemblance of Jesus, whom henceforward I would acknowledge as my teacher and sacrifice ; my intercessor and my Lord ? Communicate to me, I beseech thee, all needful influences of thy purifying, thy cheering, and thy comforting spirit ; and ‘ lift up that light of thy countenance upon me,’ which will put the sublimest ‘ joy and gladness into my soul !’ (x)

“ Dispose my affairs, O God, in a manner which may be most subservient to thy glory, and my own truest happiness ; and when I have done and borne thy will upon earth, call me from hence at what time, and in what manner thou pleasest : only grant, that in my dying moments, and in the near prospects of eternity, I may remember these my engagements to thee, and may employ my latest breath in thy service ! and do thou, Lord, when thou seest the agonies of dissolving nature upon me, remember this covenant too, even though I should then be incapable of (w) Eph. ii. 19. (x) Psalm iv. 6, 7. recollecting.

recollecting it ! Look down, O my heavenly father, with a pitying eye upon thy languishing, thy dying child ; place thine everlasting arms underneath me for my support ; put strength and confidence into my departing spirit : and receive it to the embraces of thine everlasting love ! Welcome it to the abodes ‘ of them that sleep in Jesus,’ (y) to wait with them till that glorious day, when the last of thy promises to thy covenant-people shall be fulfilled in their triumphant resurrection, and that ‘ abundant entrance,’ which shall be ‘ administered to them’ into that ‘ everlasting kingdom,’ (z) of which thou hast assured them by thy covenant, &c, in the hope of which, I now lay hold on it, desiring to live and to die as with mine hand on that hope.

“ And when I am thus numbered among the dead, and all the interests of mortality are over with me forever, if this solemn memorial should chance to fall into the hands of any surviving friends, may it be the means of making serious impressions on their mind ! may they read it, not only as my language, but as their own ; and learn to “ fear the Lord my God,” and with me ‘ to put their trust under the shadow of his wings” for time and for eternity ! And may they also learn to adore with me that grace, which inclines our hearts to enter into the covenant, and condescends to admit us into it when so inclined ; ascribing with me, and with all the nations of the redeemed, to the father, the son, and the holy ghost, that glory, honour and praise, which is so justly due to each divine person for the part he bears in this illustrious work !
Amen.”

N. B. For the sake of those who may think the preceding form of self dedication too long to be transcribed, (as it is probable many will,) I have, at the desire of a much esteemed friend, added the following abridgement of it, which should by all means be attentively weighed in every clause before it is executed ; and any word or phrase which may seem liable to exception, changed, that the whole heart may consent to it all.

(y) 1 Theff. iv. 14.

(z) 2 Pet. i. 11. Eternal

“ETERNAL and ever-blessed God? I desire to present myself before thee with the deepest humiliation and abasement of soul; sensible how unworthy, such a sinful worm is to appear before the holy majesty of heaven, “the king of kings, and Lord of lords,” and especially on such an occasion as this, even to enter into a covenant transaction with thee. But the scheme and plan is thine own. Thine infinite condescension hath offered it by thy son, and thy grace hath inclined my heart to accept of it.

“I come, therefore, acknowledging myself to have been a great offender; smiting on my breast, and saying with the humble publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner?” I come invited by the name of thy son, and wholly trusting in his perfect righteousness; intreating that, for his sake, thou wilt be merciful to my unrighteousness, and wilt no more remember my sins. Receive, I beseech thee, thy revolted creature, who is now convinced of thy right to him, and desires nothing so much as that he may be thine!

“This day do I, with the utmost solemnity, surrender myself to thee. I renounce all former lords that have had dominion over me; and I consecrate to thee all that I am, and all that I have; the faculties of my mind, the members of my body, my worldly possessions, my time, and my influence over others; to be all used entirely for thy glory, and resolutely employed in obedience to thy commands, as long as thou continuest me in life; with an ardent desire and humble resolution to continue thine thro’ all the endless ages of eternity; ever holding myself in an attentive posture to observe the first intimations of thy will, and ready to spring forward, with zeal and joy, to the immediate execution of it.

“To thy direction also I resign myself, and all I am and have, to be disposed of by thee in such a manner as thou shalt in thine infinite wisdom judge most subservient to the purposes of thy glory. To thee I leave the management of all events, and say without reserve, “Not my will, but thine be done.” Rejoicing with a loyal heart in thine unlimited government, as what ought to be the delight of the whole rational creation.

“Use me, O Lord, I beseech thee, as an instrument of

of thy service ! Number me among thy peculiar people ! Let me be washed in the blood of thy dear son ! let me be clothed with his righteousness ! let me be sanctified by his spirit ? Transform me more and more into his image ! Impart to me, through him, all needful influences of thy purifying, cheering, and comforting spirit ! And let my life be spent under these influences, and in the light of thy gracious countenance, as my father and my God ! ‘ And when the solemn hour of death comes, may I remember this thy covenant, well ordered in all things and sure, as all my salvation and all my desire,’ (a) though every other hope and enjoyment is perishing ! And do thou, O Lord, remember it too ! Look down with pity, O my heavenly father, on thy languishing dying child ? Embrace me in thine everlasting arms ! Put strength and confidence into my departing spirit ! and receive it to the abodes of them that sleep in Jesus, peacefully and joyfully to wait the accomplishment of thy great promise to all thy people, even that of a glorious resurrection, and of eternal happiness in thine heavenly presence ! And if any surviving friend should, when I am in the dust, meet with this memorial of my solemn transactions with thee, may he make the engagement his own ; and do thou graciously admit him to partake in all the blessings of thy covenant, through Jesus the great mediator of it : to whom with thee, O father, and thy holy spirit, be everlasting praises ascribed, by all the millions who are thus saved by thee, and by all those other celestial spirits, in whose work and blessedness, thou shalt call them to share ! *Amen.*”

(a) 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

C H A P. XVIII.

Of entering into church-communion, by an attendance upon the Lord's Supper.

The reader, being already supposed to have entered into covenant with God. § 1. is urged publicly to seal that engagement at the

the table of the Lord, § 2. (1) From a view of the ends for which that ordinance was instituted, § 3. whence its usefulness is strongly inferred. § 4. And, (2) From the authority of Christ's appointment; which is solemnly pressed on the conscience. § 5. Objections from apprehensions of an unsuitness. § 6. Weakness of grace, &c. briefly answered. § 7. At least, serious thoughtfulness on this subject is absolutely insisted upon. § 8. The chapter is closed with a prayer for one who desires to attend, yet finds himself pressed with remaining doubts.

§ 1. I HOPE this chapter will find you, by a most express consent, become one of God's covenant people, solemnly and cordially devoted to his service: and it is my hearty prayer, that the covenant you have made on earth may be ratified in heaven. But for your farther instruction and edification, give me leave to remind you, that our Lord Jesus Christ hath appointed a peculiar manner of expressing our regard to him, and of solemnly renewing our covenant with him, which, though it does not forbid any other proper way of doing it, must by no means be set aside or neglected for any human methods, how prudent and expedient soever they may appear to us.

§ 2. Our Lord has wisely ordained, that the advantages of society should be brought into religion; and as, by his command, professing christians assemble together for other acts of public worship, so he has been pleased to institute a social ordinance, in which a whole assembly of them is to come to his table, and there to eat the same bread, and drink the same cup. And this they are to do as a token of their affectionate remembrance of his dying love, of their solemn surrender of themselves to God, and of their sincere love to one another, and to all their fellow Christians.

§ 3. That these are indeed the great ends of the Lord's supper, I shall not now stay to argue at large—You need only read what the apostle Paul has written in the tenth and eleventh chapters of his first epistle to the Corinthians to convince you fully of this. He there expressly tells us, that our Lord commanded the bread to be eaten, and the wine to be drank in remembrance of him, (a) or as

(a) 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25.

a commemoration or memorial of him ; so that as often as we attend this institution, ‘ we shew forth our Lord’s death, which we are to do even until he come.’ (b) And it is particularly asserted, that ‘ the cup is the New Testament in his blood ;’ (c) that is, it is a seal of that covenant which was ratified by his blood. Now it is evident, that in consequence of this, we are to approach it with a view to that covenant, desiring its blessings, and resolving by divine grace to comply with its demands. On the whole, therefore, as the Apostle speaks, we have ‘ communion in the body, and the blood of Christ,’ (d) and partaking of his table and of his cup, we converse with Christ, and join ourselves to him as his people ; as the heathens in their idolatrous rites, had communion with their deities, and joined themselves to them ; and the Jews by eating their sacrifices, conversed with Jehovah, and joined themselves to him. He farther reminds them, that though many, they were ‘ one bread and one body, being all partakers of that one bread,’ (e) and being ‘ all made to drink into one spirit ;’ (f) that is, meeting together as if they were but one family, and joining in the commemoration of that one blood which was their common ransom, and of the Lord Jesus their common head. Now it is evident, all these reasonings are equally applicable to Christians in succeeding ages. Permit me therefore, by the authority of our divine master, to press upon you the observation of this precept.

§. 4. And let me also urge it, from the apparent tendency which it has to promote your truest advantage. You are setting out in the Christian life ; and I have reminded you at large, of the opposition you must expect to meet with in it. It is the love of Christ which must animate you to break through all. What then can be more desirable, than to bear about with you a lively sense of it ? and what can awaken that sense more, than the contemplation of his death as there represented ? Who can behold the bread broken, and the wine poured out, and not reflect, how the body of the blessed Jesus was even torn in pieces by his sufferings, and his sacred blood

R poured

(b) *ver.* 26. (c) *ver.* 25. (d) 2 Cor. x. 16. (e) 1 Cor. x. 17. (f) 1 Cor. xii. 13.

poured forth like water on the ground? Who can think of the heart rending agonies of the son of God, as the price of our redemption and salvation, and not feel his soul melted with tenderness, and inflamed with grateful affection? What an exalted view doth it give us of the blessings of the gospel-covenant, when we consider it as 'established in the blood of God's only begotten son?' And when we make our approach to God as our heavenly father, and give up ourselves to his service in this solemn manner, what an awful tendency has it, to fix the conviction, that 'we are not our own, being bought with such a price?' (g) What a tendency has it, to guard us against every temptation to those sins which we have so solemnly renounced, and to engage our fidelity to him to whom we have bound our souls as with an oath? Well may 'our hearts be knit together in mutual love,' (h) when we consider ourselves as 'one in Christ:' (i) His blood becomes the cement of the society, joins us in spirit, not only to each other, but 'to all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:' (k) And we anticipate, in pleasing hope, that blessed day, when the assembly shall be complete, and we shall all 'be forever with the Lord.' (l) Well may these views engage us to 'deny ourselves, and to take up our cross to follow our crucified master:' (m) Well may they engage us to do our utmost, by prayer and all other suitable endeavours, to serve his followers and his friends; to serve those, whom he hath purchased with his blood, and who are to be his associates, and ours, in the glories of an happy immortality.

§. 5. It is also the express institution and command of our blessed Redeemer, that the members of such societies should be tenderly solicitous for the spiritual welfare of each other: And that, on the whole, his churches may be kept pure and holy, that they should 'withdraw themselves from every brother that walketh disorderly;' (n) that they should 'mark such as cause offences or scandals amongst them, contrary to the doctrine which they

have

(g) 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. (h) Col. ii. 2. (i) Gal. iii. 28.

(k) 1 Cor. i. 2. (l) 1 Theff. iv. 17. (m) Mat. xvi. 24.

(n) 2 Theff. iii. 6.

have learned, and avoid them ;' (p) that 'if any obey not the word of Christ by his apostles, they should have no fellowship or communion with such, that they may be ashamed ;' (p) that they should not eat with such, as are notoriously irregular in their behaviour, but on the contrary should 'put away from among themselves such wicked persons.' (q) It is evident therefore, that the institution of such societies is greatly for the honor of Christianity, and for the advantage of its particular professors. And consequently, every consideration of obedience to our common Lord, and of prudent regard to our own benefit and that of our brethren, will require, that those, who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, should enter into them, and assemble among them in these their most solemn and peculiar acts of communion at his table.

§. 6. I intreat you therefore, and, if I may presume to say it, in his name and by his authority I charge it on your conscience, that this precept of our dying Lord go not, as it were, for nothing with you ; but that, if you indeed love him, you keep this, as well as the rest of his commandments.—I know, you may be ready to form objections. I have elsewhere debated many of the chief of them at large, and I hope, not without some good effect.* The great question is that, which relates to your being prepared for a worthy attendance : And in conjunction with what has been said before, I think that may be brought to a very short issue. Have you, so far as you know your own heart, been sincere in that deliberate surrender of yourself to God through Christ, which I recommended in the former chapter ? If you have, whether it were with, or without, the particular form or manner of doing it there recommended, you have certainly taken hold of the covenant, and therefore have a right to the seal of it. And there is not, and cannot be, any other view of the ordinance, in which you can have any farther objection to it. If you desire to remember Christ's death, if you desire to renew the dedication of yourself to God through him, if you would list yourself among his people, if you would love them and do them

good

(o) Rom. xvi. 17. (p) 2 Theff. iii. 14. (q) 1 Cor. v. 11, 13.

* See the *fourth* of my *Sermons to young persons*.

good according to your ability, and, on the whole, would not allow yourself in the practice of any one known sin, or in the omission of one known duty, then I will venture confidently to say, not only that you may be welcome to the ordinance, but that it was instituted for such as you.

§. 7. As for other objections, a few words may suffice by way of reply. The weakness of the religious principle in your soul, if it be really implanted there, is so far from being an argument against your seeking such a method to strengthen it, that it rather strongly enforces the necessity of doing it.—The neglect of this solemnity, by so many that call themselves Christians, should rather engage you so much the more to distinguish your zeal for an institution, in this respect so much slighted and injured.—And as for the fears of aggravated guilt in case of apostacy, do not indulge them. This may, by the divine blessing, be an effectual remedy against the evil you fear; and it is certain, that after what you must already have known and felt, before you could be brought into your present situation, on the suppositions I have now been making, there can be no room to think of a retreat; no room, even for the wretched hope of being less miserable than the generality of those that have perished. Your scheme therefore must be, to make your salvation as sure, and to make it as glorious as possible: And I know not any appointment of our blessed Redeemer, which may have a more comfortable aspect upon that blessed end, than this which I am now recommending to you.

§. 8. One thing I would at least insist upon, and I see not with what face it can be denied. I mean, that you should take this matter into a serious consideration: That you should diligently enquire, “whether you have reason in your conscience to believe, it is the will of God you should now approach to the ordinance, or not:” And that you should continue your reflections, your enquiries, and your prayers, till you find farther encouragement to come, if that encouragement be hitherto wanting. For if this be assured, that a state in which you are on the whole unfit to approach this ordinance, is a state in which you are destitute of the necessary preparations for death
and

and heaven ; in which therefore, if you would not allow yourselves to slumber on the brink of destruction, you ought not to rest so much as one single day.

A Prayer for one, who earnestly desires to approach to the table of the Lord, yet has some remaining doubts concerning his right to that solemn ordinance.

“BLESSED Lord, I adore thy wife and gracious appointments, for the edification of thy church in holiness and in love. I thank thee, that thou hast commanded thy servants, to form themselves into societies ; and I adore my gracious saviour, who hath instituted, as with his dying breath, the holy solemnity of his supper, to be through all ages a memorial of his dying love, and a bond of that union which it is his sovereign pleasure that his people should preserve. I hope, thou, Lord, art witness to the sincerity, with which I desire to give myself up to thee ; and that I may call thee to record on my soul, that if I now hesitate about this particular manner of doing it, it is not because I would allow myself to break any of thy commands, or to slight any of thy favors. I trust, thou knowest, that my present delay arises only from an uncertainty as to my duty, and a fear of profaning holy things by an unworthy approach to them. Yet surely, O Lord, if thou hast given me a reverence for thy command, a desire of communion with thee, and a willingness to devote myself wholly to thy service, I may regard it as a token for good, that thou art disposed to receive me, and that I am not wholly unqualified for an ordinance, which I so highly honour, and so earnestly desire. I therefore make it my humble request unto thee, O Lord, this day, that thou wouldst graciously be pleased to instruct me in my duty, and to ‘teach me the way which I should take ! Examine me, O Lord, and prove me ! try my reins and my heart !’ (r) Is there any secret sin, to the love and practice of which I would indulge ? Is there any of thy precepts, in the habitual breach of which I would allow myself ? I trust, I can appeal to thee as witness, that there is not. Let me not then wrong mine own soul, by a

r

causeless

causeless and sinful absence from thy sacred table ! But grant, O Lord, I beseech thee, that thy word, thy providence, and thy spirit may so concur, as to ‘make my way plain before me !’ (s) Scatter my remaining doubts, if thou seeest they have no just foundation ! Fill me with a more assured faith, with a more ardent love ; and plead thine own cause with my heart in such a manner, as that I may not be able any longer to delay that approach, which, if I am thy servant indeed, is equally my duty and my privilege ! In the mean time, grant, that it may never be long out of my thoughts : But that I may give all diligence, if there be any remaining occasion of doubt, to remove it, by a more affectionate concern to avoid whatever is displeasing to the eyes of thine holiness, and to practise the full extent of my duty ! May the views of Christ crucified be so familiar to my mind, and may a sense of his dying love so powerfully constrain my soul, that my own growing experience may put it out of all question, that I am one of those for whom he intended this feast of love !

“And even now, as joined to thy churches in spirit and in love, though not in so express and intimate a bond as I could wish, would I heartily pray, that thy blessing may be on all thy people : That thou wouldst ‘feed thine heritage, and lift them up forever !’ (t) May every Christian society flourish in knowledge, in holiness, and in love ! May all ‘thy priests be clothed with salvation, that by their means thy chosen people may be made joyful !’ (u) And may there be a glorious accession to thy churches every where, of those who may fly to them ‘as a cloud, and as doves to their windows.’ (w) May ‘thy table, O Lord, be furnished with guests ;’ (x) and may all that ‘love thy salvation, say, let the Lord be magnified, who hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants !’ (y) And I earnestly pray, that all who profess to ‘have received Christ Jesus the Lord, may be duly careful to walk in him ;’ (z) and that we may all be preparing for the general assembly of the first-born, and may join in that nobler

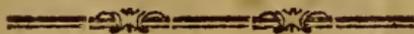
(s) Prov. xv. 19. (t) Psal. xxviii. 9. (u) Psal. cxxxii. 16.

(w) Isai. ix. 8. (x) Matt. xxii. 10. (y) Psal. xxxv. 27.

(z) Col. ii. 6.

nobler and more immediate worship, where all these types and shadows shall be laid aside; where even these memorials shall be no longer necessary, but a living, present Redeemer shall be the everlasting joy of those, who here in his absence have delighted to commemorate his death! *Amen.*"

N. B. I purposed to have added something here, concerning a regular approach to the Lord's table, a proper attendance upon it, and suitable reflections after it, but I find this work swells under my hand, beyond what I at first expected; and therefore, as these articles have been handled by so many valuable writers, I chuse to refer to them, and particularly to *Dr. Earl's sacramental exercises*, and *Mr. Grove's devotional exercises relating to the Lord's supper*: Books, which I think remarkably excellent in their kind, and which may be had at very easy rates. Yet for the farther assistance of devout communicants, I have some thoughts of publishing a small volume of *sacramental meditations on select texts of scripture*, if God spare me to finish my *exposition of the New-Testament*, and some other pieces, which I have now in hand.



C H A P. XIX.

SOME MORE PARTICULAR DIRECTIONS FOR MAINTAINING
CONTINUAL COMMUNION WITH GOD, OR BEING IN HIS
FEAR ALL THE DAY LONG.

A letter to a pious friend on this subject introduced here. §. 1. *A general plan of directions.* §. 2. (I) *For the beginning of the day*: §. 3. (I.) *Lifting up the heart to God at our first awakening*: §. 4. (2) *Setting ourselves to the secret devotions of the morning; with respect to which particular advices are given.* §. 5,—10. (II.) *For the progress of the day*: §. 11. *Directions are given concerning, (1) seriousness in devotion.* §. 12. (2) *Diligence in business.* §. 13. (3) *Prudence*

Prudence in recreations. §. 14. (4) *Observation of providences.* §. 15. (5) *Watchfulness against temptations.* §. 16. (6) *Dependance on divine influences.* §. 17. (7) *Government of the thoughts when in solitude.* §. 18. (8) *Management of discourse in company.* §. 19. (III) *For the conclusion of the day :* §. 20. (1) *With the secret devotions of the evening.* §. 21. *Directions for self-examination at large.* §. 22, 23. (2) *Lying down with a proper temper.* §. 24. *Conclusion of the letter,* §. 25. *and of the chapter :* §. 26. *With a serious view of death, proper to be taken at the close of the day.*

§. 1. **I** WOULD hope, that upon serious consideration, self-examination, and prayer, the reader may by this time become to a resolution to attend the table of the Lord, and to seal his vows there. I will now suppose that solemn transaction to be over, or some other deliberate act to have passed, by which he has given himself up to the service of God; and that his concern now is to enquire, how he may act according to the vows of God which are upon him. Now for his farther assistance here, besides the general view I have already given of the Christian temper and character, I will propose some more particular directions, relating to maintaining that devout, spiritual, and heavenly character, which may, in the language of scripture, be called ‘a daily walking with God, or being in his fear all the day long.’ (a) And I know not how I can express the idea and plan which I have formed of this in a more clear and distinct manner, than I did in a letter, which I wrote many years ago,* to a young person of eminent piety, with whom I had then an intimate friendship; and who, to the great grief of all that knew him, died a few months after he received it. Yet I hope he lived long enough to reduce the directions into practice, which I wish and pray that every reader may do, so far as they may properly suit his capacities and circumstances in life, considering it as if addressed to himself.—I say, and desire it may be observed, that I wish my reader may act on these directions so far as they

2) Prov. xxiii. 17. * N. B. It was in the year 1727.

they may properly suit his capacities and circumstances in life, for I would be far from laying down the following particulars as universal rules for all, or for any one person in the world at all times. Let them be practised by those that are able, and when they have leisure : And when you cannot reach them all, come as near the most important of them as you conveniently can.—With this precaution I proceed to the letter, which I would hope, after this previous care to guard against the danger of mistaking it, will not discourage any the weakest Christian. Let us humbly and cheerfully do our best, and rejoice that we have so gracious a father who knows all our infirmities, and so compassionate an high priest to recommend to divine acceptance the feeblest efforts of sincere duty and love !

My dear Friend,

Since you desire my thoughts in writing, and at large, on the subject of our late conversation, viz. “ By what particular methods in our daily conduct, a life of devotion and usefulness may be most happily maintained, and secured ? ” I set myself with cheerfulness, to recollect and digest the hints which I then gave you ; hoping, it may be of some service to you in your most important interests ; and may also fix on my own mind a deeper sense of my obligations, to govern my own life by the rules I offer to others. I esteem attempts of this kind among the pleasantest fruits, and the surest cements of friendship ; and as I hope ours will last for ever, I am persuaded a mutual care to cherish sentiments of this kind will add everlasting endearments to it.

§. 2. The directions you will expect from me on this occasion, naturally divide themselves into three heads. How we are to regard God,—in the beginning—the progress,—and the close of the day. I will open my heart freely to you with regard to each, and leave you to judge, how far these hints may suit your circumstances ; aiming at least to keep between the extremes, of a superstitious strictness in trifles, and of an indolent remissness, which, if admitted in little things, may draw after it criminal neglects, and at length yet more criminal indulgences.

§. 3. (I.) In the beginning of the day : It should certainly be our care—to lift up our hearts to God, as soon as we wake, and while we are rising ;—and then, to set ourselves seriously and immediately to the secret devotion of the morning.

§. 4. For the first of these, it seems exceedingly natural. There are so many things that may suggest a great variety of pious reflections and ejaculations, which are so obvious, that one would think a serious mind could hardly miss them. The ease and cheerfulness of our mind at our first awakening ; the refreshment we find from sleep ; the security we have enjoyed in that defenceless state ; the provision of warm and decent apparel ; the cheerful light of the returning sun ; or even (what it is not unfit to mention to you,) the contrivances of art, taught and furnished by the great author of all our conveniences, to supply us with many useful hours of life in the absence of the sun ; the hope of returning to the dear society of our friends ; the prospect of spending another day, in the service of God, and the improvement of our own minds ; and above all, the lively hope of a joyful resurrection to an eternal day of happiness and glory : Any of these particulars, and many more which I do not mention, may furnish us with matter of pleasing reflection and cheerful praise, while we are rising. And for our farther assistance, when we are alone at this time, it may not be improper to speak sometimes to ourselves, and sometimes to our heavenly father, in the natural expressions of joy and thankfulness. Permit me, sir, to add, that if we find our hearts in such a frame at our first awakening, even that is just matter of praise, and the rather, as perhaps it is an answer to the prayer with which we lay down.

§. 5. For the exercise of secret devotion in a morning, which I hope will generally be our first work, I cannot prescribe an exact method to another. You must, my dear friend, consult your own taste in some measure. The constituent parts of the service are in the general plain. Were I to propose a particular model for those, who have half or three quarters of an hour at command, which with prudent conduct I suppose most may have, it should be this.

§. 6. To begin the stated devotions of the day with a solemn act of praise, offered to God on our knees, and generally with a low, yet distinct voice ; acknowledging the mercies, we have been reflecting on while rising ; never forgetting to mention Christ, as the great foundation of all our enjoyments and our hopes, or to return thanks for the influences of the blessed spirit, which have led our hearts to God, or are then engaging us to seek him. This, as well as other offices of devotion afterwards mentioned, must be done attentively and sincerely ; for not to offer our praises heartily, is in the sight of God not to praise him at all. This address of praise may properly be concluded with an express renewal of our covenant with God, declaring our continued repeated resolution of being devoted to him, and particularly of living to his glory the ensuing day.

§. 7. It may be proper, after this, to take a prospect of the day before us, so far as we can probably foresee in the general, where and how it may be spent ; and seriously to reflect, “ how shall I employ myself for God this day ? What business is to be done, and in what order ? What opportunities may I expect, either of doing, or of receiving good ? What temptations am I like to be assaulted with, in any place, company, or circumstance, which may probably occur ? In what instances have I lately failed ? And how shall I be safest now ? ”

§. 8. After this review, it will be proper to offer up a short prayer ; begging, that God would quicken us to each of these foreseen duties ; that he would fortify us against each of these apprehended dangers ; that he would grant us success in such or such a business undertaken for his glory ; and also, that he would help us to discover and improve unforeseen opportunities, to resist unexpected temptations, and to bear patiently, and religiously, any afflictions which may surprize us in the day on which we are entering.

§. 9. I would advise you after this, to read some portion of scripture ; not a great deal, nor the whole bible in its course ; but some select lessons out of its most useful parts, perhaps ten or twelve verses ; not troubling yourself much about the exact connection, or other critical niceties,

niceties, which may occur, though at other times I would recommend them to your enquiry, as you have ability and opportunity; but considering them merely in a devotional and a practical view. Here take such instructions as readily present themselves to your thoughts, repeat them over to your own conscience, and charge your heart religiously to observe them and act upon them, under a sense of the divine authority which attends them. And if you pray over the substance of this scripture, with your bible open before you, it may impress your memory and your heart yet more deeply, and may form you to a copiousness and variety, both of thought and expression in prayer.

§. 10. It might be proper to close these devotions with a Psalm or Hymn: And I rejoice with you, that through the pious care of *Dr. Watts*, and some other sacred poets, we are provided with so rich a variety for the assistance of the closet and family on these occasions, as well as for the service of the sanctuary.

§. 11. (II.) The most material directions which have occurred to me, relating to the progress of the day, are these:—That we be serious in the devotions of the day;—that we be diligent in the business of it, that is, in the prosecution of our worldly callings;—that we be temperate and prudent in the recreations of it;—that we carefully remark the providences of the day;—that we cautiously guard against the temptations of it;—that we keep up a lively and humble dependance upon the divine influence, suitable to every emergency of it;—that we govern our thoughts well in the solitude of the day,—and our discourses well in the conversations of it. These, sir, were the heads of a sermon, which you lately heard me preach on this occasion, and to which I know you referred in that request which I am now endeavouring to answer. I will therefore touch upon the most material hints, which fell under each of these particulars.

§. 12. (1.) For seriousness in devotion whether public or domestic: Let us take a few moments, before we enter upon such solemnities, to pause, and reflect, on the perfections of the God we are addressing to, on the importance of the business we are coming about, on the
pleasure

pleasure and advantage of a regular and devout attendance, and on the guilt and folly of an hypocritical formality. When engaged, let us maintain a strict watchfulness over our own spirits, and check the first wanderings of thought. And when the duty is over, let us immediately reflect on the manner in which it has been performed, and ask our own consciences, whether we have reason to conclude, that we are accepted of God in it? For there is a certain manner of going through these offices, which our own hearts will immediately tell us, it is impossible for God to approve: And if we have inadvertently fallen into it, we ought to be deeply humbled before God for it, lest 'our very prayer become sin.' (b)

§. 13. (2.) As for the hours of wordly business; whether it be, as with you, that of the hands; or whether it be the labour of a learned life, not immediately relating to religious matters: Let us set to the prosecution of it with a sense of God's authority, and with a regard to his glory. Let us avoid a dreaming, sluggish, indolent temper, which nods over its work, and does only the business of one hour in two or three. In opposition to this, which runs through the life of some people, who yet think they are never idle, let us endeavour to dispatch as much as we well can in a little time; considering, that it is but a little we have in all. And let us be habitually sensible of the need we have of the divine blessing, to make our labours successful.

§. 14. (3.) For seasons of diversion: Let us take care, that our recreations be well chosen; that they be pursued with a good intention, to fit us for a renewed application to the labours of life; and thus, that they be only used in subordination to the honour of God, the great end of all our actions. Let us take heed, that our hearts be not estranged from God by them; and that they do not take up too much of our time: Always remembering, that the faculties of the human nature, and the advantages of the Christian revelation, were not given us in vain; but that we are always to be in pursuit of some great and honourable end, and to indulge ourselves in amusements and diversions no farther, than as they may make a part

in a scheme of rational and manly, benevolent and pious conduct.

§. 15. (4.) For the observation of providences: It will be useful to regard the divine interposition, in our comforts and in our afflictions.—In our comforts, whether more common, or extraordinary: That we find ourselves in continued health; that we are furnished with food for support and pleasure; that we have so many agreeable ways of employing our time; that we have so many friends, and those so good, and so happy; that our business goes on prosperously; that we go out and come in safely; and that we enjoy composure and cheerfulness of spirit, without which nothing else could be enjoyed: All these should be regarded as providential favours, and due acknowledgments should be made to God on these accounts, as we pass through such agreeable scenes.—On the other hand, providence is to be regarded in every disappointment, in every loss, in every pain, in every instance of unkindness from those who have professed friendship: And we should endeavour to argue ourselves into a patient submission, from this consideration, that the hand of God is always mediately, if not immediately, in each of them; and that if they are not properly the work of providence, they are at least under its direction. It is a reflection, which we should particularly make with relation to those little cross accidents, as we are ready to call them, and those infirmities and follies in the temper and conduct of our intimate friends, which may else be ready to discompose us. And it is the more necessary to guard our minds here, as wise and good men often lose the command of themselves on these comparatively little occasions; who, calling up reason and religion to their assistance, stand the shock of great calamities with fortitude and resolution.

§. 16. (5.) For watchfulness against temptations: It is necessary, when changing our place, or our employment to reflect, “what snares attend me here?” And as this should be our habitual care, so we should especially guard against those snares which in the morning we fore-saw. And when we are entering on those circumstances in which we expected the assault, we should reflect, especially

cially if it be a matter of great importance, “now the combat is going to begin: Now God and the blessed angels are observing, what constancy, what fortitude there is in my soul; and how far the divine authority, and the remembrance of my own prayers and resolutions, will weigh with me, when it comes to a trial.”

§. 17. (6.) As for dependance on divine grace and influence; it must be universal: And since we always need it, we must never forget that necessity. A moment spent in humble, fervent breathings after the communications of the divine assistance may do more good, than many minutes spent in mere reasoning: And though indeed this should not be neglected, since the light of reason is a kind of divine illumination; yet still it ought to be pursued in a due sense of our dependance on the ‘father of lights, or where we think ourselves wisest, we may become vain in our imaginations.’ (c) Let us therefore always call upon God; and say, for instance, when we are going to pray, ‘Lord, fix my attention! Awaken my holy affections, and ‘pour out upon me the spirit of grace and of supplication!’ (d) When taking up the bible, or any other good book, ‘open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law!’ (e) “Enlighten mine understanding! Warm my heart! May my good resolutions be confirmed, and all the course of my life in a proper manner regulated!” When addressing ourselves to any worldly business, ‘Lord, prosper thou the work of mine hands upon me,’ (f) “and give thy blessing to my honest endeavours!” When going to any kind of recreation, “Lord, bless my refreshments! Let me not forget thee in them, but still keep thy glory in view!” When coming into company, “Lord, may I do, and get good!” ‘Let no corrupt communication proceed out of my mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers!’ (g) When entering upon difficulties, Lord, give me that ‘wisdom, which is profitable to direct!’ (h) ‘Teach me thy way, and lead me in a plain path!’ (i) When encountering
with

(c) Rom. i. 21, 22. (d) Zech. xii. 10. (e) Psal. cxix. 18.

(f) Psal. xc. 17. (g) Eph. iv. 29. (h) Eccles. x. 10.

(i) Psal. xxvii. 11.

with temptations, 'let thy strength, O gracious redeemer, be made perfect in my weakness!' (k) These instances may illustrate the design of this direction, though they be far from a complete enumeration of all the circumstances in which it is to be regarded.

§. 18. (7.) For the government of our thoughts in solitude: Let us accustom ourselves, on all occasions, to exercise a due command over our thoughts. Let us take care of those entanglements of passion, and those attachments to any present interest and view, which would deprive us of our power over them. Let us set before us some profitable subject of thought: Such as, the perfections of the blessed God, the love of Christ, the value of time, the certainty and importance of death and judgment, and of the eternity of happiness or misery which is to follow. Let us also at such intervals reflect, on what we have observed as to the state of our own souls, with regard to the advance or decline of religion; or on the last sermon we have heard, or the last portion of scripture we have read. You may perhaps, in this connection, sir, recollect what I have, if I remember right, proposed to you in conversation; that it might be very useful to select some one verse of scripture, which we had met with in the morning, and to treasure it up in our mind, resolving to think of that at any time when we are at a loss for matter of pious reflection, in any intervals of leisure for entering upon it. This will often be as a spring, from whence many profitable and delightful thoughts may arise, which perhaps we did not before see in that connection and force. Or if it should not be so, yet I am persuaded, it will be much better to repeat the same scripture in our mind an hundred times in a day, with some pious ejaculation formed upon it, than to leave our thoughts at the mercy of all those various trifles which may otherwise intrude upon us! the variety of which will be far from making amends for their vanity.

§. 19. (8.) Lastly, for the government of our discourse in company: We should take great care, that nothing may escape us, which can expose us, or our Christian profession, to censure and reproach: Nothing inju-

rious

(k) 2 Cor. xii. 9.

rious to those that are absent or to those that are present ; nothing malignant, nothing insincere ; nothing which may corrupt, nothing which may provoke, nothing which may mislead those about us. Nor should we, by any means, be content, that what we say is innocent : it should be our desire, that it may be edifying, to ourselves and others. In this view, we should endeavour to have some subject of useful discourse always ready ; in which we may be assisted by the hints given, about furniture for thought, under the former head. We should watch for decent opportunities of introducing useful reflections ; and if a pious friend attempt to do it, we should endeavour to second it immediately. When the conversation does not turn directly on religious subjects, we should endeavour to make it improving some other way : We should reflect on the character and capacities of our company, that we may lead them to talk of what they understand best ; for their discourses on those subjects will probably be most pleasing to themselves, as well as most useful to us. And in pauses of discourse, it may not be improper to lift up an holy ejaculation to God, that his grace may assist us and our friends in our endeavours to do good to each other ; that all we say, and do, may be worthy the character of reasonable creatures and of Christians.

§. 20. (III.) The directions for a religious closing of this day, which I shall here mention, are only two.—Let us see to it, that the secret duties of the evening be well performed ; and let us lie down on our beds in a pious frame.

§. 21. (I.) For secret devotion in the evening, I would propose a method something different from that in the morning ; but still, as then, with due allowances for circumstances, which may make unthought of alterations proper. I should fir, advise to read a portion of scripture in the first place, with suitable reflections, and prayer, as above : Then to read a Hymn, or Psalm : After this to enter on self-examination, to be followed by a longer prayer, than that which followed reading, to be formed on this review of the day. In this address to the throne of grace it will be highly proper, to intreat that God would pardon the omissions and offences of the day ;

to praise him for mercies temporal and spiritual, to recommend ourselves to his protection for the ensuing night; with proper petitions for others, whom we ought to bear upon our hearts before him; and particularly, for those friends with whom we have conversed or corresponded, in the preceding day. Many other concerns will occur, both in morning and evening prayer, which I have not here hinted at; but I did not apprehend, that a full enumeration of these things belonged, by any means, to our present purpose.

§. 22. Before I quit this head, I must take the liberty to remind you, that self-examination is so important a duty, that it will be worth our while to spend a few words upon it, and this branch of it is so easy, that when we have proper questions before us, any person of a common understanding may hope to go through it with advantage under a divine blessing; I offer you therefore the following queries, which I hope you will, with such alterations as you may judge requisite, keep near you for daily use. “Did I awake as with God this morning, and rise with a grateful sense of his goodness? How were the secret devotions of the morning performed? Did I offer my solemn praises, and renew the dedication of myself to God, with becoming attention and suitable affections? Did I lay my scheme for the business of the day wisely and well? How did I read the scripture, and any other devotional or practical piece, which I might afterwards conveniently review? Did it do my heart good, or was it mere amusement?—How have the other stated devotions of the day been attended, whether in the family, or in public? Have I pursued the common business of this day with diligence, and spirituality; doing every thing in season, and with all convenient dispatch, and ‘as unto the Lord?’ (1) What time have I lost this day, in the morning, or forenoon, in the afternoon, or the evening;” (for these divisions will assist your recollection) “and what has occasioned the loss of it? With what temper, and under what regulations, have the recreations of this day been pursued? Have I seen the hand of God in my mercies, health, cheerfulness, food, clothing,

(1) Col. iii. 23.

ing, books, preservation in journies, success of business, conversation and kindness of friends, &c? Have I seen it in afflictions, and particularly in little things which had a tendency to vex and disquiet me? And with regard to this interposition, have I received my comforts thankfully, and my afflictions submissively? How have I guarded against the temptations of the day, particularly against this or that temptation, which I foresaw in the morning? Have I maintained an humble dependance on divine influences? Have I 'lived by faith in the son of God,' (m) and regarded Christ this day, as my teacher and governor, my atonement and intercessor, my example and guardian, my strength and forerunner? Have I been looking forward to death and eternity this day, and considered myself as a probationer for heaven, and through grace an expectant of it? Have I governed my thoughts well, especially in such or such an interval of solitude? How was my subject of thought this day chosen and how was it regarded? Have I governed my discourses well, in such and such company? Did I say nothing passionate, mischievous, slanderous, imprudent, impertinent? Has my heart this day been full of love to God, and to all mankind; and have I sought, and found, and improved opportunities of doing, and getting good? —With what attention and improvement have I read the scripture this evening? How was self-examination performed the last night; and how have I profited this day by any remarks I then made on former negligences and mistakes? With what temper did I then lie down, and compose myself to sleep?"

§. 23. You will easily see, sir, that these questions are so adjusted, as to be an abridgment of the most material advices I have given in this letter; and I believe I need not, to a person of your understanding, say any thing as to the usefulness of such enquiries. Conscience will answer them in a few minutes; but if you think them too large and particular, you may make a still shorter abstract for daily use, and reserve these, with such obvious alterations as will then be necessary, for seasons of more than ordinary exactness in review, which I hope will occur

cur at least once a week. Secret devotion being thus performed, before drowsiness renders us unfit for it, the interval between that and our going to rest must be conducted by the rules mentioned under the next head. And nothing will farther remain to be considered here, But

§. 24. (2.) The sentiments, with which we should lie down, and compose ourselves to sleep; now here it is obviously suitable, to think of the divine goodness, in adding another day and the mercies of it to the former days and mercies of our life to take notice of the indulgence of providence, in giving us commodious habitations and easy beds, and continuing to us such health of body, that we can lay ourselves down at ease upon them, and such serenity of mind as leaves us any room to hope for refreshing sleep: A refreshment to be sought, not merely as an indulgence to animal nature, but as what our wise creator, in order to keep us humble in the midst of so many infirmities, has been pleased to make necessary to our being able to pursue his service with renewed alacrity. Thus may our sleeping, as well as our waking hours, be in some sense devoted to God. And when we are just going to resign ourselves to the image of death, to what one of the ancients, beautifully calls its lesser mysteries, it is also evidently proper, to think seriously of that end of all the living, and to renew those actings of repentance and faith, which we should judge necessary, if we were to wake no more here. You have once, sir, seen a meditation of that kind in my hand: I will transcribe it for you in the postscript; and therefore shall add no more to this head, but here put a close to the directions you desired.

§. 25. I am persuaded, the most important of them have, in one form or another, been long regarded by you, and made governing maxims of your life. I shall greatly rejoice, if the review of these, and the examination and trial of the rest, may be a means of leading you into more intimate communion with God, and so of rendering your life more pleasant and useful, and your eternity, whenever that is to commence, more glorious. There is not a human creature upon earth, whom I should

should not delight to serve in these important interests ; but I can faithfully assure you, that I am, with particular respect,

Dear Sir,

Your very affectionate friend and servant.

§. 26. This, reader, with the alteration of a very few words, is the letter I wrote to a worthy friend, now I doubt not with God, about sixteen years ago : And I can assuredly say, that the experience of each of these years has confirmed me in these views, and established me in the persuasion, “that one day thus spent is preferable to whole years of sensuality, and the neglect of religion.” I chose to insert the letter as it is, because I thought the freedom and particularity of the advice I had given it, would appear most natural in its original form : And as I propose to inforce these advices in the next chapter, I shall conclude this with that meditation, which I promised my friend as a postscript ; and which I could wish you, to make so familiar to yourself, as that you might be able to recollect the substance of it, whenever you compose yourself to sleep.

A serious view of death, proper to be taken as we lie down on our beds.

“ O MY soul, look forward a little with seriousness and attention, and ‘learn wisdom, by the consideration of thy latter end.’ (n) Another of thy mortal days is now numbered and finished ; and as I have put off my clothes, and laid myself upon my bed, for the repose of the night ; so will the day of life quickly come to its period, so must the body itself be put off, and laid to its repose in a bed of dust. There let it rest ; for it will be no more regarded by me, than the clothes which I have now laid aside. I have another far more important concern to attend. Think, O my soul, when death comes, thou art to enter upon the eternal world, and to be fixed either in heaven or in hell. All the schemes and cares, the hopes and fears, the pleasures and sorrows of life, will come to their period, and the world of spirits will open
upon

(n) Deut. xxxii. 29.

upon thee. And O, how soon may it open! Perhaps before the returning sun brings on the light of another day. To-morrow's sun may not enlighten mine eyes, but only shine round a senseless corpse, which may lie in the place of this animated body. At least the death of many in the flower of their age, and many who were superior to me in capacity, piety, and the prospects of usefulness, may loudly warn me not to depend on a long life, and engage me rather to wonder that I am continued here so many years, than to be surprized if I am speedily removed.

“And now, O my soul, answer as in the sight of God; art thou ready? Art thou ready? Is there no sin unforsaken, and so unrepented of, to fill me with anguish in my departing moments, and to make me tremble on the brink of eternity? Dread to remain under the guilt of it, and this moment renew thy most earnest applications to the mercy of God, and the blood of a redeemer, for deliverance from it.

“But if the great account be already adjusted, if thou hast cordially repented of thy numerous offences, if thou hast sincerely committed thyself by faith into the hands of the blessed Jesus, and hast not renounced thy covenant with him by returning to the allowed practice of sin, then start not at the thoughts of a separation: It is not in the power of death to hurt a soul devoted to God, and united to the great redeemer. It may take me from my worldly comforts; it may disconcert and break my schemes for service on earth: But, O my soul, diviner entertainments, and nobler services wait thee beyond the grave. For ever blessed be the name of God and the love of Jesus, for these quieting, encouraging, joyful views! I will now ‘lay me down in peace, and sleep,’ (o) free from the fears of what shall be the issue of this night, whether life or death may be appointed for me. ‘Father, into thine hand I commend my spirit;’ (p) for ‘thou hast redeemed me, O God of truth,’ (q) and therefore I can cheerfully refer it to thy choice, whether I shall wake, in this world, or another.”

Chap.

(o) Psal. iv. 8. (p) Luke xxiii. 46. (q) Psal. xxxi. 5.

C H A P. XX.

A SERIOUS PERSUASIVE TO SUCH A METHOD OF SPENDING
OUR DAYS, AS IS REPRESENTED IN THE FORMER
CHAPTER.

Christians fix their views too low, and indulge too indolent a disposition, which makes it more necessary to urge such a life, as that under consideration. §. 1, 2. It is therefore inforced, (1.) from its being apparently reasonable, considering ourselves as the creatures of God, and as redeemed by the blood of Christ. §. 3. (2.) From its evident tendency to conduce to our comfort in life. §. 4. (3.) From the influence it will have to promote our usefulness to others. §. 5. (4.) From its efficacy to make afflictions lighter. §. 5. (5.) From its happy aspect on death: §. 7. And (6.) On eternity. §. 8. Where-as not to desire improvement would argue a soul destitute of religion. §. 9. A prayer suited to the state of a soul, who longs to attain the life recommended above.

§. 1. **I** HAVE been assigning, in the preceding chapter, what I fear will seem to some of my readers so hard a task, that they will want courage to attempt it; and it is indeed a life in many respects so far above that of the generality of Christians, that I am not without apprehensions, that many, who deserve the name, may think the directions, after all the precautions with which I have proposed them, are carried to an unnecessary degree of nicety and strictness. But I am persuaded, much of the credit and comfort of Christianity is lost, in consequence of its professors fixing their aims too low, and not conceiving of their high and holy calling in so elevated and sublime a view, as the nature of religion would require, and the word of God would direct. I am fully convinced, that the expressions of 'walking with God, of being in the fear of the Lord all the day long,' (a) and above all, that of 'loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength,' (b) must require, if not all these circumstances, yet the substance of all that I have

(a) Prov. xxiii. 17.

(b) Mark xii. 30.

have been recommending, so far as we have capacity, leisure and opportunity: And I cannot but think, that many might command more of the latter, and perhaps improve their capacities too, if they would take a due care in the government of themselves; if they would give up vain and unnecessary diversions, and certain indulgences, which only suit and delight the lower part of our nature, and (to say the best of them) deprive us of pleasures much better than themselves, if they do not plunge us into guilt. Many of these rules would appear easily practicable, if men would learn to know the value of time, and particularly to redeem it from unnecessary sleep, which wastes many golden hours of the day: Hours, in which many of God's servants are delighting themselves in him, and drinking in full draughts of the water of life; while these their brethren are slumbering upon their beds, and lost in vain dreams, as far below the common entertainments of a rational creature, as the pleasures of the sublimest devotion are above them.

§. 2. I know likewise, that the mind is very fickle and inconstant; and that it is a hard thing to preserve such a government and authority over our thoughts, as would be very desirable, and as the plan I have laid down will require. But so much of the honour of God, and so much of your own true happiness, depends upon it, that I beg you will give me a patient and attentive hearing while I am pleading with you; and that you will seriously examine the arguments, and then judge, whether a care and conduct like that which I have advised, be not in itself reasonable; and whether it will not be highly conducive to your comfort and usefulness in life, your peace in death, and the advancement and increase of your eternal glory.

§. 3. Let conscience say, whether such a life as I have described above be not in itself highly reasonable. Look over the substance of it again, and bring it under a close examination; for I am very apprehensive, that some weak objections may arise against the whole, which may in their consequences affect particulars against which no reasonable man would presume to make any objection at all. Recollect, O Christian, and carry it with you in your
memory

memory and your heart, while you are pursuing this review, that you are the creature of God, that you are purchased with the blood of Jesus ; and then say, whether these relations in which you stand, do not demand all that application and resolution which I would engage you to. Suppose all the counsels I have given, reduced into practice : Suppose every day begun and concluded with such devout breathings after God, and such holy retirements for morning and evening converse with him and with your own heart : Suppose a daily care, in contriving how your time may be managed, and reflecting how it has been employed : Suppose this regard to God, this sense of his presence, and zeal for his glory, to run through your acts of worship, your hours of business and recreation : Suppose this attention to providence, this guard against temptations, this dependance upon divine influence, this government of the thoughts in solitude, and of the discourses in company : Nay, I will add farther, suppose every particular direction given, to be pursued, excepting when particular cases occur, with respect to which you shall be able in conscience to say, “ I wave it, not from indolence and carelessness, but because I think it will just now be more pleasing to God to be doing something else ; ” which may often happen in human life, where general rules are best concerted : Suppose, I say, all this to be done, not for a day, or a week, but through the remainder of life, whether longer or shorter ; and suppose this to be reviewed at the close of life, in the full exercise of your rational faculties : Will there be reason to say in the reflection, “ I have taken too much pains in religion : The author of my being did not deserve all this from me : Less diligence, less fidelity, less zeal than this, might have been an equivalent for the blood which was shed for my redemption. A part of my heart, a part of my time, a part of my labours, might have sufficed for him, who hath given me all my powers ; for him, who has delivered me from that destruction, which would have made them my everlasting torment ; for him, who is raising me to the regions of a blissful immortality. ” Can you with any face say this ? If you cannot, then surely your
conscience

conscience bears witness, that all I have recommended, under the limitations above, is reasonable; that duty and gratitude require it; and consequently, that by every allowed failure in it, you bring guilt upon your own soul, you offend God, and act unworthy your christian profession.

§. 4. I intreat you farther to consider, whether such a conduct as I have now been recommending, would not conduce much to your comfort and usefulness in life. Reflect seriously, what is true happiness? Does it consist in distance from God, or in nearness to him? Surely you cannot be a Christian, surely you cannot be a rational man, if you doubt, whether communion with the great father of our spirits be a pleasure and felicity: And if it be, then surely they enjoy most of it, who keep him most constantly in view. You cannot but know in your own conscience, that it is this which makes the happiness of heaven; and therefore the more of it any man enjoys upon earth, the more of heaven comes down into his soul. If you have made any trial of religion, tho' it be but a few months or weeks since you first became acquainted with it, you must be some judge of it upon your own experience, which have been the most pleasant days of your life. Have they not been those, in which you have acted most upon these principles; those, in which you have most steadily and resolutely carried them through every hour of time, and every circumstance of life? The check, which you must in many instances give to your own inclinations, might seem disagreeable; but, it would surely be overbalanced, in a most happy manner, by the satisfaction you would find in a consciousness of self-government; in having such a command of your thoughts, affections, and actions, as is much more glorious than any authority over others can be.

§. 5. I would also intreat you to consider the influence, which such a conduct as this might have upon the happiness of others. And it is easy to be seen, it must be very great: as you would find your heart always disposed to watch every opportunity of doing good, and to seize it with eagerness and delight. It would engage you to make it the study and business of your life, to order things in such a manner, that the end of one kind and useful action

tion might be the beginning of another; in which you would go on as naturally, as the inferior animals do in those productions and actions by which mankind are relieved or enriched; or as the earth bears her successive crops of different vegetable supplies. And though mankind be, in this corrupt state, so unhappily inclined to imitate evil examples rather than good; yet it may be expected, that while your light shines before men, some seeing your good works will endeavour to transcribe them in their own lives, and so to glorify your father which is in heaven. (c) The charm of such beautiful models would surely impress some, and incline them at least to attempt an imitation; and every attempt would dispose to another. And thus through the divine goodness, you might be intitled to a share in the praise, and the reward, not only of the good you had immediately done yourself, but likewise of that which you had engaged others to do. And no eye, but that of an all-searching God, can see, into what distant times or places the blessed consequences may reach. In every instance in which these consequences appear, it will put a generous and sublime joy into your heart, which no worldly prosperity could afford, and which would be the liveliest emblem of that high delight which the blessed God feels, in seeing and making his creatures happy.

§ 6. It is true indeed, that amidst all these pious and benevolent cares, afflictions may come, and in some measure interrupt you in the midst of your projected schemes. But surely these afflictions will sit much lighter, when your heart is gladdened with the peaceful and joyful reflection of your own mind, and with so honourable a testimony of conscience before God and man. Delightful will it be to go back to past scenes in your pleasing review, and to think, that you have not only been sincerely humbling yourself for those past offences, which afflictions may bring to your remembrance; but that you have given substantial proofs of the sincerity of that humiliation, by a real reformation of what has been amiss, and by acting with strenuous and vigorous resolution on the contrary principle. And while converse with God, and doing good to men, are made the great business and pleasure of life, you will

will find a thousand opportunities of enjoyment ; even in the midst of those afflictions, which would render you so incapable of relishing the pleasures of sense, that the very mention of them might in those circumstances seem an insult and a reproach.

§. 7. At length, death will come : That solemn and important hour, which hath been passed through by so many thousands who have in the main lived such a life, and by so many millions who have neglected it. And let conscience say, if there was ever any one of all these millions, who had then any reason to rejoice in that neglect ; or any one, among the most strict and exemplary christians, who then lamented that his heart and life had been too zealously devoted to God ? Let conscience say, whether they have wished to have a part of that time, which they have thus employed, given back to them again, that they might be more conformed to this world ; that they might plunge themselves deeper into its amusements, or pursue its honors, its possessions, or its pleasures, with greater eagerness than they had done ? If you were yourself dying, and a dear friend or child stood near you, and this book and the last chapter of it should chance to come into your thoughts, would you caution that friend or child against conducting himself by such rules as I have advanced ? This question may perhaps seem unnecessary, where the answer is so plain and so certain. Well then, let me beseech you, to learn how you should live, by reflecting how you would die, and what a course you would wish to look back upon, when you are just quitting this world, and entering upon another. Think seriously, what if death should surprize you on a sudden, and you should be called into eternity at an hour's or a minute's warning, would you not wish, that your last day should have been thus begun ; and the course of it, if it were a day of health and activity, should have been thus managed ? Would you not wish, that your Lord should find you engaged in such thoughts, and in such pursuits ? Would not the passage, the flight from earth to heaven, be most easy, most pleasant, in this view and connection ? And on the other hand, if death should make more gradual approaches, would not the remembrance of such a pious, holy, humble, diligent,
and

and useful life, make a dying bed much softer and easier, than it would otherwise be? You would not die, depending upon these things: God forbid, that you should! Sensible of your many imperfections, you would, no doubt, desire to throw yourselves at the feet of Christ, that you might appear before God, adorned with his righteousness, and washed from your sins in his blood. You would also with your dying breath ascribe to the riches of his grace every good disposition you had found in your heart, and every worthy action you had been enabled to perform. But would it not give you a delight worthy of being purchased with ten thousand worlds, to reflect, that 'his grace bestowed on you had not been in vain:' (d) but that you had, from an humble principle of grateful love, glorified your heavenly father on earth, and, in some degree, tho' not with the perfection you could desire, 'finished the work which he had given you to do:' (e) That you had been living for many past years as on the borders of heaven, and endeavouring to form your heart and life to the temper and manners of its inhabitants?

§. 8. And once more, let me intreat you to reflect on the view you will have of this matter, when you come into a world of glory, if (which I hope will be the happy case,) divine mercy conduct you thither. Will not your reception there be affected by your care, or negligence, in this holy course? Will it appear an indifferent thing in the eye of the blessed Jesus, who distributes the crowns, and allots the thrones there, whether you have been among the most zealous, or the most indolent of his servants? Surely you must wish, to have 'an entrance administered unto you abundantly, into the kingdom of your Lord and Saviour:' (f) And what can more certainly conduce to it, than to be 'always abounding in his work?' (g) You cannot think so meanly of that glorious state, as to imagine, that you shall there look round about with a secret disappointment, and say in your heart, that you overvalued the inheritance you have received, and pursued it with too much earnestness. You will not surely complain, that it had too many of your thoughts and cares: But on the

t

contrary,

(d) 1 Cor. xv. 10. (e) John xvii. 4. (f) 2 Pet. i. 11.

(g) 1 Cor. xv. 58.

contrary, you have the highest reason to believe, that if any thing were capable of exciting your indignation and your grief there, it would be, that amidst so many motives, and so many advantages, you exerted yourself no more in the prosecution of such a prize.

§. 9. But I will not enlarge on so clear a case, and therefore conclude the chapter with reminding you, that to allow yourself deliberately to sit down satisfied with any imperfect attainments in religion, and to look upon a more confirmed and improved state of it as what you do not desire, nay, as what you secretly resolve that you will not pursue, be one of the most fatal signs we can well imagine, that you are an entire stranger to the first principles of it.

A PRAYER suited to the state of a soul, who desires to attain the life recommended above.

“ BLESSED God, I cannot contradict the force of these reasonings: Oh that I might feel more than ever the lasting effects of them! Thou art the great fountain of being and of happiness; and as from thee my being was derived, so from thee my happiness directly flows; and the nearer I am to thee, the purer and the more delicious is the stream. ‘With thee is the fountain of life; in thy light may I see light!’ (h) The great object of my final hope is to dwell forever with thee. Give me now some foretaste of that delight! Give me, I beseech thee, to experience ‘the blessedness of that man, who feareth the Lord, and who delighteth greatly in his commandments;’ (i) and so form my heart by thy grace, that I may ‘be in the fear of the Lord all the day long!’ (k)

“ ‘Lift up, oh Lord, the light of thy countenance upon me!’ (l) When my faculties are roused from that broken state in which they lay, while buried, and as it were annihilated, in sleep, may my first actions be consecrated to thee, O God, who givest me light; who givest me, as it were, every

(h) Psal. xxxvi. 9. (i) Psalm. cxii. 1. (k) Prov. xxiii. 17.

(l) Psal. iv. 6.

every morning a new life and a new reason ! Enable my heart to pour itself out before thee, with a filial reverence, freedom, and endearment ? And may I hearken to God, as I desire that he should hearken unto me ! May thy word be read with attention and pleasure ! May my soul be delivered into the mold of it, and may I ‘hide it in mine heart, that I may not sin against thee !’ (m) Animated by the great motives there suggested, may I every morning be renewing the dedication of myself to thee through Jesus thy beloved son ; and be deriving from him new supplies of that blessed spirit of thine, whose influences are the life of my soul !

“ And being thus prepared, do thou, Lord, lead me forth by the hand to all the duties and events of the day ! In that calling, wherein thou hast been pleased to call me, may I abide with thee ; (n) not being slothful in business, but ‘fervent in spirit serving the Lord !’ (o) May I know the value of time, and always improve it to the best advantage, in such duties as thou has assigned me ; how low so ever they may seem, or how painful soever they may be ! To thy glory, oh Lord, may the labours of life be pursued ; and to thy glory may the refreshments of it be sought ! ‘Whether I eat, or drink, or whatever I do,’ (p) may that end still be kept in view, and may it be attained ! And may every refreshment, and release from business, prepare me to serve thee with greater vigour and resolution !

“ May mine eye be watchful to observe the descent of mercies from thee ; and may a grateful sense of thine hand in them add a favour and a relish to all ! And when afflictions come, which in a world like this I would accustom myself to expect, may I remember that they come from thee ; and may that fully reconcile me to them, while I firmly believe, that the same love which gives us our daily bread, appoints us our daily crosses ; which I would learn to take up, that I may ‘follow my dear Lord,’ (q) with a temper like that which he manifested, when ascending calvary for my sake ; saying like him, ‘the cup which my father hath given me, shall I not drink it ?’ (r) And
when

(m) Psal. cxix. 11, (n) 1 Cor. vii. 20, (o) Rom. xii. 11. (p) 1 Cor. x. 31. (q) Mark xiii. 34. (r) John xviii. 11.

when I 'enter into temptation, do thou, Lord, deliver me from evil!' (s) Make me sensible, I intreat thee, of my own weakness, that my heart may be raised to thee for present communications of proportionable strength! When I am engaged in the society of others, may it be my desire and my care, that I may do, and receive, as much good as possible; and may I continually answer the great purposes of life, by honouring thee, and diffusing useful knowledge and happiness in the world? And when I am alone, may I remember my heavenly father is with me; may I enjoy the pleasure of thy presence, and feel the animating power of it, awakening my soul to an earnest desire to think, and act, as in thy sight!

" Thus let my days be spent: And let them always be closed in thy fear, and under a sense of thy gracious presence! Meet me, oh Lord, in mine evening retirements! May I chuse the most proper time for them; may I diligently attend to reading and prayer; and when I review my conduct, may I do it with an impartial eye! Let not self-love spread a false colouring over it; but may I judge myself, as one that expects to be judged of the Lord, and is very solicitous he may be approved by thee, who 'searchest all hearts, canst not forget any of my works!' (t) Let my prayer come daily before thee as incense, and let 'the lifting up of my hands be as the morning and the evening sacrifice!' (u) May I resign my powers to sleep in sweet calmness and serenity; conscious that I have lived to God in the day, and cheerfully persuaded that I am accepted of thee in Christ Jesus my Lord, and humbly hoping in thy mercy through him, whether my days on earth be prolonged, or 'the residue of them be cut off in the midst!' (x) If death comes by a leisurely advance, may it find me thus employed; and if I am called on a sudden to exchange worlds, may my last days and hours be found to have been conducted by such maxims as these; that I may have a sweet and easy passage from the services of time to the infinitely nobler services of an immortal state! I ask it through him, who while on earth was the fairest pattern and example of every virtue and grace,

and
 (s) Mat. vi. 13. (t) Amos viii. 7. (u) Psal. cxli. 2.
 (x) Isai. xxxviii. 10.

who now lives and reigns with thee, 'able to save unto the uttermost :' (y) To him 'having done all' I would fly, with humble acknowledgment that I am 'an unprofitable servant ;' (z) to him be glory forever and ever. *Amen.*"

(y) Heb. vii. 25. (z) Luke xvii. 10.

C H A P. XXI.

A CAUTION AGAINST VARIOUS TEMPTATIONS, BY WHICH
THE YOUNG CONVERT MAY BE DRAWN ASIDE FROM
THE COURSE RECOMMENDED ABOVE.

Dangers continue, after the first difficulties (considered Chap xvi.) are broken through. §. 1. Particular cautions, (1.) against a sluggish and indolent temper. §. 2. (2.) Against the excessive love of sensitive pleasure. §. 3. Leading to a neglect of business and needless expence. §. 4. (3.) Against the snares of vain company. §. 5. (4.) Against excessive hurries of worldly business ; §. 6. which is enforced by the fatal consequences these have had in many cases. §. 7. The Chapter concludes with an exhortation to die to this world, and live to another : §. 8. And the young convert's prayer for divine protection against the dangers arising from these snares.

§. 1. **T**HE representation I have been making of the pleasure and advantage of a life spent in devotedness to God and communion with him, as I have described it above, will I hope engage you, my dear reader, to form some purposes, and make some attempt to obtain it. But from considering the nature and observing the course of things, it appears exceedingly evident, that besides the general opposition which I formerly mentioned as like to attend you in your first entrance on a religious life, you will find, even after you have resolutely broken through this, "a variety of hindrances" in any attempts of exemplary piety, and in the prosecution of a remarkably strict and

and edifying course, will present themselves daily in your path. And whereas you may, by a few resolute efforts, baffle some of the former sort of enemies; these will be perpetually renewing their onsets, and a vigorous struggle must be continually maintained with them. Give me leave now, therefore, to be particular in my cautions against some of the chief of them. And here I would insist upon the difficulties, which will arise from indolence, and the love of pleasure, from vain company, and from worldly cares. Each of these may prove insnaring to any, and especially to young persons, to whom I would now have some particular regard.

§. 2. I intreat you therefore, in the first place, that you would guard against a sluggish and indolent temper. The love of ease insinuates itself into the heart, under a variety of plausible pretences, which are often allowed to pass, when temptations of a grosser nature would not be admitted. The mispending a little time seems to wise and good men but a small matter; yet this sometimes runs them into great inconveniences. It often leads them to break in upon the seasons regularly allotted to devotion, and to defer business, which might immediately be done, but being put off from day to day is not done at all; and thereby the services of life are at least diminished, and the rewards of eternity diminished proportionably: Not to insist upon it, that very frequently this lays the soul open to farther temptations, by which it falls, in consequence of being found unemployed. Be therefore suspicious of the first approaches of this kind. Remember, that the soul of man is an active being, and that it must find its pleasure in activity. ‘Gird up therefore the loins of your mind.’ (a) Endeavour to keep yourself always well employed. Be exact, if I may with humble reverence use the expression, in your appointments with God. Meet him early in the morning; and say not with the sluggard, when the proper hour of rising is come, ‘a little more sleep, a little more slumber.’ (b) That time, which prudence shall advise you, give to conversation and to other recreations. But when that is elapsed, and no unforeseen and important engagement presents, rise and begone. Quit the company

(a) 1 Pet. i. 13.

(b) Prov. vi. 10.

of your dearest friends, and retire to your proper business, whether it be in the field, the shop, or the closet. For by acting contrary to the secret dictates of your mind, as to what it is just at the present moment best to do, though it be but in the manner of spending half an hour, some degree of guilt is contracted, and a habit is cherished, which may draw after it much worse consequences. Consider therefore, what duties are to be dispatched, and in what seasons. Form your plan as prudently as you can, and pursue it resolutely; unless any unexpected incident arises, which leads you to conclude, that duty calls you another way. Allowances for such unthought of interruptions must be made; but if in consequence of this, you are obliged to omit any thing of importance which you purposed to have done to day, do it if possible to-morrow: And do not cut yourself out new work, till the former plan be dispatched; unless you really judge it, not merely more amusing, but more important. And always remember, that a servant of Christ should see to it, that he determines on these occasions, as in his master's presence.

§. 3. Guard also against an excessive love of sensitive and animal pleasure, as that which will be a great hindrance to you in that religious course, which I have now been urging. You cannot but know, that Christ has told us, that 'a man must deny himself, and take up his cross daily,' if he desires to 'become his disciple.' (c) Christ, the Son of God, 'the former and the heir of all things, pleased not himself;' (d) but submitted to want, to difficulties, and hardships, in the way of duty, and some of them of the extremest kind and degree, for the glory of God and the salvation of men. In this way we are to follow him; and as we know not how soon we may be called, even to 'resist unto blood striving against sin,' (e) it is certainly best to accustom ourselves to that discipline, which we may possibly be called out to exercise, even in such rigorous heights. A soft and delicate life will give force to temptations, which might easily be subdued by one, who has habituated himself to 'endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.' (f) It also produces an attachment

to

(c) Luke ix. 23. (d) Rom. xv. 3. (e) Heb. xii. 4.
(f) 2 Tim. ii. 3.

to this world, and an unwillingness to leave it ; which ill becomes those who are strangers and pilgrims on earth, and who expect so soon to be called away to ' that better country' which they ' profess to seek.' (g) Add to this, that what the world calls a life of pleasure, is necessarily a life of expence too, and may perhaps lead you, as it has done many others, and especially many who have been setting out in the world, beyond the limits which providence has assigned ; and so after a short course of indulgence may produce proportionable want. And while in other cases it is true, that pity should be shewn to the poor, this is a poverty that is justly contemptible, because it is the effect of a man's own folly ; and when your want thus ' comes upon you as an armed man,' (h) you will not only find yourself stripped of the capacity you might otherwise have secured for performing those works of charity which are so ornamental to a Christian profession, but probably will be under strong temptations to some low artifice or mean compliance, quite beneath the Christian character, and that of an upright man. Many who once made a high profession, after a series of much sorry and scandalous shifts, have fallen into the infamy of bankrupts, and of the worst kind of bankrupts ; I mean such as have lavished away on themselves what was indeed the property of others, and so have injured, and perhaps ruined the industrious, to feed a foolish, luxurious, or ostentatious humour, which while indulged was the shame of their own families, and when it can be indulged no longer is their torment. This will be a terrible reproach to religion : Such a reproach to it, that a good man would rather choose to live on bread and water, or indeed to die for want of them, than to occasion it.

§. 4. Guard therefore, I beseech you, against any thing which might tend to that way, especially by diligence in business, and by prudence and frugality in expence ; which, by the divine blessing, may have a very happy influence to make your affairs prosperous, your health vigorous, and your mind easy. But this cannot be attained, without keeping a resolute watch over yourself, and strenuously refusing to comply with many proposals, which indolence

(g) Heb. xi. 13—16.

(h) Prov. vi. 12.

dolence or sensuality will offer in very plausible forms, and for which it will plead, "that it asks but very little." Take heed, lest in this respect you imitate those fond parents, who, by indulging their children in every little thing they have a mind to, encourage them, by insensible degrees, to grow still more encroaching and imperious in their demands; as if they chose to be ruined with them, rather than to check them in what seems a trifle. Remember and consider that excellent remark, sealed by the ruin of so many thousands: "He that despiseth small things, shall fall by little and little."

§ 5. In this view, give me leave also seriously and tenderly to caution you, my dear reader, against the snares of vain company. I speak not, as before, of that company, which is openly licentious and profane. I hope there is something now in your temper and views which would engage you to turn away from such with detestation and horror. But I beseech you to consider, that those companions may be very dangerous who might at first give you but very little alarm; I mean those, who, though not the declared enemies of religion, and professed followers of vice and disorder, yet nevertheless have no practical sense of divine things on their hearts, so far as can be judged by their conversation and behaviour.— You must often of necessity be with such persons, and Christianity not only allows, but requires, that you should, on all expedient occasions of intercourse with them, treat them with civility and respect; but chuse not such for your most intimate friends, and do not contrive to spend most of your leisure moments among them.— For such converse has a sensible tendency to alienate the soul from God, and to render it unfit for all spiritual communion with him. To convince you of this, do but reflect on your own experience, when you have been for many hours together among persons of such a character. Do you not find yourself more indisposed for devotional exercises! Do you not find your heart, by insensible degrees, more and more inclined to a conformity to this world, and to look with a secret disrelish on those objects and employments to which reason directs as the noblest
and

and the best? Observe the first symptoms, and guard against the snare in time: and, for this purpose, endeavour to form friendships founded in piety, and supported by it. 'Be a companion of them that "fear God, and of them that keep his precepts.' (i) You well know, that in the sight of God 'they are the excellent of the earth;' let them therefore 'be all your delight.' (k) And that the peculiar benefit of their friendship may not be lost, endeavour to make the best of the hours you spend with them. The wisest of men has observed, that when 'council in the heart of a man is like deep waters,' that is, 'when it lies low and concealed, a man of understanding will draw it out.' (l) Endeavour, therefore, on such occasions, so far as you can do it with decency and convenience, to give the conversation a religious turn. And when serious and useful subjects are started in your presence, lay hold of them, and cultivate them; and, for that purpose, 'let the word of Christ dwell richly in you,' (m) and be continually made 'the man of your counsel.' (n)

§ 6. If it be so, it will secure you not only from the snares of idleness and luxury, but from the contagion of every bad example. And it will also engage you to guard against those excessive hurries of worldly business, which would fill up all your time and thoughts, and thereby 'choke the good word of God, and render it in a great measure, if not quite, unfruitful.' (o) Young people are generally of an enterprising disposition; having experienced comparatively little of the fatigue of business, and of the disappointments and incumbrances of life, they easily swallow them up, and annihilate them in their imagination, and fancy that their spirit, their application and address, will be able to encounter and surmount every obstacle or hindrance. But the event proves it otherwise. Let me intreat you, therefore, to be cautious how you plunge yourself into a greater variety of business than you are capable of managing as you ought, that is, in consistency with the care of your souls, and the service of God; which certainly ought not on any pretence

to

(i) P^sal. cxix. 63. (k) P^sal. xvi. 3. (l) Prov. xx. 5.
 (m) Col. iii. 16. (n) P^sal. cxix. 24. (o) Mat. xiii. 22.

to be neglected. It is true indeed, that a prudent regard to your worldly interest would require such a caution; as is obvious to every careful observer, that multitudes are undone by grasping at more than they can conveniently manage. Hence it has frequently been seen, that while they have seemed 'resolved to be rich,' they have 'pierced themselves through with many sorrows,' (p) have ruined their own families, and drawn down many others into desolation with them: whereas, could they have been contented with moderate employments, and moderate gains, they might have prospered in their business, and might, by sure degrees, under a divine blessing, have advanced to a great and honorable increase. But if there was no danger at all to be apprehended on this head; if you were as certain of becoming rich and great as you are of perplexing and fatiguing yourself in the attempt; consider, I beseech you, how precarious these enjoyments are. Consider how often a 'plentiful table becomes a snare, and that which should have been for a man's welfare becomes a trap.' (q) Forget not that short lesson, which is so comprehensive of the highest wisdom, 'One thing is needful.' (r) Be daily thinking, while the gay and great things of life are glittering before your eyes, how soon death will come and impoverish you at once; how soon it will strip you of all possessions but those which a naked soul can carry along with it into eternity, when it drops the body in the grave. ETERNITY! ETERNITY! ETERNITY! Carry the view of it about with you, if it be possible, through every hour of waking life; & be fully persuaded that you have no business, no interest in life, that is inconsistent with it: for whatsoever would be injurious to this view, is not your business, is not your interest. You see indeed, that the generality of men act as if they thought the great thing which God required of them, in order to secure his favour, was to get as much of the world as possible; at least as much as they can without any gross immorality, and without risking the loss of all, for making a little addition. And, as if it were to abet this design, they tell others, and perhaps tell themselves, they only seek oppor-

tunities

(p) 1 Tim. vi. 10. (q) Psal. lxxix. 22. (r) Luke 10. 42

tunities of greater usefulness, but, in effect, if they mean any thing more by this than a capacity of usefulness, which, when they have it, they will not exert, they generally deceive themselves: and one way or another, it is a vain pretence. In most instances men seek the world,—either that they may hoard up riches for the mean and scandalous satisfaction of looking upon them while they are living, and of thinking, that when they are dead, it will be said of them, that they have left so many hundreds or thousands of pounds behind them; very probably to ensnare their children, or other heirs, (for the vanity is not peculiar to those who have children of their own:)—or else, that they may lavish away their riches on their lusts, and drown themselves in a gulph of sensuality, in which, if reason be not lost, religion is soon swallowed up, and, with it, all the noblest pleasures which can enter into the heart of man. In this view, the generality of rich people appear to me objects of much greater compassion than the poor; especially as when both live (which is frequently the case) without any fear of God before their eyes, the rich abuse the greater variety and abundance of his favours, and therefore will probably feel, in that world of future ruin which awaits impenitent sinners, a more exquisite sense of their misery.

§ 7. And let me observe to you, my dear reader, lest you should think yourself secure from any such danger, that we have great reason to apprehend there are many now in a very wretched state, who once thought seriously of religion when they were first setting out, in lower circumstances of life, but they have since forsaken God for mammon, and are now priding themselves in those golden chains, which, in all probability, before it is long, will leave them to remain in those of darkness. When, therefore an attachment to the world may be followed with such fatal consequences, ‘let not thine heart envy sinners;’ (s) and do not out of a desire of gaining what they have, be guilty of such folly, as to expose yourself to this double danger of failing in the attempt, or of being undone by the success of it. Contract your desires: endeavor to be easy and content with a little; and if providence,

call

call you out to act in a larger sphere, submit to it in obedience to providence ; but number it among the trials of life, which it will require a larger proportion of grace to bear well. For, be assured, that as affairs, and interest multiply, cares and duties will certainly increase, and probably disappointments and sorrows will increase in an equal proportion.

§ 8. On the whole, learn, by divine grace, to die to the present world ; to look upon it as a low state of being, which God never intended for the final and complete happiness, or the supreme care of any one of his children ; a world, where something is indeed to be enjoyed, but chiefly from himself ; where a great deal is to be borne with patience and resignation ; and where some important duties are to be performed, and a course of discipline to be passed through, by which you are to be formed for a better state : to which, as a Christian, you are near, and to which God will call you, perhaps on a sudden, but undoubtedly, if you hold on your way, in the fittest time and the most convenient manner. Refer, therefore, all this to him. Let your hopes and fears, your expectations and desires, with regard to this world be kept as low as possible ; and all your thoughts be united, as much as may be, in this one centre, what it is that God would, in present circumstances, have you to be ; and what is that method of conduct by which you may most effectually please and glorify him ?

THE YOUNG CONVERT'S PRAYER FOR DIVINE PROTECTION
AGAINST THE DANGER OF THESE SNARES.

“ BLESSED God ! in the midst of ten thousand snares and dangers, which surround me from without and from within, permit me to look up unto thee with my humble entreaty, that thou wouldst ‘ deliver me from them that rise up against me,’ (t) and that ‘ thine eyes may be upon me for good !’ (u) When sloth and indolence are ready to seize me, awaken me from that idle dream with lively and affectionate views of that invisible and eternal world to which I am tending ! Remind me of what infinite im-
u portance

(t) Psal. lix. 1. (u) Jer. xxiv. 6.

portance it is that I diligently improve those transient moments which thou hast allotted to me as the time of my preparation for it !

“ When ‘ sinners enticè me,’ may I ‘ not consent!’ (x) May holy converse with God give me a disrelish for the converse of those who are strangers to thee, and who would separate my soul from thee ! May ‘ I honour them that fear the Lord ;’ (y) and ‘ walking with such wise and holy men, may I find I am daily advancing in wisdom and holiness !’ (z) Quicken me, O Lord, by their means : that by me thou mayest also quicken others ! Make me the happy instrument of enkindling and animating the flame of divine love in their breasts : and may it catch from heart to heart, and grow every moment in its progress !

“ Guard me, O Lord, from the love of sensual pleasure ! May I seriously remember, that ‘ to be carnally minded is death!’ (a) May it please thee, therefore, to purify and refine my soul by the influences of thine Holy Spirit, that I may always shun unlawful gratifications more solicitously than others pursue them ; and that those indulgencies of animal nature, which thou hast allowed, and which the constitution of things renders necessary, may be soberly and moderately used ! May I still remember the superior dignity of my spiritual and intelligent nature, and may the pleasures of the man and the Christian be sought as my noblest happiness ! May my soul rise on the wings of holy contemplation, to the regions of invisible glory : and may I be endeavouring to form myself, under the influences of divine grace, for the entertainments of those angelic spirits, that live in thy presence in a happy incapacity of those gross delights by which spirits dwelling in flesh are so often ensnared, and in which they so often lose the memory of their high original, and of those noble hopes which alone are proportionable to it !

“ Give me, O Lord, to know the station in which thou had fixed me, and steadily to pursue the duties of it ! But deliver me from those excessive cares of this world, which would so engross my time and my thoughts, that the one thing

(x) Prov. i. 10. (y) Psal. xv. 4. (z) Prov. xiii. 20.
(a) Rom. viii. 6.

thing needful should be forgotten ! May my desires after worldly possessions be moderated, by considering their uncertain and unsatisfying nature ; and while others are laying up treasures on earth, may I be 'rich towards God !' (b) May I never be too busy to attend to those great affairs, which lie between thee and my soul ; never be so engrossed with the concerns of time, as to neglect the interests of eternity ! May I pass through earth with my heart and hope set upon heaven, and feel the attractive influence stronger and stronger, as I approach still nearer and nearer to that desirable centre : till the happy moment come, when every earthly object shall disappear from my view, and the shining glories of the heavenly world shall fill my improved and strengthened sight, which shall then be cheered with that which would now overwhelm me ! Amen."

(b) Luke xii. 21.

C H A P. XXII.

THE CASE OF SPIRITUAL DECAY AND LANGOUR IN RELIGION.

Declensions in religion, and relapses into sin with their sorrowful consequences, are in the general too probable. §. 1. The case of declension and languor in religion described, negatively ; §. 2. and positively ; §. 3. as discovering itself. (1.) By a failure in the duties of the closet. §. 4. (2.) By a neglect of social worship. §. 5. (3.) By want of love to our fellow christians. §. 6. (4.) By an undue attachment to sensual pleasures, or secular cares. §. 7. (5.) By prejudices against some important principles in religion : §. 8. A symptom peculiarly sad and dangerous. §. 9, 10. Directions for recovery. §. 11. immediately to be pursued. §. 12. A prayer for one under spiritual decays.

§. 1. **I**F I am so happy as to prevail upon you in the exhortations and cautions I have given, you will probably

bably go on with pleasure and comfort in religion ; and your path will generally be ‘like the morning light, which shineth more and more until the perfect day.’ (a) Yet I dare not flatter myself with an expectation of such success, as shall carry you above those varieties in temper, conduct and state, which have been more or less the complaint of the best of men. Much do I fear, that how warmly soever your heart may now be impressed with the representation I have been making, tho’ the great objects of your faith and hope continue unchangeable, your temper towards them will be changed. Much do I fear, that you will feel your mind languish and tire in the good ways of God ; nay, that you may be prevailed upon to take some step out of them, and may thus fall a prey to some of those temptations, which you now look upon with a holy scorn. The probable consequence of this will be, that God will hide his face from you ; that he will stretch forth his afflicting hand against you ; and that you will still see your sorrowful moments, how cheerfully soever you may now be ‘rejoicing in the Lord, and joying in the God of your salvation.’ (b) I hope, therefore, it may be of some service, if this too probable event should happen, to consider these cases a little more particularly : And I heartily pray, that God would make what I shall say concerning them, the means of restoring, comforting, and strengthening your soul, if he ever suffers you in any degree to deviate from him.

§. 2. We will first consider the case of spiritual declensions, and languor in religion. And here I desire, that, before I proceed any farther, you would observe, that I do not comprehend under this head every abatement of that fervour, which a young convert may find, when he first becomes experimentally acquainted with divine things. Our natures are so framed, that the novelty of objects strikes them in something of a peculiar manner : Not to urge, how much more easily our passions are impressed in the earlier years of life, than when we are more advanced in the journey of it. This, perhaps, is not sufficiently considered. Too great a stress is commonly laid on the flow of affections ; and for want of this a Christian who is ripened

(a) Prov. iv. 18.

(b) Hab. iii. 18.

pened in grace, and greatly advanced in his preparation for glory, may sometimes be ready to lament imaginary rather than real decays, and to say, without any just foundation, ‘O that it were with me as in months past!’ (c) Therefore you can hardly be too frequently told, that religion consists chiefly, “in the resolution of the will for God, and in a constant care to avoid whatever we are persuaded he would disapprove, to dispatch the work he has assigned us in life, and to promote his glory in the happiness of mankind.” To this we are chiefly to attend, looking in all to the simplicity and purity of those motives from which we act, which we know are chiefly regarded by that God who searches the heart; humbling ourselves before him at the same time under a sense of our many imperfections, and flying to the blood of Christ and the grace of the gospel.

§. 3. Having given this precaution, I will now a little more particularly describe the case, which I call the state of a Christian who is declining in religion; so far as it does not fall in with those, which I shall consider in the following chapters. And I must observe, that it chiefly consists “in a forgetfulness of divine objects, and a remissness in those various duties to which we stand engaged by that solemn surrender which we have made of ourselves to the service of God.” There will be a variety of symptoms, according to the different circumstances and relations in which the Christian is placed; but some will be of a more universal kind. It will be peculiarly proper to touch on these; and so much the rather, as these declensions are often unobserved, like the grey hairs, which were ‘upon Ephraim when he knew it not.’ (d)

§. 4. Should you, my good reader, fall into this state, it will probably first discover itself, by a failure in the duties of the closet. Not that I suppose, they will at first, or certainly conclude, that they will at all, be wholly omitted: But they will be run over in a cold and formal manner. Sloth, or some of those other snares which I cautioned you against in the former chapter, will so far prevail upon you, that though perhaps you know and recollect, that the proper season of retirement is come, you will

will sometimes indulge yourself upon your bed in the morning, sometimes in conversation or business in the evening, so as not to have convenient time for it. Or perhaps, when you come into your closet at that season, some favourite book you are desirous to read, some correspondence that you chuse to carry on, or some other amusement will present itself, and plead to be dispatched first. This will probably take up more time than you imagined: and then, secret prayer will be hurried over, and perhaps reading the scripture quite neglected. You will plead perhaps, that it is but for once; but the same allowance will be made a second and a third time; and it will grow more easy and familiar to you each time, than it was the last. And thus God will be mocked, and your own soul will be defrauded of its spiritual meals, if I may be allowed the expression; the word of God will be slighted, and self examination quite difused; and secret prayer itself will grow a burthen, rather than a delight; a trifling ceremony, rather than a devout homage fit for the acceptance of our father who is in heaven.

§. 5. If immediate and resolute measures be not taken for your recovery from these declensions, they will spread farther, and reach the acts of social worship. You will feel the effect in your families, and in public ordinances. And if you do not feel it, the symptoms will be so much the worse. Wandering thoughts will (as it were) eat out the very heart of these duties. It is not, I believe, the privilege of the most eminent Christians, to be entirely free from them: But probably in these circumstances, you will find but few intervals of strict attention, or of any thing which wears the appearance of inward devotion. And when these heartless duties are concluded, there will scarce be a reflection made, how little God hath been enjoyed in them, how little he hath been honoured by them. Perhaps the sacrament of the Lord's supper, being so admirably adapted to fix the attention of the soul, and to excite its warmest exercise of holy affections, may be the last ordinance in which these declensions may be felt. And yet, who can say, that the sacred table is a privileged place! Having been unnecessarily straitened in your preparations, you will attend with less fixedness and enlargement

ment of heart than usual. And perhaps a dissatisfaction in the review, when there has been a remarkable alienation or insensibility of mind, may occasion a disposition to forsake your place and your duty there. And when your spiritual enemies have once gained this point upon you, it is probable you will fall by swifter degrees than ever, and your resistance to their attempts will grow weaker and weaker.

§. 6. When your love to God our father, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, fails, your fervour of Christian affection to your brethren in Christ will proportionably decline, and your concern for usefulness in life abate; especially, where any thing is to be done for spiritual edification. You will find one excuse or another, for the neglect of religious discourse, perhaps not only among neighbours and christian friends, when very convenient opportunities offer; but even with regard to those, who are members of your own families, and to those, who, if you are fixed in the superiour relations of life, are committed to your care.

§. 7. With this remissness, an attachment, either to sensual pleasure, or to worldly business, will increase. For the soul must have something to employ it, and something to delight itself in: And as it turns to one or the other of these, temptations of one sort or another will present themselves. In some instances, perhaps the strictest bounds of temperance, and the regular appointments of life may be broken in upon, through a fondness for company, and the entertainments which often attend it. In other instances, the interests of life appearing greater than they did before, and taking up more of the mind, contrary interests of other persons may throw you into disquietude, or plunge you in debate and contention; in which it is extremely difficult to preserve, either the serenity, or the innocence of the soul. And perhaps, if ministers and other christian friends observe this, and endeavour in a plain and faithful way, to reduce you from your wandering, a false delicacy of mind, often contracted in such a state as this, will render these attempts extremely disagreeable. The ulcer of the soul (if I may be allowed the expression,) will not bear being touched, when it most needs it; and one of the most generous and self-denying instances of christian friendship

friendship shall be turned into an occasion of coldness and distaste, yea perhaps of enmity.

§. 8. And possibly, to sum up all, this disordered state of mind may lead you into some prejudices against those very principles, which might be most effectual for your recovery: And your great enemy may succeed so far in his attempts against you, as to persuade you, that you have lost nothing in religion, when you have lost almost all. He may very probably lead you to conclude, that your former devotional frames were meer fits of enthusiasm; and that the holy regularity of your walk before God was an unnecessary strictness and scrupulosity. Nay, you may think it a great improvement in understanding, that you have learnt from some new masters, that if a man treat his fellow-creatures with humanity and good nature, judging and reviling only those who would disturb others by the narrowness of their notions, (for these are generally exempted from other objects of the most universal and disinterested benevolence so often boasted of,) he must necessarily be in a very good state, though he pretend not to converse much with God, provided that he thinks respectfully of him, and do not provoke him by any gross immoralities.

§. 9. I mention this in the last stage of religious declensions, because I apprehend that to be its proper place; and I fear, it will be found by experience to stand upon the very confines of that gross apostacy into deliberate and presumptuous sin, which will claim our consideration under the next head: And because too, it is that symptom, which most effectually tends to prevent the success, and even the use, of any proper remedies in consequence of a fond and fatal apprehension, that they are needless. It is, if I may borrow the simile, like those fits of lethargick drowsiness, which often precede apoplexies and death.

§. 10. It is by no means my design at this time to reckon up, much less to consider at large, those dangerous principles, which are now ready to possess the mind, and to lay the foundation of a false and treacherous peace. Indeed they are in different instances various, and sometimes run into opposite extremes. But if God awakens you to read your bible with attention, and gives you to feel the
spirit

spirit with which it is written, almost every page will flash in conviction upon the mind, and spread a light to scatter and disperse these shades of darkness.

§. 11. What I chiefly intend in this address, is to engage you, if possible, as soon as you perceive the first symptoms of these declensions, to be upon your guard, and to endeavour as speedily as possible to recover yourself from them. And I would remind you, that the remedy must begin where the first cause of complaint prevailed, I mean, in the closet. Take some time for recollection, and ask your own conscience seriously, how matters stand between the blessed God and your soul? Whether they are as they once were, and as you could wish them to be, if you saw your life just drawing to a period, and were to pass immediately into the eternal state? One serious thought of eternity shames a thousand vain excuses, with which, in the forgetfulness of it, we are ready to delude our own souls. And when you feel that secret misgiving of heart, which will naturally arise on this occasion, do not endeavour to palliate the matter, and to find out flight and artful coverings for what you cannot forbear secretly condemning; but honestly fall under the conviction, and be humbled for it. Pour out your heart before God, and seek the renewed influences of his spirit and grace. Return with more exactness to secret devotion, and to self-examination. Read the scripture with yet greater diligence, and especially the more devotional and spiritual parts of it. Labour to ground it in your heart, and to feel what you have reason to believe the sacred penmen felt when they wrote, so far as the circumstances may agree. Open your soul with all simplicity, to every lesson which the word of God would teach you; and guard against those things, which you perceive to alienate your mind from inward religion, tho' there be nothing criminal in the things themselves. They may, perhaps, in the general be lawful; to some, possibly, they may be expedient; but if they produce such an effect, as was mentioned above, it is certain they are not convenient for you. In these circumstances, above all, seek the converse of those Christians whose progress in religion seems most remarkable, and who adorn their profession in the most amiable manner. Labour to obtain their temper

and sentiments, and lay open your case and your heart to them with all the freedom which prudence will permit. Employ yourself at seasons of leisure in reading practical and devotional books, in which the mind and heart of the pious author is transfused into the work, and in which you can (as it were) taste the genuine spirit of christianity. And, to conclude, take the first opportunity that presents of making an approach to the table of the Lord, and spare neither time nor pains in the most serious preparation for it. There renew your covenant with God: put your soul anew into the hand of Christ, and endeavour to view the wonders of his dying love in such a manner as may rekindle the languishing flame, and quicken you to more vigorous resolutions than ever, 'to live unto him who died for you.' (e) And watch over your own heart; that the good impressions you then feel, may continue. Rest not, till you have obtained as confirmed a state in religion, as you ever knew. Rest not, till you have made a greater progress than before: For it is certain, more is yet behind; and it is only by a zeal to go forward, that you can be secure from the danger of going backward, and of revolting more and more.

§. 12. I only add, that it is necessary to take these precautions as soon as possible; or you will probably find a much swifter progress than you are aware in the downhill road: and you may possibly be left of God, to fall into some gross and aggravated sin, so as to fill your conscience with an agony and horror, which the pain of 'broken bones' (f) can but imperfectly express.

APRAYER for one under spiritual decays.

“ ETERNAL and unchangeable Jehovah! Thy perfections and glories are, like thy being, immutable. Jesus thy son is 'the same yesterday, to day, and forever.' (g) The eternal world to which I am hastening, is always equally important, and presses upon the attentive mind for a more fixed and solemn regard, in proportion to the degree in which it comes nearer and nearer. But, alas, my views, and my affections, and my best resolutions are continually

(e) 2 Cor. v. 15. (f) Psal. li. 8. (g) Heb. xiii. 8.

ly varying, like this poor body, which goes through daily and hourly alterations in its state and circumstances. Whence, O Lord, whence this sad change, which I now experience, in the frame and temper of my mind towards thee? Whence this alienation of my soul from thee? Why can I not come to thee with all the endearments of filial love, as I once could? Why is thy service so remissly attended, if attended at all! and why are the exercises of it, which were once my greatest pleasure, become a burthen to me? 'Where, O God, is the blessedness I once spake of,' (h) when my joy in thee as my heavenly father was so conspicuous, that strangers might have observed it; and when my heart did so overflow with love to thee, and with zeal for thy service, that it was matter of self denial to me, to limit and restrain the genuine expressions of those strong emotions of my soul even where prudence and duty required it?

"Alas, Lord, whither am I fallen! Thine eye sees me still; but O how unlike what it once saw me? Cold and insensible as I am, I must blush on the reflection,—Thou 'seest me in secret:' (i) and seest me, perhaps, often amusing myself with trifles in those seasons, which I used solemnly to devote to thine immediate service. Thou seest me, coming into thy presence as by constraint; and, when I am before thee, so straitened in my spirit, that I hardly know what to say to thee, though thou art the God with whom I have to do, and though the keeping up an humble and dutiful correspondence with thee, beyond all comparison the most important business of my life. And even when I am speaking to thee, with how much coldness and formality is it? It is, perhaps, the work of the imagination, the labour of the lips: But where are those ardent desires, those intense breathings after God, which I once felt: Where is that pleasing repose in thee, which I was once conscious of, as being near my divine rest, as being happy in that nearness, and resolving that if possible I would no more be removed from it! But O, how far am I now removed? When these short devotions, if they may be called devotions, are over, in which long intervals do I forget thee, and appear so little animated with thy

(h) Gal. iv. 15. (i) Mat. vi. 6.

thy love, so little devoted to thy service, and a stranger might converse with me a considerable time, without knowing that I had ever formed any acquaintance with thee, without discovering that I had so much as known or heard any thing of God?—Thou callest me to thine house, O Lord, on thine own day? but how heartless are my services there? I offer thee no more than a carcase. My thoughts and affections are engrossed with other objects, while I ‘draw near thee with my mouth, and honour thee with my lips.’ (k)—Thou callest me to thy table; but my heart is so frozen, that it hardly melts even at the foot of the cross; hardly feels any efficacy in the blood of Jesus. O wretched creature that I am! Unworthy of being called thine! Unworthy of a place among thy children, or of the meanest situation in thy family; rather worthy to be cast out, to be forsaken, yea, to be utterly destroyed!

“Is this, Lord, the service, which I once promised, and which thou hast so many thousand reasons to expect? Are these the returns I am making, for thy daily providential care, for the sacrifice of thy son, for the communications of thy spirit, for the pardon of my numberless aggravated sins, for the hopes, the undeserved and so often forfeited hopes of eternal glory? Lord, I am ashamed to stand, or to kneel before thee. But pity me, I beseech thee, and help me: For I am a pitiable object indeed! ‘My soul cleaveth unto the dust,’ and lays itself as in the dust before thee; but, O ‘quicken me, according to thy word?’ (l) Let me trifle no longer, for I am upon the brink of a precipice! I am ‘thinking of my ways,’ O give me grace to ‘turn my feet unto thy testimonies; to make haste, without any farther delay, that I may keep thy commandments!’ (m) ‘Search me, O Lord, and try me!’ (n) Go to the first root of this distemper, which spreads itself over my soul; and recover me from it! Represent sin unto me, O Lord, I beseech thee, that I may see it with abhorrence! And represent the Lord Jesus Christ to me, in such a light, that I may ‘look upon him and mourn,’ (o) that I may look upon him and love!

May

(k) *Isai.* xxix. 13. (l) *Pfal.* cxix. 25. (m) *Pfal.* cxix. 59, 60. (n) *Pfal.* cxxxix. 23. (o) *Zech.* xii. 10.

May I awaken from this stupid lethargy, into which I am sinking: and may Christ give me more abundant degrees of spiritual life and activity, than I have ever yet received! And may I be so quickened and animated by him, that I may more than recover the ground I have lost, and may make a more speedy and exemplary progress, than in my best days I have ever yet done! Send down upon me, O Lord, in a more rich and abundant effusion, 'thy good-spirit! May he dwell in me, as in a temple which he has consecrated to himself;' (p) and while all the service is directed and governed by him, may 'holy and acceptable sacrifices be continually offered'! (q) May the incense be constant, and may it be fragrant! May the sacred fire burn and blaze perpetually; (r) and may none of its vessels ever be profaned, by being employed to an unholy or forbidden use? Amen."

(p) 1 Cor. iii. 16. (q) Rom. xii. 1. (r) Lev. vi. 13.

C H A P. XXIII.

THE SAD CASE OF A RELAPSE INTO KNOWN AND DELIBERATE SIN, AFTER SOLEMN ACTS OF DEDICATION TO GOD, AND SOME PROGRESS MADE IN RELIGION.

Unthought of relapses may happen. §. 1. and bring the soul into a miserable case. §. 2. Yet the case is not desperate. §. 3. The backslider urged immediately to return: (1.) By deep humiliation before God for so aggravated an offence. §. 4. (2.) By renewed regards to the divine mercy in Christ. §. 5. (3.) By an open profession of repentance, where the crime hath given public offence. §. 6. (4.) Falls to be reviewed for future caution. §. 7. The chapter concludes, §. 8. with a prayer for the use of one who hath fallen into gross sins, after religious resolutions and engagements.

§. 1. **T**HE declensions which I have described in the foregoing chapter, must be acknowledged
 W
 worthy

worthy of deep lamentation : But happy will you be, my dear reader, if you never know, by experience, a circumstance, yet more melancholy than this. Perhaps, when you consider the view of things which you now have, you imagine that no considerations can ever bribe you, in any single instance, to act contrary to the present dictates or suggestions of your conscience, and of the spirit of God as setting it on work. No : You think it would be better for you to die. And you think rightly. But Peter thought and said so too : ‘ Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee :’ (a) And yet, after all, he fell : And therefore ‘ be not high-minded, but fear.’ (b) It is not impossible, but you may fall into that very sin, of which you imagine you are least in danger, or into that against which you have most solemnly resolved, and of which you have already most bitterly repented. You may relapse into it again and again. But O, if you do, nay, if you should deliberately and presumptuously fall but once, how deep will it pierce your heart ? How dear will you pay for all the pleasure, with which the temptation has been bated ? How will this separate between God and you ? What a desolation, what a dreadful desolation, will it spread over your soul ? It is grievous to think of it. Perhaps in such a state you may feel more agony and distress in your own conscience, when you come seriously to reflect, than you ever felt when you were first awakened and reclaimed ; because the sin will be attended with some very high aggravations, beyond those of your unregenerate state. I well knew the person, that said, ‘ The agonies of a sinner in the first pangs of his repentance were not to be mentioned on the same day, with those of the backslider in heart, when he comes to be filled with his own way.’ (c)

§. 2. Indeed it is enough to wound one’s heart to think, how yours will be wounded : How all your comforts, all your evidences, all your hopes will be clouded : What thick darkness will spread itself on every side, so that neither sun, nor moon, nor stars, will appear in your heaven. Your spiritual consolations will be gone ; and your temporal enjoyments will also be rendered tasteless and insipid.

And

(a) Mat. xxvi. 35. (b) Rom. xi. 20. (c) Prov. xiv. 14.

And if afflictions be sent, as they probably may in order to reclaim you, a conscioufness of guilt will sharpen and in-venom the dart. Then will the enemy of your soul with all his art and power rise up against you, encouraged by your fall, and labouring to trample you down in utter hopeless ruin. He will persuade you, that you are already undone beyond recovery. He will suggest, that it signifies nothing to attempt it any more ; for that every effort, every amendment, every act of repentance, will but make your case, so much the worse, and plunge you lower and lower into hell.

§. 3. Thus will he endeavour by terrors to keep you from that sure remedy, which yet remains. But yield not to him. Your case will indeed be sad ; and if it be now your case, it is deplorably so ; and to rest in it would still be much worse. Your heart would be hardened yet more and more ; and nothing could be expected, but sudden and aggravated destruction. Yet blessed be God, it is not quite hopeless. ‘ Your wounds are corrupted, because of your foolishness ;’ (d) but the gangrene is not incurable. ‘ There is balm in Gilead, there is a physician there.’ (e) Do not therefore render your condition indeed hopeless, by now saying, ‘ there is no hope,’ (f) and drawing a fatal argument from that false supposition for going after the idols you have loved. Let me address you, in the language of God to his backsliding people, when they were ready to apprehend that to be their case, and to draw such a conclusion from it : ‘ Only return unto me saith the Lord.’ (g) Cry for renewed grace ; and in the strength of it labour to return. Cry with David, under the like guilt : ‘ I have gone astray like a lost sheep, seek thy servant ; for I do not forget thy commandments ;’ (h) and that remembrance of them is, I hope, a token for good. But if thou wilt return at all, do it immediately. Take not one step more in that fatal path, to which thou hast turned aside. Think not to add one sin more to the account, and then to repent ; as if it would be but the same thing on the whole. The second error may be worse than the first ; it may make way for another and another

(d) Psal. xxxviii. 5. (e) Jer. viii. 22. (f) Jer. ii. 25.
 (g) Jer. iii. 1, 13. (h) Psal. cxix. 176.

another, and draw on a terrible train of consequences, beyond all you can now imagine. ‘Make haste therefore, and do not delay. Escape, and fly, as for thy life,’ (i) before ‘the dart strike through thy liver,’ (k) ‘Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eye-lids:’ (l) Lie not down upon thy bed under unpardoned guilt, lest evil overtake thee, lest the sword of divine justice shall smite thee; and whilst thou purpolest to return to-morrow, thou shouldst this night go and take possession of hell.

§. 4. Return immediately; and permit me to add, return solemnly. Some very pious and excellent divines have expressed themselves upon this head, in a manner which seems liable to dangerous abuse; when they urge men after a fall, “not to stay to survey the ground, nor to consider how they came to be thrown down, but immediately to get up and renew the race.” In slighter cases, the advice is good: But when conscience has suffered such violent outrage by the commission of known, wilful and deliberate sin, (a case, which one would hope, should but seldom happen to those who have once sincerely entered on a religious course,) I can by no means think, that either reason or scripture encourage such a method. Especially would it be improper, if the action itself has been of so heinous a nature, that even to have fallen into it on the most sudden surprize of temptation must greatly have ashamed, and terrified, and distressed the soul. Such an affair is dreadfully solemn, and should be treated accordingly. If this has been the sad case with you, my then unhappy reader, I would pity you, and mourn over you; and would beseech you, as you tender your peace, your recovery, the health and the very life of your soul, that you would not loiter away an hour. Retire immediately for serious reflection. Break through other engagements & employments unless they be such as you cannot in conscience delay for a few hours, which can seldom happen in the circumstance I now suppose. This is the one thing needful. Set yourself to it, therefore, as in the presence of God, and hear at large patiently and humbly what conscience has to say, though it chide and reproach severely. Yea, earnestly pray, that God would speak to you by conscience and

(i) Gen. xix. 17. (k) Prov. vii. 23. (l) Prov. vi. 4.

make you more thoroughly to know and feel, 'what an evil and bitter thing it is, that you have thus forsaken him.' (m) Think of all the aggravating circumstances attending your offence; and especially think of those, which arise from abused mercy and goodness; which arise, not only from your solemn vows and engagements to God, but from the views you have had of a redeemer's love, sealed even in blood. And are these the returns? Was it not enough, that Christ should have been 'thus injured by his enemies?' must he be 'wounded in the house of his friends' too? (n) Were you 'delivered to work such abominations as these?' (o) Did the blessed Jesus groan and die for you, that you might sin with boldness and freedom, that you might extract, as it were, the very spirit and essence of sin, and offend God to a height of ingratitude and baseness, which would otherwise have been in the nature of things impossible? O think, how justly God might cast you out from his presence? How justly he might number you among the most signal instances of his vengeance! And think, how 'your heart would endure, and your hands be strong, if he should deal thus with you!' (p) Alas, all your former experiences would enhance your sense of the ruin and misery, that must be felt in an eternal banishment from the divine presence and favour.

§. 5. Indulge such reflections as these. Stand the humbling sight of your sins in such a view as this. The more odious and the more painful it appears, the greater prospect there will be of your benefit by attending to it. But the matter is not to rest here. All these reflections are intended not to grieve, but to cure; and to grieve no more, than may promote the cure. You are indeed to look upon sin: But you are also, in such a circumstance, if ever, to 'look upon Christ; to look upon him, whom you have now pierced deeper than before, and to mourn for him with sincerity and tenderness,' (q) The God whom you have injured and affronted, whose laws you have broken, and whose justice you have (as it were) challenged by this foolish wretched apostacy, is nevertheless 'a most merciful God.' (r) You cannot be so ready

to

(m) Jer. ii. 19. (n) Zec. xiii. 6. (o) Jer. vii. 10.
(p) Ezek. xxii. 14. (q) Zech. xii. 10. (r) Deut. iv. 31.

to return to him, as he is to receive you. Even now does he, as it were, solicit a reconciliation, by those tender impressions which he is making upon your heart. But remember, how he will be reconciled. It is in the very same way, in which you made your first approach to him; in the name, and for the sake of his dear son, come therefore, in an humble dependence upon him. Renew your application to Jesus, that his blood may (as it were) be sprinkled upon your soul, and your soul may thereby be purified, and your guilt removed. This very sin of yours, which the blessed God foresaw, increased the weight of your redeemer's sufferings: It was concerned in shedding his blood. Humbly go, and place your wounds, as it were, under the droppings of that precious balm, by which alone they can be healed. That compassionate saviour will delight to restore you, when you lie as an humble suppliant at his feet, and will graciously take part with you in that peace and pleasure which he gives, through him renew your covenant with God, that broken covenant, the breach of which divine justice might teach you to know 'by terrible things in righteousness: (s) But mercy allows of an accommodation. Let the consciousness and remembrance of that breach engage you to enter into covenant anew, under a deeper sense than ever of your own weakness, and with a more cordial dependance on divine grace for your security, than you have ever yet entertained. I know, you will be ashamed to present yourself among the children of God in his sanctuary, and especially at his table, under a consciousness of so much guilt: But brake through that shame, if providence open you the way. You would be humbled before your offended father: But surely, there is no place where you are more like to be humbled, than when you see yourself in his house; and no ordinance administered there can lay you lower, than that in which 'Christ is evidently set forth, as crucified before your eyes.' (t) Sinners are the only persons who have business there. The best of men come to that sacred table, as sinners: As such make your approach to it; yea, as the greatest of sinners; as one who needs the blood of Jesus, as much as any creature upon earth.

§. 6. And

(s) Pſal. lxx. 5.

(t) Gal. iii. 1.

§. 6. And let me remind you of one thing more : If your fall has been of such a nature as to give any scandal to others, be not at all concerned to save appearances, and to moderate those mortifications which deep humiliation before them would occasion. The depth and pain of that mortification is indeed an excellent medicine, which God has in wise goodness appointed for you in such circumstances as these. In such a case, confess your fault with the greatest frankness : Aggravate it to the utmost : Intreat pardon, and prayer, from those whom you have offended. Then, and never till then, will you be in the way to peace : Not by palliating a fault, not by making vain excuses, not by objecting to the manner in which others may have treated you : as if the least excess of rigour in a faithful admonition were a crime equal to some great immorality that occasioned it. This can only proceed from the madness of pride and self-love : It is the sensibility of a wound, which is hardened, swelled, and inflamed ; and it must be reduced, and cooled, and suppled, before it can possibly be cured. To be censured, and condemned by men, will be but a little grievance, to a soul thoroughly humbled and broken under a sense of having incurred the condemning sentence of God. Such a one will rather desire to glorify God, by submitting to deserved blame ; and will fear deceiving others into a more favourable opinion of him, than he inwardly knows himself to deserve. These are the sentiments which God gives to the sincere penitent in such a case ; and by this means he restores him to that credit and regard among others, which he does not know how to seek ; but which, nevertheless, for the sake both of his comfort and usefulness, God wills that he should have ; and which it is, humanly speaking, impossible for him to recover any other way. But there is something so honorable in the frank acknowledgment of a fault, and in deep humiliation for it, that all who see it must needs approve it. They pity an offender, who is brought to such a disposition ; and endeavour to comfort him with returning expressions not only of their love, but of their esteem too.

§. 7. Excuse this digression, which may suit some cases ; and which would suit many more, if a regular discipline

pline were to be exercised in churches : For on such a supposition, the Lord's supper could not be approached after visible and scandalous falls, without solemn confession of the offence, and declarations of repentance. On the other hand, there may be instances of sad apostacy, where the crime, though highly aggravated before God, may not fall under human notice. In this case, remember, that your business is with him, to whose piercing eye every thing appears in its just light : Before him therefore prostrate your souls, and seek a solemn reconciliation with him, confirmed by the memorials of his dying son. And when this is done, imagine not, that, because you have received the tokens of pardon, the guilt of your apostacy is to be forgot at once. Bear it still in your memory, for future caution : Lament it before God, in the frequent returns of secret devotion especially : And view with humiliation the scars of those wounds which your own folly occasioned, even when by divine grace they are thoroughly healed. For God establishes his covenant, not to remove the sense of every past abomination, but 'that thou mayest remember thy ways, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, even when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord.' (u)*

§. 8. And now, upon the whole, if you desire to attain such a temper, and to return by such steps as these, then immediately fall down before God, and pour out your heart in his presence, in language like this.

A PRAYER for one who has fallen into gross sin, after religious resolutions and engagements.

“ O MOST holy, holy, holy, Lord God ! When I seriously reflect on thy spotless purity, and on the strict and impartial methods of thy steady administration, together with that almighty power of thine, which is able to carry every thought of thine heart into immediate and full execution, I may justly appear before thee this day with shame and terror, in confusion and consternation of spirit. This day, O my God, this dark mournful day; would I take occasion to look back to that sad source of our guilt,

(u) Ezek. xvi. 63.

and

and our misery, the apostacy of our common parents, and say with thine offending servant David, 'behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.' (w) This day would I lament all the fatal consequences of such a descent with regard to myself. And O how many have they been! — The remembrance of the sins of my unconverted state, and the failings and infirmities of my after-life, may justly confound me: How much more such a scene as now lies before my conscience, and before thine all seeing eye? For 'Thou O Lord, knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee.' (x) 'Thou tellest all my wanderings from thy statutes:' (y) Thou seest, and thou recordest every instance of my disobedience to thee, and of my rebellion against thee: Thou seest it in every aggravated circumstance which I can discern, and in many more which I have never observed or reflected upon. How then shall I 'appear in thy presence, or lift up my face to thee!' (z) 'I am full of confusion,' (a) and feel a secret regret in the thought of applying to thee: But, 'O Lord, to whom should I go, but unto thee;' (b) unto thee, on whom depends my life, or my death, unto thee, who alone canst take away that burthen of guilt, which now presses me down to the dust, who alone canst restore to my soul that rest and peace which I have lost, and which I deserve ever to lose?

"Behold me, O Lord God, falling down at thy feet! Behold me, pleading guilty in thy presence, and surrendering myself to that justice which I cannot escape? I have not one word to offer in mine own vindication, in my own excuse. Words, far from being able to clear up my innocence, can never sufficiently describe the enormity and demerit of my sin. Thou, O Lord, and thou only knowest to the full, how heinous and how aggravated it is. Thine infinite understanding alone can fathom the infinite depth of its malignity. I am, on many accounts, most unable to do it. I cannot conceive the glory of thy sacred majesty, whose authority I have despised, nor the number and variety of those mercies, which I have sinned against. I cannot conceive the value of the blood of thy

X

dear

(w) Psal. li. 5. (x) Psal. lxxix. 5. (y) Psal. lvi. 8.
 (z) Ezra ix. 6. (a) Job x. 15. (b) John vi. 68.

dear son, which I have ungratefully trampled under my feet ; nor the dignity of that blessed spirit of thine, whose agency I have, as far as I could, been endeavouring to oppose, and whose work I have been, as with all my might, labouring to undo, and to tear up (as it were) that plantation of his grace, which I should rather have been willing to have guarded with my life, and watered with my blood. O the baseness and madness of my conduct ! That I should thus, as it were, rend open the wounds of my soul, of which I had died long ere this, had not thine own hand applied a remedy, had not thine only son bled to prepare it ! That I should violate that covenant I have ‘ made with thee by sacrifice,’ (c) by the memorials of such a sacrifice too, even of Jesus, my Lord, whereby I am become ‘ guilty of his body and blood !’ (d) That I should bring such dishonor upon religion too, by so unsuitable a walk, and perhaps open the mouths of its greatest enemies to insult it upon my account, and prejudice some against it to their everlasting destruction !

“ I wonder, O Lord God, that I am here to own all this. I wonder, thou hast not long ago appeared ‘ as a swift witness against me ;’ (e) that thou hast not discharged the thunderbolts of thy flaming wrath against me, and crushed me into hell ; making me there a terror to all about me, as well as to myself, by a vengeance and ruin, to be distinguished even there, where all are miserable, and all hopeless.

“ O God, thy patience is marvellous ! But how much more marvellous is thy grace, which after all this invites me to thee ! While I am here giving judgment against myself, that I deserve to die, to die for ever, thou art sending me the words of everlasting life, and ‘ calling me, a backsliding child, to return unto thee.’ (f) Behold therefore, O Lord, invited by thy word, and encouraged by thy grace, I come ; and great as my transgressions are, I humbly beseech thee, freely to pardon them. Because I know, that though my ‘ sins have reached unto heaven,’ (g) and ‘ are lifted up even to the skies,’ (h) ‘ Thy mercy, O Lord, is above the heaven.’ (i). Extend that mercy

to

(c) Psa. l. 5. (d) 1 Cor. xi. 27. (e) Mal. iii. 5. (f) Jer. iii. 22. (g) Rev. xviii. 5. (h) Jer. li. 9. (i) Psa. cviii. 4.

to me, O heavenly father ; and display, in this illustrious instance, the riches of thy grace, and the prevalency of thy son's blood ! For surely, if such crimson sins, as mine may be made 'white as snow and as wool,' (k) and if such a revolter as I am be brought to eternal glory, earth must, so far as it is known, be filled with wonder, and heaven with praise ; and the greatest sinner may cheerfully apply for pardon, if I the chief of sinners find it. And O that, when I have lain mourning, and as it were bleeding at thy feet, as long as thou thinkest proper, thou wouldst at length 'heal this soul of mine which hath sinned against thee ;' (l) and 'give me beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.' (m) O that thou wouldst at length 'restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and make me to hear songs of gladness that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.' (n) Then, when a sense of thy forgiving love is shed abroad upon my heart, and it is cheered with the voice of pardon, I will proclaim thy grace to others ; 'I will teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee :' (o) Those, that have been backsliding from thee, shall be encouraged to seek thee by my happy experience, which I will gladly proclaim for thy glory, though it be to my own shame and confusion of face. And may this 'joy of the Lord be my strength,' (p) so that in it I may serve thee henceforward with a vigor and zeal far beyond what I have hitherto known !

" This I would ask, with all humble submission to thy will ; for I presume not to insist upon it. If thou shouldst see fit to make me a warning to others, by appointing that I should walk all my days in darkness, and at last die under a cloud, thy will be done ! But, O God, extend mercy for thy son's sake, to this sinful soul at last ; and give me some place, though it were at the feet of all thine other servants in the regions of glory ! O bring me at length, though it should be through the gloomiest valley that any have ever passed, into that blessed world where I shall depart from God no more, where I shall wound my own conscience, and dishonor thy holy name no more !

Then

(k) Isai. i. 18.

(l) Psal. xli. 4.

(m) Isai. xli. 3.

(n) Psal. li. 8, 12.

(o) Psal. li. 13.

(p) Neh. viii. 10.

Then shall my tongue be loosed, how long soever it might here be bound under the confusion of guilt ; and immortal praises shall be paid to that victorious blood, which has redeemed such an infamous slave of sin, as I must acknowledge myself to be, and brought me, from returns into bondage and repeated pollution, to share the dignity and holiness of those, who are 'kings and priests unto God.' (q) Amen."

(q) Rev. i. 6.

C H A P. XXIV.

THE CASE OF THE CHRISTIAN UNDER THE HIDINGS OF GOD'S FACE.

The phrase scriptural. §. 1. It signifies the withdrawing the tokens of the divine favour, §. 2. chiefly as to spiritual considerations. §. 3. This may become the case of any Christian, §. 4. and will be found a very sorrowful one ; §. 5. The following directions therefore, are given to those who suppose it to be their own : I. To enquire whether it be indeed a case of spiritual distress, or whether a disconsolate frame may not proceed from indisposition of body, §. 6. or difficulties, as to worldly circumstances. §. 7. If it be found to be indeed such, as the title of the chapter proposes, be advised, II. To consider it as a merciful dispensation of God, to awaken and bestir the soul ; and excite to a strict examination of conscience, and reformation of what has been amiss. §. 8, 9. III. To be humble and patient while the trial continues. §. 10. IV. To go on steadily in the way of duty. §. 11. V. To renew a believing application to the blood of Jesus. §. 12. An humble supplication for one under these mournful exercises of mind, when they are found to proceed from the spiritual cause supposed.

§. 1. **T**HERE is a case which often occurs in the Christian life, which they who accustom themselves much

to the exercise of devotion, have been used to call the hiding of God's face. It is a phrase borrowed from the word of God, which I hope may shelter it from contempt at the first hearing. It will be my business in this chapter to state it as plainly as I can, and then to give some advice as to your own conduct when you fall into it, as it is very probable you may before you have finished your journey through this wilderness.

§. 2. The meaning of it may partly be understood by the opposite phrase, of God's causing his face to shine upon a person, or lifting up upon him the light of his countenance. This seems to carry in it an allusion to the pleasant and delightful appearance which the face of a friend has, and especially if in a superior relation of life, when he converses with those whom he loves and delights in. Thus Job, when speaking of the regard paid him by his attendants, says, 'If I smiled upon them, they believed it not, and the light of my countenance they cast not down;' (a) that is, they were careful, in such an agreeable circumstance, to do nothing to displease me, or (as we speak) to cloud my brow. And David, when expressing his desire of the manifestation of God's favour to him, says, 'Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me;' and, as the effect of it, declares, 'thou hast put gladness into my heart more than if corn and wine increased.' (b) Nor is it impossible, that in this phrase as used by David, there may be some allusion to the bright shining forth of the Shekinah, that is, the lustre which dwelt in the cloud as the visible sign of the divine presence with Israel, which God was pleased peculiarly to manifest upon some public occasions, as a token of his favor and acceptance.—On the other hand therefore, for God to hide his face, must imply the withholding the tokens of his favour, and must be esteemed a mark of his displeasure. Thus Isaiah uses it; 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.' (c) And again, 'thou hast hid thy face from us,' as not regarding the calamities we suffer, 'and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.' (d)

x

fo

(a) Job xxix. 24. (b) Psal. iv. 6, 7. (c) Isai. lix. 2.
(d) Isai. lxiv. 7.

So likewise, for God 'to hide his face from our sins,' (e) signifies to overlook them, and to take no farther notice of them. The same idea is, at other times, expressed by 'God's hiding his eyes' (f) from persons of a character disagreeable to him, when they come to address him, with their petitions, not vouchsafing (as it were) to look towards them. This is plainly the scriptural sense of the word; and agreeably to this, it is generally used by Christians in our day, and every thing which seems a token of divine displeasure towards them is expressed by it.

§. 3. It is farther to be observed here, that the things which they judge to be manifestations of divine favour towards them, of complacency in them, are not only, nor chiefly of a temporal nature, or such as merely relate to the blessings of this animal and perishing life. David, though the promises of the law had a continual reference to such, yet was taught to look farther, and describes them as preferable to, and therefore plainly distinct from, 'the blessings of the corn-floor or the wine-press.' (g) And if you, to whom I am now addressing, do not know them to be so, it is plain you are quite ignorant of the subject we are enquiring into, and indeed are yet to take out the first lessons of true religion. All that David says, of 'beholding the beauty of the Lord,' (h) or being 'satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when he remembered him on his bed,' (i) as well as 'with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple,' (k) is to be taken in the same sense, and can need very little explication to the truly experienced soul. But those that have known the light of God's countenance, and the shinings of his face, will, in proportion to the degree of that knowledge, be able to form some notion of the hiding of his face, or the withdrawing of the tokens he has given his people of his presence and favour, which sometimes greatly imbitters prosperity; as where the contrary is found, it sweetens afflictions, and often swallows up the sense of them.

§. 4. And give me leave to remind you, my Christian friend, (for under that character I now address my reader) that to be thus deprived of the sense of God's love, and of the

(e) Psal. li. 9. (f) Isai. i. 15. (g) Psal. iv. 7.
 (h) Psal. xxvii. 4. (i) Psal. lxxiii. 5, 6. (k) Psal. lxxv. 4.

the tokens of his favour, may soon be the case with you, though you may now have the pleasure to see the candle of the Lord shining upon you, or though it may even seem to be sun-shine and high noon in your soul. You may loose your lively views of the divine perfections and glories, in the contemplation of which you now find that inward satisfaction. You may think of the divine wisdom and power, of the divine mercy and fidelity, as well as of his righteousness and holiness, and feel little inward complacency of soul in the views. It may be, with respect to any lively impressions, as if it were the contemplation merely of a common object. It may seem to you, as if you had lost all idea of those important words, though the view has sometimes swallowed up your whole soul in transports of astonishment, admiration and love. You may lose your delightful sense of the divine favour. It may be matter of great and sad doubt with you, whether you do indeed belong to God; and all the work of his blessed spirit may be so veiled and shaded in the soul, that the peculiar characters, by which the hand of that sacred agent might be distinguished, shall be in a great measure lost; and you may be ready to imagine, you have only deluded yourself in all the former hopes you have entertained. In consequence of this, those ordinances, in which you now rejoice, may grow very uncomfortable to you, even when you do indeed desire communion with God in them. You may hear the most delightful evangelical truths opened, you may hear the privileges of God's children most affectionately represented, and not be aware that you have any part or lot in this matter; and from that very coldness and insensibility may be drawing a farther argument, that you have nothing to do with them. And then your heart may 'meditate terror,' (1) and under the distress that overwhelms you, your dearest enjoyments may be reflected upon as adding to the weight of it, and making it more sensible, while you consider that you had once such a taste for these things, and have now lost it all. So that perhaps it may seem to you, that they, who never felt any thing at all of religious impressions, are happier than you, or at least are less miserable. You may

(1) *Isai. xxxiii. 18.*

So likewise, for God ‘to hide his face from our sins,’ (e) signifies to overlook them, and to take no farther notice of them. The same idea is, at other times, expressed by ‘God’s hiding his eyes’ (f) from persons of a character disagreeable to him, when they come to address him, with their petitions, not vouchsafing (as it were) to look towards them. This is plainly the scriptural sense of the word; and agreeably to this, it is generally used by Christians in our day, and every thing which seems a token of divine displeasure towards them is expressed by it.

§. 3. It is farther to be observed here, that the things which they judge to be manifestations of divine favour towards them, of complacency in them, are not only, nor chiefly of a temporal nature, or such as merely relate to the blessings of this animal and perishing life. David, though the promises of the law had a continual reference to such, yet was taught to look farther, and describes them as preferable to, and therefore plainly distinct from, ‘the blessings of the corn-floor or the wine-press.’ (g) And if you, to whom I am now addressing, do not know them to be so, it is plain you are quite ignorant of the subject we are enquiring into, and indeed are yet to take out the first lessons of true religion. All that David says, of ‘beholding the beauty of the Lord,’ (h) or being ‘satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when he remembered him on his bed,’ (i) as well as ‘with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple,’ (k) is to be taken in the same sense, and can need very little explication to the truly experienced soul. But those that have known the light of God’s countenance, and the shinings of his face, will, in proportion to the degree of that knowledge, be able to form some notion of the hiding of his face, or the withdrawing of the tokens he has given his people of his presence and favour, which sometimes greatly imbitters prosperity; as where the contrary is found, it sweetens afflictions, and often swallows up the sense of them.

§. 4. And give me leave to remind you, my Christian friend, (for under that character I now address my reader) that to be thus deprived of the sense of God’s love, and of the

(e) Psal. li. 9. (f) Isai. i. 15. (g) Psal. iv. 7.
 (h) Psal. xxvii. 4. (i) Psal. lxxiii. 5, 6. (k) Psal. lxxv. 4.

the tokens of his favour, may soon be the case with you, though you may now have the pleasure to see the candle of the Lord shining upon you, or though it may even seem to be sun-shine and high noon in your soul. You may loose your lively views of the divine perfections and glories, in the contemplation of which you now find that inward satisfaction. You may think of the divine wisdom and power, of the divine mercy and fidelity, as well as of his righteousness and holiness, and feel little inward complacency of soul in the views. It may be, with respect to any lively impressions, as if it were the contemplation merely of a common object. It may seem to you, as if you had lost all idea of those important words, though the view has sometimes swallowed up your whole soul in transports of astonishment, admiration and love. You may lose your delightful sense of the divine favour. It may be matter of great and sad doubt with you, whether you do indeed belong to God ; and all the work of his blessed spirit may be so veiled and shaded in the soul, that the peculiar characters, by which the hand of that sacred agent might be distinguished, shall be in a great measure lost ; and you may be ready to imagine, you have only deluded yourself in all the former hopes you have entertained. In consequence of this, those ordinances, in which you now rejoice, may grow very uncomfortable to you, even when you do indeed desire communion with God in them. You may hear the most delightful evangelical truths opened, you may hear the privileges of God's children most affectionately represented, and not be aware that you have any part or lot in this matter ; and from that very coldness and insensibility may be drawing a farther argument, that you have nothing to do with them. And then your heart may ' meditate terror,' (1) and under the distress that overwhelms you, your dearest enjoyments may be reflected upon as adding to the weight of it, and making it more sensible, while you consider that you had once such a taste for these things, and have now lost it all. So that perhaps it may seem to you, that they, who never felt any thing at all of religious impressions, are happier than you, or at least are less miserable. You may

(1) *Isai.* xxxiii. 18.

may perhaps in these melancholy hours, even doubt, whether you have ever prayed at all, and whether all that you called your enjoyment of God, were not some false delight, excited by the great enemy of souls, to make you apprehend that your state was good, that so you might continue his more secure prey.

§. 5. Such as this may be your case for a considerable time ; and ordinances may be attended in vain, and the presence of God may be in vain sought in them. You may pour out your soul in private, and then come to public worship, and find little satisfaction in either ; but be forced to take up the psalmist's complaint ; ' My God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not ; and in the night season, and am not silent ;' (m) or that of Job. ' Behold I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive him ; on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him ; he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him : ' (n) So that all, which looked like religion in your mind, shall seem, as it were, to be melted into grief, or chilled into fear, or crushed into a deep sense of your own unworthiness ; in consequence of which, you shall not dare so much as to lift up your eyes before God, and be almost ashamed to take your place in a worshipping assembly among any that you think his servants. I have known this to be the case of some excellent Christians, whose improvements in religion have been distinguished, and whom God hath honored above many of their brethren in what he hath done for them, and by them. Give me leave therefore, having thus described it, to offer you some plain advices with regard to it ; and let not that be imputed to enthusiastick fancy, which proceeds from an intimate and frequent view of facts on the one hand, and from a sincere affectionate desire, on the other, to relieve the tender pious heart in so desolate a state. At least, I am persuaded, the attempt will not be overlooked or disapproved by ' the great shepherd of the sheep,' (o) who has charged us to ' comfort the feeble minded.' (p)

§. 6. And here I would first advise you most carefully

to

(m) Psal. xxij. 2. (n) Job xxiii. 8, 9. (o) Heb. xii. 20.
(p) 1 Thess. v. 14.

to enquire, whether your present distress, does indeed arise from causes which are truly spiritual? Or whether it may not rather have its foundation in some disorder of body, or in the circumstances of life, in which you are providentially placed, which may break your spirits and deject your mind? The influence of the inferior part of our nature, on the nobler, the immortal spirit, while we continue in this embodied state, is so evident, that no attentive person can, in the general, fail to have observed it; and yet, these are cases, in which it seems not to be sufficiently considered; and perhaps your own may be one of them. The state of the blood is often such, as necessarily to suggest gloomy ideas even in dreams, and to indispose the soul for taking pleasure in any thing: And when it is so, why should it be imagined to proceed from any peculiar divine displeasure, if it does not find its usual delight in religion? Or why should God be thought to have departed from us, because he suffers natural causes to produce natural effects, without opposing by miracle to break the connection? When this is the case, the help of the physician is to be sought, rather than that of the divine, or at least, by all means, together with it; and medicine, diet, exercise and air, may, in a few weeks, effect that, which the strongest reasonings, the most pathetic exhortations or consolations, might for many months have attempted in vain.

§. 7. In other instances, the dejection and feebleness of the mind may rise from something uncomfortable in our worldly circumstances; these may cloud as well as distract the thoughts, and imbitter the temper, and thus render us in a great degree unfit for religious services or pleasures; and when it is so, the remedy is to be sought in submission to divine providence, in abstracting our affections as far as possible from the present world, in a prudent care to ease ourselves of the burthen so far as we can, by moderating unnecessary expences, and by diligent application to business, in humble dependance on the divine blessing; in the mean time, endeavouring by faith to look up to him, who sometimes suffers his children to be brought into such difficulties, that he may endear himself more sensibly to them by the method he shall take for their relief.

§. 8. On the principles here laid down, it may, perhaps, appear on enquiry, that the distress complained of, may have a foundation very different from what was at first supposed. But where the health is found, and the circumstances are easy; when the animal spirits are disposed for gaiety and entertainment, while all taste for religious pleasure is in a manner gone; when the soul is seized with a kind of lethargic insensibility, or what I had almost called, a paralytic weakness, with respect to every religious exercise, even though there should not be that deep terrifying distress, or pungent amazement, which I before represented as the effect of melancholy; nor that anxiety about the accommodations of life, which straight circumstances naturally produce: I would in that case vary my advice, and urge you, with all possible attention and impartiality, to search into the cause which has brought upon you that great evil, under which you justly mourn. And, probably, in the general, the cause is sin; some secret sin which has not been discovered or observed by the eye of the world; for enormities that draw on them the observation and censure of others, will probably fall under the case mentioned in the former chapter, as they must be instances of known and deliberate guilt. Now the eye of God hath seen these evils which have escaped the notice of your fellow creatures; and in consequence of this care to conceal them from others, while you could not but know they were open to him. God has seen himself in a peculiar manner affronted, and injured, I had almost said insulted by them: And hence his righteous displeasure. O! let that never be forgotten, which is so plainly said, so commonly known, so familiar to almost every religious ear, yet too little felt by any of our hearts. ‘Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear.’ (q) And this is on the whole, a merciful dispensation of God, though it may seem severe; regard it not, therefore, merely as your calamity, but as intended to awaken you, that you may not content yourself, even with lying in tears of humiliation before the Lord, but like Joshua rise and exert yourself vigorously,

(q) *Isai. lix. 1, 2.*

orously, to put away from you that accursed thing whatever it be. Let this be your immediate and earnest care, that your pride may be humbled, that your watchfulness may be maintained, that your affections to the world may be deadened, and that, on the whole, your fitness for heaven may in every respect be increased. These are the designs of your heavenly father, and let it be your great concern to co-operate with them.

§. 9. Receive it, therefore, on the whole, as the most important advice that can be given you, immediately to enter on a strict examination of your conscience. Attend on its gentlest whispers. If a suspicion arises in your mind, that any thing has not been right, trace that suspicion, search into every secret folding of your heart; improve to the purposes of a fuller discovery, the advices of your friends, the reproaches of your enemies; recollect for what your heart hath smitten you at the table of the Lord, for what it would smite you, if you were upon a dying bed, and within this hour to enter on eternity.— When you have made any discovery, note it down, and go on in your search till you can say, these are the remaining corruptions of my heart, these are the sins and follies of my life; this have I neglected; this have I done amiss. And when the account is as complete as you can make it, set yourself in the strength of God to a strenuous reformation, or rather begin the reformation of every thing that seems amiss as soon as ever you discover it; return to the Almighty and thou shalt be built up; and put iniquity far from thy tabernacle, then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him and he shall hear thee, thou shalt pay thy vows unto him, and his light shall shine upon thy ways.' (r)

§. 10. In the mean time be waiting for God with the deepest humility, and submit yourself to the discipline of your heavenly father, acknowledging his justice, and hoping in his mercy; even when your conscience is least severe in its remonstrances, and discovers nothing more than the common infirmities of God's people; yet still bow yourself down before him, and own, that so many are the evils

evils of your best days, so many the imperfections of your best services, that by them you have deserved all, and more than all that you suffer; deserved, not only that your sun should be clouded, but that it should go down, and arise no more, but leave your soul in a state of everlasting darkness. And while the shade continues, be not impatient. Fret not yourself in any wise, but rather with a holy calmness and gentleness of soul, 'wait on the Lord.' (s) Be willing to stay his time, willing to bear his frown, in humble hope that he will at length 'return and have compassion on you.' (t) He 'has not utterly forgotten to be gracious, nor resolved, that he will be favourable no more.' (u) 'For the Lord will not cast off forever; but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.' (x) It is comparatively but 'for a small moment that he hides his face from you; but, you may humbly hope, that with great mercies he will gather you, and that with everlasting kindness he will have mercy on you.' (y) The suitable words are not mine, but his; and they wear this, as in the very front of them, "That a soul under the hidings of God's face, may at last be one whom he will gather, and to whom he will extend everlasting favour."

§. 11. But while the darkness continues "go on in the way of your duty." Continue the use of means and ordinances: Read and meditate: Pray, yes, and sing the praises of God too, though it may be with a heavy heart. Follow 'the footsteps of his flock;' (z) you may perhaps meet the shepherd of souls in doing it. Place yourself at least in his way. It is possible, you may, by this means, get a kind look from him; and one look, one turn of thought which may happen in a moment, may as it were create a heaven in your soul at once. Go to the table of the Lord. If you cannot rejoice, go and mourn there. 'Go and mourn that saviour, whom by your sins you have pierced;' (a) go and lament the breaches of that covenant, which you have there so often confirmed. Christ may, perhaps, 'make himself known unto you in the break-

(s) Psal. xxxvii. 8, 34. (t) Jer. xii. 15. (u) Psal. lxxvii. 7, 9.
 (x) Lam. iii. 31, 32. (y) Isai. liv. 7, 8. (z) Song Sol. i. 8.
 (a) Zech. xii. 10.

breaking of bread,' (b) and you may find, to your surprize, that he hath been near you, when you imagined he was at the greatest distance from you ; near you, when you thought you were cast out from his presence. Seek your comforts in such employments as these ; and not in the vain amusements of the world, and in the pleasures of sense. I shall never forget that affectionate expression, which I am well assured broke out from an eminently pious heart, then almost ready to break under its sorrows of this kind ! " Lord, if I may not enjoy thee, let me enjoy nothing else ; but go down mourning after thee to the grave !" I wondered not to hear, that almost as soon as this sentiment had been breathed out before God in prayer, the burthen was taken off, and the joy of God's salvation restored.

§. 12. I shall add but one advice more ; and that is, " That you renew your application to the blood of Jesus, through whom the reconciliation between God and your soul has been accomplished." It is ' he that is our peace, and by his blood it is that we are made nigh : ' (c) It is ' in him, as the beloved of his soul, that God declares, he is well pleased ; ' (d) and it is ' in him that we are made accepted, to the glory of his grace.' (e) Go therefore, O Christian, and apply by faith to a crucified saviour : Go and apply to him as to a merciful high priest, ' and pour out thy complaint before him, and shew before him thy trouble.' (f) Lay open the distress and anguish of thy soul to him, who once knew what it was to say, (O astonishing ! that he of all others should ever have said it,) ' My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ' (g) Look up for pity and relief to him, who himself suffered, being not only tempted, but with regard to sensible manifestations deserted ; that he might thus know how to pity those that are in such a melancholy case, and be ready, as well as ' able, to succour them.' (h) He is ' Immanuel, God with us : ' (i) and it is only in and through him, that his father shines forth upon us with the mildest beams of mercy and of love. Let it be therefore your immediate

Y

care

(b) Luke xxiv. 35. (c) Eph. ii. 13, 14. (d) Mat. iii. 17.
 (e) Eph. i. 6. (f) Psal. cxlii. 2. (g) Mat. xxvii. 46.
 (h) Heb. ii. 18. (i) Mat. i. 23.

care to renew your acquaintance with him. Review the records of his life and death : Hear his words : Behold his actions : And when you do so, surely you will find a sacred sweetness diffusing itself over your soul. You will be brought into a calm, gentle, silent frame, in which faith and love will operate powerfully, and God may probably cause the ‘ still small voice of his comforting spirit to be heard,’ (k) till your soul bursts out into a song of praise, and you may be ‘ made glad according to the days in which you have been afflicted.’ (l) In the mean time, such language as the following supplication speaks, may be suitable.

An humble SUPPLICATION for one under the bidings of God’s face.

“ BLESSED God ! ‘ with thee is the fountain of life,’ (m) and of happiness. I adore thy name that I have ever tasted of thy streams ; that I have ever felt the peculiar pleasure arising from the light of thy countenance, and the shedding abroad of thy love on my soul. But alas, these delightful seasons are now to me no more ; and the remembrance of them engages me to ‘ pour out my soul within me.’ (n) I would come, as I have formerly done, and call thee with the same endearment, my Father, and my God : But alas, I know not how to do it. Guilt and fear arise, and forbid the delightful language. I seek thee, O Lord, but I seek thee in vain. I would pray, and my lips are sealed up. I would read thy word, and all the promises of it are veiled from mine eyes. I frequent those ordinances, which have been formerly most nourishing and comfortable to my soul ; but alas, they are only the shadows of ordinances ; the substance is gone : The animating spirit is fled, and leaves them now at best but the image of what I once knew them.

“ But, Lord, hast ‘ thou cast off forever, and wilt thou be favourable no more ? (o) Hast thou in awful judgment determined, that my soul must be left to a perpetual winter, the sad emblem of eternal darkness ? Indeed I deserve it should be so. I acknowledge, O Lord, I deserve

to

(k) 1 Kings xix. 12. (l) Psal. xc. 15. (m) Psal. xxxvi. 9.
 (n) Psal. xlii. 4. (o) Psal. lxxvii. 7.

to be cast away from thy presence with disdain; to be sunk lower than I am, much lower: I deserve to have 'the shadow of death upon mine eye-lids,' (p) and even to be surrounded with the thick gloom of the infernal prison. But hast thou not raised multitudes, who have deserved like me to be 'delivered into chains of darkness,' (q) to the visions of thy glory above, where no cloud can ever interpose between thee and their rejoicing spirits? 'Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me!' (r) And though mine iniquities have now justly 'caused thee to hide thy face from me,' (s) yet be thou rather pleased, agreeably to the gracious language of thy word, to 'hide thy face from my sins, and to blot out all mine iniquities!' (t) Cheer my heart with the tokens of thy returning favour, and 'say unto my soul, I am thy salvation!' (u)

"Remember, O Lord God, remember that dreadful day, in which Jesus thy dear son endured what my sins have deserved! Remember that agony, in which he poured out his soul before thee, and said, 'my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!' (x) Did he not, O Lord, endure all this, that humble penitents might through him be brought near unto thee, and might behold thee with pleasure, as their father, and their God? Thus do I desire to come unto thee. Blessed favour, art thou not appointed 'to give unto them that mourn in Zion, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness:' (y) O wash away my tears, anoint my head with 'the oil of gladness, and clothe me with the garments of salvation!' (z)

"O that I knew where I might find thee!" (a) O that I knew what it is, that has engaged thee to depart from me! I am 'searching and trying my ways: (b) O that thou wouldst 'search me, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts; and if there be any wicked way in me, discover it, and lead me in the way everlasting;' (c) in that way, in which I may 'find rest and peace for my soul,'

- (p) Job. xvi. 16. (q) 2 Pet. ii. 4. (r) Psa. cxxiii. 3.
 (s) Isai. lix. 2. (t) Psa. li. 9. (u) Psa. xxxv. 3.
 (x) Mat. xxvii. 46. (y) Isai. lxi. 3. (z) Isai. lxi. 10.
 (a) Job. xxiii. 3. (b) Lam. iii. 40. (c) Psa. cxxxix. 23, 24.

soul,' (d) and feel the discoveries of thy love in Christ !

" O God, ' who didst command the light to shine out of darkness,' (e) speak but the word, and light shall dart into my soul at once ! ' Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise,' (f) shall burst out into a cheerful song, which shall display before those, whom my present dejections may have discouraged, the pleasures and supports of religion !

" Yet, Lord, on the whole, I submit to thy will. If it is thus that my faith must be exercised, by walking in darkness for days, and months, and years to come, how long soever they may seem, how long soever they may be, I will submit. Still will I adore thee, as ' the God of Israel, and the saviour, though thou art a God that hidest thyself : ' (g) Still will I ' trust in the name of the Lord, and stay myself upon my God ; ' (h) ' trusting in thee, though thou slay me : ' (i) ' and waiting for thee, more than they that watch for the morning, yea, more than they that watch for the morning.' (k) Peradventure ' in the evening time it may be light.' (l) I know, that thou hast sometimes manifested thy compassions to thy dying servants, and given them, in the lowest ebb of their natural spirits, a full tide of divine glory, thus turning ' darkness into light before them.' (m) So may it please thee to gild ' the valley of the shadow of death with the light of thy presence, when I am passing through it, and to stretch forth thy rod and thy staff to comfort me,' (n) that my tremblings may cease, and the gloom may echo with songs of praise ! But if it be thy sovereign pleasure, that distress and darkness should still continue to the last motion of my pulse and the last gasp of my breath, O let it cease with the parting struggle, and bring me to ' that light which is sown for the righteous, and to that gladness which is reserved for the upright in heart ; ' (o) to the unclouded regions of everlasting splendor and joy, where the full anointings of thy spirit shall ' be poured out on all thy people, and thou wilt no more hide thy face from any of them ! ' (p)

" This,

- (d) Jer. vi. 16. (e) 2 Cor. iv. 6. (f) Psal. li. 15.
 (g) Isai. xlv. 15. (h) Isai. l. 10. (i) Job. xiii. 15.
 (k) Psal. cxxx. 6. (l) Zech. xiv. 7. (m) Isai. xiii. 16.
 (n) Psal. xxiii. 4. (o) Psal. xcvi. 11. (p) Ezek. xxxix. 29.

“ This, ‘ Lord, is thy salvation for which I am waiting;’ (q) and whilst I feel the desires of my soul drawn out after it, I will never despair of obtaining it. Continue and increase those desires, and at length satisfy and exceed them all, through the riches of thy grace in Christ Jesus! Amen.”

(q) Gen. xlix. 18.

C H A P. XXV.

THE CHRISTIAN STRUGGLING UNDER GREAT AND HEAVY AFFLICTIONS.

Here it is advised, (1.) That afflictions should be expected. §. 1. (2.) That the righteous hand of God should be acknowledged in them, when they come. §. 2. (3.) That they should be borne with patience. §. 3. (4.) That the divine conduct in them should be cordially approved. §. 4. (5.) That thankfulness should be maintained in the midst of trials. §. 5. (6.) That the design of affliction should be diligently enquired into, and all proper assistance taken in discovering it. §. 6. (7.) That when it is discovered, it should humbly be complied with and answered. §. 7. A prayer suited to such a case.

§. 1. SINCE ‘man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward,’ (a) and Adam has intailed on all his race the sad inheritance of calamity in their way to death, it will certainly be prudent and necessary, that we should all expect to meet with trials and afflictions; and that you, reader, whoever you are, should be endeavoring to gird on your armour, and put yourself into a posture to encounter those trials, which will fall to your lot as a man, and a Christian. Prepare yourself to receive afflictions, and to endure them, in a manner agreeable to both those characters. In this view, when you see others under the burthen, consider how possible it is, that you may be called out to the very same difficulties, or to others equal to them.

(a) Job. v. 7.

them. Put your soul, as in the place of theirs. Think, how you could endure the load, under which they lie; and endeavour at once, to comfort them, and to strengthen your own heart: Or rather pray, that God would do it. And observing how liable mortal life is to such sorrows, moderate your expectations from it; raise your thoughts above it; and form your schemes of happiness, only for that world, where they cannot be disappointed: In the mean time, blessing God, that your prosperity is lengthened out thus far, and ascribing it to his special providence, that you continue so long unwounded, when so many showers of arrows are flying around you, and so many are falling by them, on the right hand, and on the left.

§. 2. When at length your turn comes, as it certainly will, from the first hour in which an affliction seizes you, realize to yourself the hand of God in it, and lose not the view of him in any second cause, which may have proved the immediate occasion. Let it be your first care, to 'humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. (b) Own, that 'he is just in all that is brought upon you,' (c) and that in all these things 'he punishes you less than your iniquities deserve.' (d) Compose to yourself to bear his hand with patience, to glorify his name by a submission to his will, and to fall in with the gracious design of his visitation, as well as to wait the issue of it quietly, whatsoever the event may be.

§. 3. Now that patience may 'have its perfect work,' (e) reflect frequently, and deeply, upon your own meanness and sinfulness. Consider, how often every mercy has been forfeited, and every judgment deserved. And consider too, how long the patience of God hath borne with you, and how wonderfully it is still exerted towards you; and indeed, not only his patience, but his bounty too. Afflicted as you are, (for I speak to you now as actually under the pressure,) look round and survey your remaining mercies, and be gratefully sensible of them. Make the supposition of their being removed: What if

God

(b) 1 Pet. v. 6. (c) Neh. ix. 33. (d) Ezr. ix. 13.
(e) Jam. i. 4.

God should stretch out his hand against you, and add poverty to pain, or pain to poverty, or the loss of friends to both : or the death of surviving friends to that of those whom you are now mourning over ; would not the wound be more grievous ? Adore his goodness, that this is not the case ; and take heed, lest your unthankfulness should provoke him to multiply your sorrows. Consider also the need you have of discipline ; how wholesome it may prove to your soul, and what merciful designs our heavenly father has, in all the corrections he sends upon his children.

§. 4. Nay I will add, that, in consequence of all these considerations it may well be expected, not only that you should submit to your afflictions as what you cannot avoid, but that you should sweetly acquiesce in them and approve them ; that you should not only justify, but glorify God in sending them ; that you should glorify him with your heart, and with your lips too. Think not praise unsuitable on such an occasion ? nor think that praise alone to be suitable, which takes its rise from remaining comforts : But know that it is your duty, not only to be thankful in your afflictions, but to be thankful on account of them.

§. 5. God himself has said, ‘ in every thing give thanks ;’ [f] and he has taught his servants to say, ‘ yea also we glory in tribulation.’ [g] And most certain it is, that to true believers they are instances of divine mercy ; for ‘ whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth’ with peculiar and distinguished endearment. [h] View your present afflictions in this light, as chastisements of love ; and then let your own heart say, whether love does not demand praise.— Think with yourself, “ It is thus that God is making me conformable to his own son ; it is thus that he is training me up for complete glory. Thus he kills my corruptions ; thus he strengthens my graces ; thus he is wisely contriving to bring me nearer to himself, and to ripen me for the honors of his heavenly kingdom. It is ‘ if need be, that I am in heaviness ;’ [i] and he surely knows what that need is better than I can pretend to teach him ;

and

[f] 1 Thess. v. 18. [g] Rom. v. 3. [h] Heb. xii. 6.
[i] 1 Pet. i. 6.

and knows what peculiar property there is in this affliction, to answer my present necessity, and to do me that peculiar good which he is graciously intending me by it. This tribulation shall ‘work patience, and patience experience, and experience a more assured hope; even a hope which shall not make ashamed, while the love of God is shed abroad in my heart,’ [k] and shines through my affliction, like the sun through a gently descending cloud, darting in light upon the shade, and mingling fruitfulness with weeping.”

§. 6. Let it be then your earnest care, while you thus look on your affliction, whatever it may be, as coming from the hand of God, to improve it to the purposes for which it was sent. And that you may so improve it, let it be your first concern, to know what those purposes are. Summon up all the attention of your soul, to ‘hear the rod and him who hath appointed it; [l] and pray earnestly, that you may understand its voice. Examine your life, your words, and your heart, and pray, that God would so guide your enquiries, that you may ‘return unto the Lord that smiteth you.’ [m] To assist you in this, call in the help of pious friends, and particularly of your ministers: Intreat, not only their prayers but their advices too, as to the probable design of providence; and encourage them freely to tell you any thing which occurs to their minds upon this head. And if such an occasion should lead them to touch upon some of the imperfections of your character and conduct, look upon it as a great token of their friendship, and take it, not only patiently, but thankfully. It does but ill become a Christian at any time, to resent reproofs and admonitions; and least of all does it become him, when the rebukes of his heavenly father are upon him. He ought rather to seek admonitions at such a time as this, and voluntarily to offer his wounds to be searched by a faithful and skilful hand.

§. 7. And when, by one mean or another, you have got a ray of light to direct you in the meaning and language of such dispensation, take heed, that you do not, in any degree, ‘harden yourself against God, and walk contrary to him.’ [n] Obstinate reluctance to the apprehended

[k] Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. [l] Mic. vi. 9. [m] Isai. ix. 13.
[n] Lev. xxvi. 27.

hended design of any providential stroke is inexpressibly provoking to him. Set yourself therefore to an immediate reformation of whatever you discover amiss; and labour to learn the general lessons of greater submission to God's will, of a more calm indifference to the world, and of a closer attachment to divine converse and to the views of an approaching invisible state. And whatever particular proportion or correspondence you may observe, between this or that circumstance in your affliction, and your former transgressions, be especially careful to act according to that more peculiar and express voice of the rod. Then you may, perhaps, have speedy and remarkable reason to say, that 'it hath been good for you that you have been afflicted;' [o] and with a multitude of others, may learn to number the time of your sharpest trials, among the sweetest and the most exalted moments of your life. For this purpose, let prayer be your frequent employment; and let such sentiments as these, if not in the very same terms, be often and affectionately poured out before God.

An humble ADDRESS to God, under the pressure of heavy afflictions.

"O thou supreme, yet all righteous and gracious governor of the whole universe! Mean and inconsiderable as this little province of thy spacious empire may appear, thou dost not disregard the earth and its inhabitants; but attendest to its concerns with the most condescending and gracious regards. 'Thou reignest and I rejoice in it, as it is indeed matter of universal joy.' [p] I believe thy universal providence and care; and I firmly believe thy wise, holy and kind interposition in every thing which relates to me and to the circumstances of my abode in this thy world. I would look through all inferior causes unto thee, whose eyes are upon all thy creatures; to thee, 'who formest the light, and createst darkness, who makest peace and createst evil;' [q] to thee, Lord, who at thy pleasure canst exchange the one for the other,

[o] Psal. cxix. 71. [p] Psal. xcvi. 1. [q] Isai. xlv. 7.

ether, canst turn the brightest noon into midnight, and the darkest midnight into noon.

“ O thou wise and merciful governor of the world ! I have often said thy will be done. And now, thy will is painful to me. But shall I, upon that account, unsay what I have so often said ? God forbid ! I come rather to lay myself down at thy feet, and to declare my full and free submission to all thy sacred pleasure. O Lord, thou art just and righteous in all ! I acknowledge in thy venerable and awful presence, that I ‘ have deserved this, and ten thousand times more,’ [r] I acknowledge, that ‘ it is of thy mercy, that I am not utterly consumed,’ [s] and that any the least degree of comfort yet remains. O Lord, I most readily confess, that the sins of one day of my life have merited all these chastisements ; and that every day of my life hath been more or less sinful. Smite therefore, O thou righteous judge ; and I will still adore thee, that instead of the scourge, thou hast not given a commission to the sword, to do all the dreadful work of justice, and to pour out my blood in thy presence.

“ But shall I speak unto thee, only as my judge ? O Lord, thou hast taught me a tenderer name : Thou condescendest to call thyself my father, and to speak of correction as the effect of thy love. O welcome, welcome those afflictions, which are the tokens of thy parental affection, the marks of my adoption into thy family ! Thou knowest what discipline I need. Thou seest, O Lord, that bundle of folly, which there is in the heart of thy poor, froward and thoughtless child : And knowest, what rods, and what strokes are needful to drive it away. I would therefore ‘ be in humble subjection to the father of spirits, who chasteneth me for my profit ; would be in subjection to him, and live.’ [t] I would bear thy strokes, not merely because I cannot resist them, but because I love and trust in thee. I would sweetly acquiesce and rest in thy will, as well as stoop to it ; and would say ‘ good is the word of the Lord.’ [u] And I desire, that not only my lips, but my soul may acquiesce. Yea, Lord, I would praise thee, that thou wilt shew so much regard to me, as

[r] Ezr. ix. 13. [s] Lam. iii. 22. [t] Heb. xii. 9, 10.
[u] 2 Kings xx. 19.

to apply such remedies as these to the diseases of my mind, and art thus kindly careful to train me up for glory. I have no objection against being afflicted, against being afflicted in this particular way. 'The Cup which my father puts into mine hand, shall I not drink it?' [x] By thine assistance and support I will. Only be pleased, O Lord, to stand by me, and sometimes to grant me a favourable look, in the midst of my suffering! Support my soul, I beseech thee, by thy consolations mingled with my tribulations; and I shall glory in those tribulations that are thus allayed! It has been the experience of many, who have reflected on afflicted days with pleasure, and have acknowledged that their comforts have swallowed up their sorrows. And after all that thou hast done 'are thy mercies restrained?' [y] 'Is thy hand waxed short,' [z] or canst thou not still do the same for me?

"If my heart be less tender, less sensible, thou canst cure that disorder, and canst make this affliction the mean of curing it. Thus let it be; and at length in thine own due time, and in the way which thou shalt chuse, work out deliverance for me; and 'shew me thy marvellous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them that put their trust in thee!' [a] For I well know, that how dark soever this night of affliction seem, if thou sayest, let there be light, there shall be light. But I would urge nothing before the time thy wisdom and goodness shall appoint. I am much more concerned that my afflictions may be sanctified, than that they may be removed. Number me, O God, among the happy persons, whom whilst thou chastenest, thou 'teachest out of thy law!' [b] 'Shew me, I beseech thee, wherefore thou contendest with me; [c] and purify me by the fire, which is so painful to me, while I am passing through it! Dost thou not 'chasten thy children for this very end, that they may be partakers of thine holiness!' [d] Thou knowest, O God, it is this my soul is breathing after. I am partaker of thy bounty, every day and moment of life: I am partaker of thy gospel, and, I hope, in some
measure

[x] John xviii. 11. [y] Isai. lxiii. 15. [z] Numb. xi. 23.

[a] Psal. xvii. 7. [b] Psal. xciv. 12. [c] Job x. 2.

[d] Heb. xii. 10.

measure too, a partaker of the grace of it operating on my heart : O may it operate more and more, that I may largely partake of thine holiness too ; that I may come nearer and nearer in the temper of my mind to thee, O blessed God, the supreme model of perfection ! Let my soul be (as it were) melted, though with the intensest heat of the furnace, if I may but thereby be made fit for being delivered into the mold of thy gospel, and bearing thy bright and amiable image !

“ O Lord, ‘ my soul longeth for thee ; it crieth out for the living God !’ [e] In thy presence, and under the support of thy love, I can bear any thing ; and am willing to bear it, if I may grow more lovely in thine eyes, and more meet for thy kingdom. The days of my affliction will have an end ; the hour will at length come, when ‘ thou wilt wipe away all my tears.’ [f] ‘ Tho’ it tarry, I would wait for it.’ [g] My foolish heart, in the midst of all its trials, is ready to grow fond of this earth, disappointing and grievous as it is : and graciously, O God, dost thou deal with me, in breaking those bonds that would tie me faster to it. O let my soul be girding itself up, and (as it were) stretching its wings in expectation of that blessed hour, when it shall drop all its sorrows and incumbrances at once, and soar away to expatiate with infinite delight in the regions of liberty, peace, and Joy !
Amen.”

[e] P^{sa}l. lxxxiv. 2. [f] Rev. xxi. 4. [g] Hab. ii. 3.

C H A P. XXVI.

THE CHRISTIAN ASSISTED IN EXAMINING INTO HIS
GROWTH IN GRACE.

The examination important. §. 1. *False marks of growth to be avoided.* §. 2. *True marks proposed ; such as, (1.) Increasing love to God.* §. 3. (2.) *Benevolence to men.* §. 4. (3.) *Candour of disposition.* §. 5. (4.) *Meekness under injuries.*

juries. §. 6. (5.) Serenity amidst the uncertainties of life. §. 7. (6.) Humility, §. 8. especially as expressed in evangelical exercises of the mind towards Christ and the spirit. §. 9. (7.) Zeal for the divine honor. §. 10. (8.) Habitual and cheerful willingness to exchange worlds whenever God shall appoint it. §. 11. Conclusion. §. 12. The Christian breathing after growth in grace.

§. 1. **I**F by divine grace you have been ‘born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,’ (a) even “by that word of God, which liveth and abideth forever,” not only in the world and church, but in particular souls in which it is sown; you will, ‘as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.’ (b) And though in the most advanced state of religion on earth, we are but infants in comparison of what we hope to be, when in the heavenly world we arrive ‘unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;’ c) yet as we have some exercise of a sanctified reason, we shall be solicitous that we may be growing and thriving infants. And you, my reader, ‘if so be that you have tasted that the Lord is gracious,’ (d) will, I doubt not, feel this solicitude. I would, therefore, endeavour to assist you in making the enquiry, whether religion be on the advance in your souls. And here, I shall warn you against some false marks of growth; and then, shall endeavour to lay down others on which you may depend as more solid—In this view I would observe, that you are not to measure your growth in grace, only or chiefly by your advances in knowledge, or in zeal, or any other passionate impression of the mind; no, nor by the fervour of devotion alone; but by the habitual determination of the will for God, and by your prevailing disposition to obey his commands, to submit to his disposal, and to subserve his schemes in the world.

§. 2. It must be allowed, that knowledge, and affection in religion, are indeed desirable. Without some degree of the former, religion cannot be rational; and it is very reasonable

Z

(a) 1 Pet. i. 23. (b) 1 Pet. ii. 2. (c) Eph. iv. 13.
(d) 1 Pet. ii. 3.

reasonable to believe, that without some degree of the latter, it cannot be sincere, in creatures whose natures are constituted like ours. Yet there may be a great deal of speculative knowledge, and a great deal of rapturous affection, where there is no true religion at all; and therefore much more, where there is no advanced state in it. The exercise of our rational faculties, upon the evidences of divine revelation, and upon the declaration of it as contained in scripture, may furnish a very wicked man with a well digested body of orthodox divinity in his head, when not one single doctrine of it has ever reached his heart. An eloquent description of the sufferings of Christ, of the solemnities of judgment, of the joys of the blessed and the miseries of the damned, might move the breast even of a man who did not firmly believe them; as we often find ourselves strongly moved by well-wrought narrations, or discourses, which, at the same time, we know to have their foundation in fiction. Natural constitution, or such accidental causes as are some of them too low to be here mentioned, may supply the eyes with a flood of tears, which may discharge itself plenteously upon almost any occasion that shall first arise. And a proud impatience of contradiction, directly opposite as it is to the gentle spirit of christianity, may make a man's blood boil, when he hears the notions he has entertained, and especially those which he has openly and vigorously espoused, disputed and opposed. This may possibly lead him, in terms of strong indignation, to pour out his zeal and his rage before God, in a fond conceit, that, as the God of truth, he is the patron of those favourite doctrines, by whose fair appearances, perhaps, he himself is misled. And if these speculative refinements, or these affectionate fallies of the mind, be consistent with a total absence of true religion, they are much more apparently consistent with a very low estate of it. I would desire to lead you, my friend, into sublimer notions and juster marks; and refer you to other practical writers, and above all to the book of God, to prove how material they are. I would therefore intreat you, to bring your own heart to answer, as in the presence of God, to such inquiries as these.

§. 3. Do you find "divine love, on the whole, advancing

ing in your soul?"—Do you feel yourself more and more sensible of the presence of God; and does that sense grow more delightful to you, than it formerly was? Can you, even when your natural spirits are weak and low, and you are not in any frame for the ardors and extasies of devotion, nevertheless find a pleasing rest, a calm repose of heart, in the thought that God is near you, and that he sees the secret sentiments of your soul? while you are, as it were, labouring up the hill, and casting a longing eye towards him, though you cannot say you enjoy any sensible communications from him? Is it agreeable to you to open your heart to his inspection and regard, to present it to him laid bare of every disguise, and to say with David, 'thou, Lord, knowest thy servant!' (e) Do you find a growing esteem and approbation of that sacred law of God, which is the transcript of his moral perfections? Do you inwardly 'esteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right?' (f) Do you discern, not only the necessity, but the reasonableness, the beauty, the pleasure of obedience; and feel a growing scorn and contempt of those things, which may be offered as the price of your innocence, and would tempt you to sacrifice or to hazard your interest in the divine favour and friendship? Do you find an ingenuous desire to please God; not only because he is so powerful, and has so many good and so many evil things entirely at his command; but from a veneration of his most amiable nature and character? And do you find your heart habitually reconciled to a most humble subjection, both to his commanding, and to his disposing will? Do you perceive, that your own will is now more ready and disposed, in every circumstance, to bear the yoke, and to submit to the divine determination, whatever he appoints to be born or forborn? Can you 'in patience possess your soul?' (g) Can you maintain a more steady calmness and serenity, when God is striking at your dearest enjoyments in this world, and acting most directly contrary to your present interests, to your natural passions and desires? If you can, it is a most certain and noble sign, that grace is grown up in you to a very vigorous state.

§. 4. Examine also, "what affections you find in your heart

(e) 2 Sam. vii. 20. (f) Psal. cxix. 128. (g) Luke xxi. 19.

heart towards those who are round about you, and towards the rest of mankind in general."—Do you find your heart overflow with undissembled and unrestrained benevolence? Are you more sensible than you once were, of those many endearing bonds, which unite all men, and especially all Christians, into one community; which make them brethren and fellow citizens? Do all the unfriendly passions die and wither in your soul, while the kind social affections grow and strengthen? And though self love was never the reigning passion, since you became a true Christian; yet, as some remainders of it are still too ready to work inwardly, and to shew themselves, especially as sudden occasions arise, do you perceive, that you get ground of them? Do you think of yourself only as one of a great number, whose particular interests and concerns are of little importance when compared with those of the community, and ought by all means, on all occasions, to be sacrificed to them?

§. 5. Reflect especially 'on the temper of your mind towards those, whom an un sanctified heart might be ready to imagine, it had some just excuse for excepting out of the list of those it loves, and towards whom you are ready to feel a secret aversion, or at least an alienation from them.'—How does your mind stand affected towards those who differ from you in their religious sentiments and practices? I do not say, that Christian charity will require you to think every error harmless. It argues no want of love to a friend in some cases, to fear lest his disorder should prove more fatal than he seems to imagine; nay sometimes, the very tenderness of friendship may encrease that apprehension. But to hate persons because we think they are mistaken, and to aggravate every difference in judgment or practice into a fatal and damnable error that destroys all Christian communion and love, is a symptom generally much worse than the evil it condemns. Do you love the image of Christ in a person, who thinks himself obliged in conscience to profess and worship in a manner different from yourself? Nay farther, can you love and honor that which is truly amiable and excellent, in those, in whom much is defective: in those, in whom there is a mixture of bigotry and narrowness of spirit,
which

which may lead them perhaps to flight, or even to censure you? Can you love them, as the disciples and servants of Christ, who through a mistaken zeal may be ready to 'cast out your name as evil,' (h) and to warn others against you as a dangerous person? This is none of the least triumphs of charity, nor any despicable evidence of an advance in religion.

§. 6. And, on this head, reflect farther, "how can you bear injuries?"—There is a certain hardness of soul in this respect, which argues a confirmed state in piety and virtue. Does every thing of this kind hurry and ruffle you, so as to put you on contrivances, how you may recompence, or at least, how you may disgrace and expose him, who has done you the wrong? Or can you stand the shock calmly, and easily divert your mind to other objects, only (when you recollect these things,) pitying and praying for those, who with the worst tempers and views are assaulting you? This is a Christ-like temper indeed; and he will own it as such; will own you, as one of his soldiers, as one of his heroes; especially if it rises so far, as instead of 'being overcome of evil, to overcome evil with good.' (i) Watch over your spirits, and over your tongue, when injuries are offered; and see whether you be ready to meditate upon them, to aggravate them to yourself, to complain of them to others, and to lay on all the load of blame that you in justice can; or whether you be ready to put the kindest construction upon the offence, to excuse it as far as reason will allow, and (where, after all, it will wear a black and odious aspect) to forgive it, heartily to forgive it, and that even before any submission is made, or pardon asked; and in token of the sincerity of that forgiveness, to be contriving what can be done, by some benefit or other towards the injurious person, to teach him a better temper.

§. 7. Examine farther, 'with regard to the other evils and calamities of life, and even with regard to its uncertainties how can you bear them?'—Do you find your soul is, in this respect, gathering strength? Have you fewer foreboding fears and disquieting alarms, than you once had, as to what may happen in life: Can you trust the

z

wisdom

(h) Luke vi. 22. (i) Rom. xii. 21.

wisdom and goodness of God, to order your affairs for you with more complacency and chearfulness than formerly? Do you find, you are able to unite your thoughts more in surveying present circumstances, that you may collect immediate duty from them though you know not what God will next appoint or call you to: And when you feel the smart of affliction, do you make a less matter of it? Can you transfer your heart more easily to heavenly and divine objects, without an anxious sollicitude whether this or that burthen be removed, so it may but be sanctified to promote your communion with God, and your ripeness for glory?

§. 8. Examine also, 'whether you advance in humility.'—This is a silent, but most excellent grace; and they, who are most eminent in it, are dearest to God, and most fit for the communications of his presence to them. Do you then feel your mind more emptied of proud and haughty imaginations? Not prone so much to look back upon past services which it has performed, as forward to those which are yet before you, and inward upon the remaining imperfections of your heart? Do you more tenderly observe your daily slips and miscariages, and find yourself disposed to mourn over those things before the Lord, that once passed with you as slight matters; though when you come to survey them, as in the presence of God, you find they were not wholly involuntary, or free from guilt? Do you feel in your breast a deeper apprehension of the infinite majesty of the blessed God, and of the glory of his natural and moral perfections; so as, in consequence of these views, to perceive yourself (as it were) annihilated in his presence, and to shrink into 'less than nothing, and vanity?' (k) If this be your temper, God will look upon you with peculiar favour, and will visit you more and more with the distinguished blessings of his grace.

§. 9. But there is another great branch and effect of Christian-humility, which it would be an unpardonable negligence to omit. Let me therefore farther enquire: Are you more frequently renewing your application, your sincere, steady, determinate application, to the righteousness

(k) *Isai. xl. 17.*

ness and blood of Christ ; as being sensible how unworthy you are to appear before God, otherwise than in him ? And do the remaining corruptions of your heart humble you before him, though the disorders of your life are in a great measure cured ? Are you more earnest to obtain the quickening influences of the holy spirit ; and have you such a sense of your own weakness, as to engage you to depend, in all the duties you perform, upon the communications of his grace to ‘ help your infirmities ?’ (1) Can you, at the close of your most religious, exemplary, and useful days, blush before God for the deficiencies of them, while others, perhaps, may be ready to admire and extol your conduct ? And while you give the glory of all that has been right to him, from whom the strength and grace has been derived, are you coming to the blood of sprinkling, to free you from the guilt which mingles itself even with the best of your services ? Do you learn to receive the bounties of providence, not only with thankfulness as coming from God, but with a mixture of shame and confusion too, under a consciousness that you do not deserve them, and are continually forfeiting them ? And do you justify providence in your afflictions and disappointments, even while many are flourishing around you in the full bloom of prosperity, whose offences have been more visible at least, and more notorious than yours ?

§. 10. Do you also advance in “ zeal and activity, for the service of God, and the happiness of mankind ?”—Does your love show itself solid and sincere, by a continual flow of good works from it ? Can you view the sorrows of others with tender compassion, and with projects and contrivances what you may do to relieve them ? Do you feel in your breast, that you are more frequently ‘ devising liberal things,’ (m) and ready to wave your own advantage or pleasure that you may accomplish them ? Do you find your imagination teeming (as it were) with conceptions and schemes, for the advancement of the cause and interest of Christ in the world, for the propagation of his gospel, and for the happiness of your fellow-creatures ? And do you not only pray, but act for it ; act in such a manner, as to shew that you pray in earnest ; and feel a
readiness

{ (1) Rom. viii. 26. (m) Isai. xxxii. 8.

readiness to do what little you can in this cause, even though others, who might, if they pleased, very conveniently do a vast deal more, will do nothing?

§. 11. And, not to enlarge on this copious head, reflect once more ‘how your affections stand, with regard to this world and another.’—Are you more deeply and practically convinced of the vanity of these things which are seen, and are temporal?’ (n) Do you perceive your expectations from them and your attachments to them, to diminish? You are willing to stay in this world, as long as your father pleases; and it is right and well: But do you find your bonds so loosened to it, that you are willing, heartily willing, to leave it at the shortest warning; so that if God should see fit to summon you away on a sudden, though it should be in the midst of your enjoyments, pursuits, expectations, and hopes, you would cordially consent to that remove; without saying, “Lord, let me stay a little while longer, to enjoy this or that agreeable entertainment, to finish this or that scheme?” Can you think with an habitual calmness and hearty approbation, if such be the divine pleasure, of waking no more when you lie down on your bed, of returning home no more when you go out of your house? And yet on the other hand, how great soever the burthens of life are, do you find a willingness to bear them, in submission to the will of your heavenly father, though it should be to many future years; and though they should be years of far greater affliction, than you have ever yet seen? Can you say calmly and steadily, if not with such overflowing of tender affections as you could desire, “Behold thy servant, thy child, is in thine hand, do with me as seemeth good in thy sight!” (o) My will is melted into thine; to be lifted up or laid down, to be carried out or brought in, to be here or there, in this or that circumstance, just as thou pleasest, and as shall best suit with thy great extensive plan, which it is impossible that I, or all the angels of heaven, should mend.”

§. 12. These, if I understand matters aright, are some of the most substantial evidences of growth and establishment in religion. Search after them: Bless God for them, so far as you discover them in yourself; and study

to advance in them daily, under the influences of divine grace, to which I heartily recommend you, and to which I intreat you frequently to recommend yourself.

The Christian breathing earnestly after growth in grace.

“ O thou ever blessed fountain of natural and spiritual life ! I thank thee, that I live, and know the exercises and pleasures of a religious life. I bless thee, that thou hast infused into me thine own vital breath, though I was once ‘ dead in trespasses and sins,’ (p) so that I am become, in a sense peculiar to thine own children, a living soul.’ (q) But it is mine earnest desire, that I may not only live but grow ; ‘ grow in grace, and in the knowledge of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,’ (r) upon an acquaintance with whom my progress in it so evidently depends ! In this view I humbly intreat thee, that thou wilt form my mind to right notions in religion, that I may not judge of grace by any wrong conceptions of it, nor measure my advances in it by those things, which are merely the effects of nature, and possibly its corrupt effects !

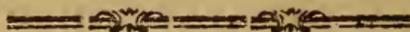
“ May I be seeking after an increase of divine love to thee, my God and father in Christ, of unreserved resignation to thy wise and holy will, and of extensive benevolence to my fellow-creatures ! May I grow in patience and fortitude of soul, in humility and zeal, in spirituality and a heavenly disposition of mind, and in a concern, that ‘ whether present or absent I may be accepted of the Lord,’ (s) that whether I live or die it may be for his glory ! In a word, as thou knowest I hunger and thirst after righteousness, make me whatever thou wouldst delight to see me ! Draw on my soul, by the gentle influences of thy gracious spirit, every trace and every feature, which thine eye, O heavenly father, may survey with pleasure, and which thou mayest acknowledge as thine own image !

“ I am sensible, O Lord, I have not as yet attained : Yea, my soul is utterly confounded to think, ‘ how far I am from being already perfect : But this one thing, (after

(p) Eph. ii. 1. (q) Gen. ii. 7. (r) 1 Pet. iii. 18.
 (s) 2 Cor. v. 9.

the great example of thine apostle, and the much greater of his Lord,) I would endeavour to do; forgetting the things which are behind, I would press forward to those which are before. (t) O that thou wouldst feed my soul by thy word and spirit! Having been, as I humbly hope and trust, regenerated by it, 'being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even by thy word which liveth and abideth forever, (u) as a new-born babe, I desire the sincere milk of the word, that I may grow thereby.' (x) And may 'my profiting appear unto all men,' (y) till at length 'I come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;' (z) and after having enjoyed the pleasures of those that flourish eminently in thy courts below, be fixed in the paradise above! I ask, and hope it through him, 'of whose fulness we have all received, even grace for grace.' (a) To him be glory, both now and for ever!' (b) Amen.

(t) Phil. iii. 12. 13. (u) 1 Pet. i. 23. (x) 1 Pet. ii. 2.
 (y) 1. Tim. iv. 15. (z) Eph. iv. 13. (a) John i. 16.
 (b) 2 Pet. iii. 18.



C H A P. XXVII.

THE ADVANCED CHRISTIAN REMINDED OF THE MERCIES OF GOD, AND EXHORTED TO THE EXERCISES OF HABITUAL LOVE TO HIM AND JOY IN HIM.

An holy joy in God, our privilege, as well as our duty. §. 1. The Christian invited to the exercise of it: §. 2. (1.) By the representation of temporal mercies. §. 3. (2.) By the consideration of spiritual favours. §. 4. (3.) By the views of eternal happiness. §. 5. And, (4.) Of the mercies of God to others, the living, and the dead. §. 6. The chapter closes with an exhortation to this heavenly exercise, §. 7. and with

with an example of the genuine workings of this grateful joy in God.

§. 1. I WOULD now suppose my reader to find, on an examination of his spiritual state, that he is growing in grace. And if you desire, that this growth may at once be acknowledged and promoted, let me call your soul to that more affectionate exercise of love to God and joy in him, which suits, and strengthens, and exalts the character of the advanced Christian; and which I beseech you to regard, not only as your privilege, but as your duty too. Love is the most sublime generous principle of all true and acceptable obedience; and with love, when so wisely and happily fixed, when so certainly returned, joy, proportionable joy, must naturally be connected. It may justly grieve a man that enters into the spirit of Christianity, to see how low a life the generality even of sincere Christians commonly live in this respect. 'Rejoice then in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness,' (a) and of all those other perfections and glories, which are included in that majestic, that wonderful, that delightful name, The Lord thy God! Spend not your sacred moments merely in confession, or in petition, though each must have their daily share: But give a part, a considerable part, to the celestial and angelick work of praise. Yea, labour to carry about with you continually an heart overflowing with such sentiments, warmed and inflamed with such affections.

§. 2. Are there not continually rays enough diffused from the great father of light and love, to inkindle it in our bosom? Come, my Christian friend and brother, come and survey with me the goodness of our heavenly father. And O that he would give me such a sense of it, that I might represent it in a suitable manner; that, 'while I am musing, the fire may burn in my own heart,' (b) and be communicated to yours! And O that it might pass with the lines I write, from soul to soul; awakening in the breast of every Christian that reads them, sentiments more worthy of the children of God, and the heirs of glory; who are to spend an eternity in those sacred exercises, to which I am now endeavouring to excite you?

§. 3. Have

(a) Psal. xcvi. 12.

(b) Psal. xxxix. 3.

§. 3. Have you not reason to adopt the words of David and say, 'how many are thy gracious thoughts unto me, O Lord! How great is the sum of them! When I would count them, they are more in number than the sand.' (c) You, indeed, know, where to begin the survey for the favours of God to you begun with your being, commemorate it therefore with a grateful heart, that the 'eyes, which saw your substance, being yet imperfect, beheld you with a friendly care, when you were made in secret, and have watched over you ever since; and that 'the hand, which drew the plan of your members, when as yet there was none of them,' (d) not only fashioned them at first, but from that time has been concerned in 'keeping all your bones, so that not one of them is broken;' (e) and that, indeed, it is to this you owe it, that you live. Look back upon the path you have trod, from the day that God brought you out of the womb, and say whether you do not (as it were) see all the road thick set with the marks and memorials of the divine goodness. Recollect the places where you have lived, and the persons with whom you have most intimately conversed; and call to mind the mercies you have received in those places, and from those persons, as the instruments of the divine care and goodness. Recollect the difficulties and dangers, with which you have been surrounded; and reflect attentively on what God hath done to defend you from them, or to carry you through them. Think, how often there has been 'but a step between you and death;' and how suddenly God hath sometimes interposed to set you in safety, even before you apprehended your danger. Think of those chambers of illness, in which you have been confined, and from whence, perhaps, you once thought you should go forth no more; but said, (with Hezekiah) 'in the cutting off of your days, I shall go to the gates of the grave, I am deprived of the residue of my years.' (f) God has, it may be, since that time, added many years to your life; and you know not how many may be in reserve, or how much usefulness and happiness may attend each. Survey your circumstances in relative life; how many kind friends are surrounding

(c) Psal. cxxxix. 17, 18. (d) Psal. cxxxix. 15, 16
 (e) Psal. xxxiv. 20. (f) Isai. xxxviii. 10.

rounding you daily, and studying how they may contribute to your comfort. Reflect on those remarkable circumstances in providence, which occasioned the knitting of some bonds of this kind, which, next to those which join your soul to God, you number among the happiest. And forget not, in how many instances, when these dear lives have been threatened, lives, perhaps, more sensibly dear than your own, God hath given them back from the borders of the grave, and so added new endearments arising from that tender circumstance to all your after converse with them. Nor forget, in how gracious a manner he hath supported some others in their last moments, and enabled them to leave behind a sweet odour of piety, which hath embalmed their memories, revived you when ready to faint under the sorrows of the first separation, and, on the whole, made even the recollection of their death delightful.

§. 4. But it is more than time that I lead on your thoughts to the many spiritual mercies which God hath bestowed upon you. Look back, as it were, to the 'rock from whence you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence you were digged.' (g) Reflect seriously on the state wherein divine grace found you : under how much guilt : under how much pollution ! in what danger, in what ruin ! Think what was, and, O, think with yet deeper reflection, what would have been the case ! The eye of God, which penetrates into eternity, saw what your mind, amused with the trifles of present time and sensual gratifications, was utterly ignorant and regardless of. It saw you on the borders of eternity, and pitied you ; saw that you would in a little time have been such a helpless wretched creature, as the sinner that is just now dead, and has, to his infinite surprise and everlasting terror, met his unexpected doom, and would, like him, stand thunder-struck in astonishment and despair. This God saw, and he pitied you ; and being merciful to you, he provided in the counsels of his eternal love and grace, a redeemer for you, and purchased you to himself with the blood of his son ; a price. which, if you will pause upon it, and think seriously what it was, must surely affect you to such a degree as to make you fall down

A a

before

(g) *Isai. li. 1.*

before God in wonder and shame, to think that it should ever have been given for you. To accomplish these blessed purposes, he sent his grace into your heart ; so that, though ‘ you were once darkness, you are now light in the Lord.’ (h) He made that happy change which you now feel in your soul, and, ‘ by his holy spirit which is given to you, he shed abroad that principle of love,’ (i) which is enkindled by this review, and now flames with greater ardor than before. Thus far he hath supported you in your Christian course ; and, ‘ having obtained help from him it is, that you continue even to this day.’ (k) He hath not only ‘ blessed you, but made you a blessing :’ (l) And though you have not been so useful, as that holy generosity of heart, which he has excited, would have engaged you to desire, yet some good you have done in the station in which he has fixed you. Some of your brethren of mankind have been relieved, perhaps too some thoughtless creature reclaimed to virtue and happiness, by his blessing on your endeavours. Some in the way to heaven, are praising God for you ; and some, perhaps, already there are longing for your arrival, that they may thank you in nobler and more expressive forms for benefits, the importance of which they now sufficiently understand, though while here they could never conceive it.

§. 5. Christian, look round on the numberless blessings of one kind or another, with which you are already encompassed ; and advance your prospect still farther, to what faith yet discovers within the veil. Think of those now unknown transports, with which thou shalt drop every burthen in the grave, and thine immortal spirit shall mount, light and joyful, holy and happy, to God, its original, its support, and its hope ; to God, the source of being, of holiness, and of pleasure ; to Jesus, through whom all these mercies are derived to thee, and who will appoint thee a throne near his own, to be forever the spectator and partaker of his glory. Think of the rapture, with which thou shalt attend his triumph in the resurrection day, and receive this poor mouldering corruptible body transformed into his glorious image ; and then ‘ think,

“ these

(h) Eph. v. 8. (i) Rom. v. 5. (k) Acts xxvi. 22.
(l) Gen. xii. 2.

“ these hopes are not mine alone, but the hopes of thousands and millions. Multitudes, whom I number among the dearest of my friends upon earth, are rejoicing with me in these apprehensions and views : And God gives me sometimes to see the smiles on their cheeks, the sweet humble hope that sparkles in their eyes, and shines through the tears of tender gratitude ; and to hear that little of their inward complacency and joy, which language can express. Yea, and multitudes more, who were once equally dear to me with these, though I have laid them in the grave, and wept over their dust, are living to God, living in the possession of inconceivable delights, and drinking large draughts of the water of life, which flows in perpetual streams at his right hand.”

§. 6. O Christian, thou art still intimately united and allied to them. Death cannot break a friendship thus cemented, and it ought not to render thee insensible of the happiness of those friends, for whose memory thou retainest so just an honor. They live to God, as his servants : they ‘ serve him, and see his face ;’ (m) and they make but a small part of that glorious assembly. Millions, equally worthy of thine esteem and affection with themselves, inhabit those blissful regions : And wilt thou not rejoice in their joy ? and wilt thou not adore that everlasting spring of holiness and happiness, from whence each of these streams is derived ? Yea, I will add, while the blessed angels are so kindly regarding us, while they are ministering to thee, O Christian, and bearing thee on their arms, ‘ as an heir of salvation,’ (n) wilt thou not rejoice in their felicity too ? and wilt thou not adore that God, who gives them all the superior glory of their most exalted nature, and gives them a heaven, which fills them with blessedness, even while they seem to withdraw from it, that they may attend on thee ?

§. 7. This, and infinitely more than this, the blessed God is, and was, and shall ever be. The felicities of the blessed spirits that surround his throne, and thy felicities, O Christian, are immortal. These heavenly luminaries shall glow with an undecaying flame ; and thou shalt shine and burn among them, when the sun and the stars are

(m) Rev. xxii. 3, 4. (n) Heb. i. 14.

are gone out. Still shall the unchanging father of lights pour forth his beams upon them; and the lustre they reflect from him, and their happiness in him, shall be everlasting, shall be ever growing. Bow down, O thou child of God, thou heir of glory, bow down, and let all that is within thee unite in one act of grateful love; and let all that is around thee, all that is before thee in the prospects of an unbounded eternity, concur to elevate and transport thy soul; that thou mayest, as far as possible, begin the work and blessedness of heaven, in falling down before the God of it, in opening thine heart to his gracious influences, and in breathing out before him that incense of praise, which these warm beams of his presence and love have so great a tendency to produce, and to ennoble with a fragrancy resembling that of his paradise above.

The grateful soul rejoicing in the blessings of providence and grace, and pouring out itself before God in vigorous and affectionate exercises of love and praise.

“ O my God, it is enough! I have mused, and ‘the fire burneth!’ (o) But O, in what language shall the flame break forth! What can I say but this, that my heart admires thee, and adores thee, and loves thee! My little vessel is as full as it can hold; and I would pour out all thatfulness before thee, that it may grow capable of receiving more and more. Thou art, ‘my hope, and my help; my glory, and the lifter up of my head.’ (p) ‘My heart rejoices in thy salvation;’ (q) and when I set myself, under the influences of thy good spirit, to converse with thee, a thousand delightful thoughts spring up at once; a thousand sources of pleasure are unsealed, and flow in upon my soul with such refreshment and joy, that they seem to crowd into every moment the happiness of days, and weeks, and months.

“ I bless thee, O God, for this soul of mine, which thou hast created; which thou hast taught to say, and I hope to the happiest purpose, where is God my maker? (r)

I

(o) Psal. xxxix. 3. (p) Psal. iii. 3. (q) Psal. xiii. 5.
[r) Job. xxxv. 10.

gination can conceive. But O I adore and love thee, yet far more, for what thou art in thyself, for those stores of perfection which creation has not diminished, and which can never be exhausted by all the effects of it which thou impartest to thy creatures; that infinite perfection, which makes thee thine own happiness, thine own end; amiable, infinitely amiable and venerable, were all derived excellence and happiness forgot.

“ O thou first, thou greatest, thou fairest of all objects! Thou only great, thou only fair, possess all my soul! And surely thou dost possess it. While I thus feel thy sacred spirit breathing on my heart, and exciting these fervours of love to thee, I cannot doubt it any more, than I can doubt the reality of this animal life, while I exert the actings of it, and feel its sensations. Surely, if ever I knew the appetite of hunger, my soul ‘hungereth after righteousness,’ (a) and longs for a greater conformity to thy blessed nature and holy will. If ever my palate felt thirst, ‘my soul thirsteth for God, even for the living God,’ (b) and panteth for the more abundant communication of his favour. If ever this body, when wearied with labours or journies, knew what it was to wish for the refreshment of my bed and rejoiced to rest there, my soul with sweet acquiescence rests upon thy gracious bosom, O my heavenly father, and returns to its repose in the embraces of its God, who ‘hath dealt so bountifully with it.’ (c) And if ever I saw the face of a beloved friend with complacency and joy, I rejoice in the beholding thy face, O Lord, and in calling thee my father in Christ. Such thou art, and such thou wilt be, for time, and for eternity. What have I more to do, but to commit myself to thee for both? leaving it to thee to ‘chuse mine inheritance, and to order my affairs for me,’ (d) while all my business is to serve thee, and all my delight to praise thee. ‘My soul follows hard after God, because his right hand upholds me.’ (e) Let it still bear me up, and I shall press on towards thee, till all my desires be accomplished in the eternal enjoyment of thee! *Amen.*”

(a) Mat. v. 6. (b) Psal. xlii. 2. (c) Psal. cxvi. 7.
(d) Psal. xlvii. 4. (e) Psal. lxiii. 8.

C H A P. XXVIII.

THE ESTABLISHED CHRISTIAN URGED TO EXERT HIMSELF FOR PURPOSES OF USEFULNESS.

A sincere love to God will express itself, not only in devotion, but in benevolence to men. §. 1. 2. This is the command of God. §. 3. The true Christian feels his soul wrought to a holy conformity to it; §. 4. and therefore will desire instruction on this head. §. 5. Accordingly directions are given for the improvement of various talents: Particularly. (1.) Genius and learning. §. 6. (2.) Power. §. 7. (3.) Domestic authority. §. 8. (4.) Esteem. §. 9. (5.) Riches. §. 10. Several good ways of employing them hinted at. §. 11. Prudence in expence urged, for the support of charity. §. 12, 13. Divine directions in this respect to be sought. §. 14. The Christian breathing after more extensive usefulness.

§. 1. **S**UCH as I have described in the former chapter, I trust, are, and will be the frequent exercises of your soul before God. Thus will your love and gratitude breath itself forth in the divine presence, and will, through Jesus the great mediator, come up before it as incense, and yield an acceptable favour. But then you must remember, this will not be the only effect of that love to God, which I have supposed so warm in your heart. If it be sincere, it will not spend itself in words alone; but will discover itself in actions, and will produce, as its genuine fruit, an unfeigned love to your fellow-creatures, an unwearied desire and labour to do them good continually.

§. 2. "Has the great father of mercies," will you say, looked upon me with so gracious an eye; has he not only forgiven me ten thousand offences, but enriched me with such a variety of benefits; O what shall I render to him for them all! Instruct me, O ye oracles of eternal truth! instruct me, ye elder brethren in the family of my heavenly father! Instruct me above all, O thou spirit of wisdom and of love, what I may be able to do, to express my love to the great eternal fountain of love, and to approve my fidelity to him, who has already done so much to engage it, and who will take so much pleasure in owning and rewarding it!"

§. 3. This,

I bleſs thee for the knowledge, with which thou haſt adorned it. I bleſs thee for that grace, with which, I truſt I may (not without humble wonder) ſay, thou haſt ſanctified it; though alas, the celeftial plant is fixed in too barren a ſoil, and does not flouriſh to the degree I could wiſh.

“ I bleſs thee alſo for that body which thou haſt given me, and which thou preſerveſt as yet in its ſtrength and vigour; not only capable of reſiſhing the entertainments which thou provideſt for its various ſenſes, but (which I eſteem far more valuable than any of them for its own ſake) capable of acting with ſome vivacity in thy ſervice. I bleſs thee for that eaſe and freedom, with which theſe limbs of mine move themſelves, and obey the dictates of my ſpirit, I hope as guided by thine. I bleſs thee, that ‘ the keepers of the houſe do not yet tremble, nor the ſtrong men bow themſelves; that they that look out of the windows are not yet darkened, nor the daughters of muſick brought low: I bleſs thee, O God of my life, that the ſilver cords are not yet looſed, nor the golden bowl broken:’ (s) For it is thine hand that braces all my nerves, and thine infinite ſkill that prepares thoſe ſpirits, which flow in ſo freely, and, when exhausted, recruit ſo ſoon and ſo plentifully.

“ I praiſe thee for that royal bounty, with which thou provideſt for the daily ſupport of mankind in general, and for mine in particular; for the various ‘ table which thou ſpreadeſt before me, and for the overflowing cup which thou putteſt into my hand.’ (t) I bleſs thee, that theſe bounties of thy providence do not ſerve, as it were, to upbraid diſabled appetite, and are not like meſſes of meat ſet before the dead. I bleſs thee too, that ‘ I eat not my morſel alone,’ (u) but ſhare it with ſo many agreeable friends, who add the reſiſh of a ſocial life to that of the animal at our ſeaſons of common reſpaſt. I thank thee for ſo many dear relatives at home, for ſo many kind friends abroad, who are capable of ſerving me in various inſtances; and diſpoſed to make an obliging uſe of that capacity.

“ Nor would I forget to acknowledge thy favour, in

a 2

rendering

[s] Eccl. xii. 3, 4, 6. (t) Pſal. xxiii. 5. (u) Job xxxi. 17.

rendering me capable of serving others, and giving me in any instances to know, how much 'more blessed it is to give than to receive.' (x) I thank thee for a heart which feels the sorrows of the necessitous, and a mind which can make it my early care and refreshment to contrive, according to my little ability for their relief: for 'this also cometh forth from thee, O Lord,' (y) the great author of every benevolent inclination, of every prudent scheme, of every successful attempt to spread happiness around us, or in any instance to lessen distress.

"And surely, O Lord, if I thus acknowledge the pleasures of sympathy with the afflicted, much more must I bless thee for those of sympathy with the happy, with those that are compleatly blessed. I adore thee for the streams that water paradise, and maintain it in ever-flourishing, ever-growing delight. I praise thee for the rest, the joy, the transport, thou art giving to many that were once dear to me on earth; whose sorrows it was my labour to sooth, and whose joys, especially in thee, it was the delight of my heart to promote. I praise thee for the blessedness of every saint, and of every angel, that surrounds thy throne above; and I praise thee with accents of distinguished pleasure, for that reviving hope which thou hast implanted in my bosom, that I shall ere long know by clear sight, and by everlasting experience, what that felicity of theirs is, which I now only discover at a distance, through the comparatively obscure glass of faith. Even now through thy grace, do I feel myself borne forward by thy supporting arm to those regions of blessedness. Even now am I 'waiting for thy salvation,' (z) with that ardent desire on the one hand, which its sublime greatness cannot but inspire into the believing soul, and that calm resignation on the other which the immutability of thy promise establishes.

"And now, O my God, what shall I say unto thee! What, but that I love thee above all the powers of language to express! That I love thee for what thou art to thy creatures, who are in their various forms every moment deriving being, knowledge and happiness, from thee, in numbers and degrees, far beyond what my narrow imagination

(x) Acts xx. 35, (y) Isai. xxviii. 29. (z) Gen. xlix. 18.

§. 3. This, O Christian, "is the command which we have heard from the beginning," and it will ever continue in unimpaired force, 'that he, who loveth God, should love his brother also;' (a) and should express that love, 'not in word and in profession alone, but indeed and in truth.' (b) You are to "love your neighbour as yourself;" to love "the whole creation of God;" and, so far as your influence can extend, must endeavour to make it happy.

§. 4. "Yes," will you say, "and I do love it. I feel the golden chain of the divine love incircling us all, and binding us close to each other, joining us in one body, and diffusing (as it were) one soul through all. May happiness, true and sublime, perpetual and overgrowing happiness, reign through the whole world of God's rational and obedient creatures in heaven and on earth! And may every revolted creature, that is capable of being recovered and restored, be made obedient! Yea, may the necessary punishment of those, who are irrecoverable, be over-ruled by infinite wisdom and love to the good of the whole!"

§. 5. These are right sentiments; and if they are indeed the sentiments of your heart, O reader, and not an empty form of vain words, they will be attended with a serious concern to act in subordination to this great scheme of divine providence, according to your abilities in their utmost extent. And to this purpose, they will put you on surveying the peculiar circumstances of your life and being; that you may discover what opportunities of usefulness they now afford, and how those opportunities and capacities may be improved. Enter therefore into such a survey; not that you may pride yourselves in the distinctions of divine providence or grace towards you, or 'having received, may glory as if you had not received;' (c) but that you may deal faithfully with the great proprietor, whose steward you are, and by whom you are intrusted with every talent, which, with respect to any claim from your fellow-creatures, you may call your own. And here, 'having gifts differing according to the grace which is given unto us,' (d) let us hold the
balance

(a) 1 John iv. 21. (b) 1 John iii. 18. (c) 1 Cor. iv. 7.
(d) Rom. xii. 6.

balance with an impartial hand, that so we may determine what it is that God requires of us ; which is nothing less, than doing the most we can invent, contrive, and effect, for the general good. But O, how seldom is this estimate faithfully made ! And how much does the world around us, and how much do our own souls suffer, for want of that fidelity !

§. 6. Hath God given you genius and learning ? It was not, that you might amuse or deck yourself with it, and kindle a blaze which should only serve to attract and dazzle the eyes of men. It was intended, to be the means of leading both yourself and them to the Father of lights. And it will be your duty, according to the peculiar turn of that genius and capacity, either to endeavour to improve and adorn human life, or, by a more direct application of it to divine subjects, to plead the cause of religion, to defend its truths, to enforce and recommend its practice, to deter men from courses which would be dishonorable to God and fatal to themselves, and to try the utmost efforts of all the solemnity and tenderness with which you can clothe your addresses, to lead them into the paths of virtue and happiness.

§. 7. Has God invested you with power, whether it be in a larger or smaller society ? Remember, that this power was given you, that God might be honored, and those placed under your government, whether domestic or public, might be made happy. Be concerned, therefore, that whether you be intrusted with the rod or the sword, it may 'not be borne in vain.' (e) Are you a magistrate ? Have you any share in the great and tremendous charge of enacting laws ? Reverence the authority of the supreme legislator, the great guardian of society : Promote none, consent to none, which you do not in your own conscience esteem, in present circumstances, an imitation of his will ; and in the establishment of which you do not firmly believe you shall be 'his minister for good.' (f) Have you the charge of executing laws ? Put life into them by a vigorous and strenuous execution, according to the nature of the particular office you bear. Retain not an empty name of authority. Permit not

(e) Rom. xiii. 4. (f) Ibid.

not yourself, as it were, to fall asleep on the tribunal. Be active, be wakeful, be observant of what passeth around you. Protect the upright, and the innocent. Break in pieces the power of the oppressor. Unveil every dishonest art. Disgrace as well as defeat the wretch, that makes his distinguished abilities the disguise or protection of the wickedness, which he ought rather to endeavour to expose, and to drive out of the world with abhorrence.

§. 8. Are you placed only at the head of a private family? Rule it for God. Administer the concerns of that little kingdom with the same views, and on the same principles, which I have been inculcating on the powerful and the great; if by an unexpected accident any of them should suffer their eye to glance upon the passage above. Children and servants are your natural subjects. Let good order be established among them, and keep them under a regular discipline. Let them be instructed in the principles of religion, that they may know how reasonable such a discipline is; and let them be accustomed to act accordingly. You cannot indeed change their hearts, but you may very much influence their conduct; and by that means may preserve them from many snares, may do a great deal to make them good members of society, and may 'set them, as it were, in the way of God's steps,' (g) if, peradventure, passing by he may bless them with the riches of his grace. And fail not to do your utmost to convince them of their need of those blessings; labour to engage them to an high esteem of them, and to an earnest desire after them, as incomparably more valuable than any thing else.

§. 9. Again. Has God been pleased to raise you to esteem among your fellow-creatures, which is not always in proportion to a man's rank or possessions in human life? Are your counsels heard with attention? Is your company sought? Does God give you good acceptance in the eyes of men, so that they do not only put the fairest construction on your words, but overlook faults of which you are conscious to yourself, and consider your actions and performances in the most indulgent and favorable light? You ought to regard this, not only as a
favour

favour of providence, and as an encouragement to you cheerfully to pursue your duty, in the several branches of it, for the time to come; but also, as giving you much greater opportunities of usefulness, than in your present station you could otherwise have had. If your character has any weight in the world, throw it into the right scale. Endeavor to keep virtue and goodness in countenance. Affectionately give your hand to modest worth, where it seems to be depressed or overlooked; though shining, when viewed in its proper light, with a lustre which you may think much superior to your own. Be an advocate for truth; be a counsellor of peace; be an example of candor; and do all you can to reconcile the hearts of men, and especially of good men, to each other, however they may differ in their opinion about matters which, it is possible, for good men to dispute. And let the caution and humility of your behaviour, in circumstances of such superior eminence, and amidst so many tokens of general esteem, silently reprove the rashness and haughtiness of those, who, perhaps, are remarkable for little else; or, who if their abilities were indeed considerable, must be despised, and whose talents must be in a great measure lost to the public, till that rashness and haughtiness of spirit be subdued. Nor suffer yourself to be interrupted in this generous and worthy course, by the little attacks of envy and calumny, which you may meet with in it. Be still attentive to the general good, and steadily resolute in your efforts to promote it; and leave it to providence, to guard or to rescue your character from the base assaults of malice and falsehood; which will often, without your labour, confute themselves, and heap upon the authors greater shame, or (if they are inaccessible to that) greater infamy, than your humanity will allow you to wish them.

§ 10. Once more, Has God blessed you with riches? Has he placed you in such circumstances, that you have more than you absolutely need for the subsistence of yourself and your family? Remember your approaching account. Remember what an incumbrance these things often prove to men in the way of their salvation, and how often according to our Lord's express declaration, they
render

render it 'as difficult to enter into the kingdom of God, as it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.' (h) Let it, therefore, be your immediate, your earnest, and your daily prayer, that riches may not be a snare and a shame to you, as they are to, by far, the greater part of their possessors. Appropriate, I beseech you, some certain part and proportion of your estate and revenues, to charitable uses: with a provisional increase, as God shall prosper you, in any extraordinary instance. By this means you will always have a fund of charity at hand: and you will probably be more ready to communicate, when you look upon what is so deposited, as not in any sense your own; but as already actually given away to those uses, though not yet affixed to particular objects. It is not for me to say, what that proportion ought to be. To those, who have large revenues, and no children, perhaps, a third or one half may be too little: To those, whose incomes are small, and their charge considerable, though they have something more than is absolutely necessary, it is possible a tenth may be too much. But pray, that God would guide your mind; make a trial for one year, on such terms, as, in your conscience, you think will be most pleasing to him; and let your observations on that, teach you to fix your proportion for the next; always remembering, that he requires justice in the first place, and alms deeds only so far as may consist with that. Yet, at the same time, take heed of that treacherous, delusive, and, in many instances, destructive imagination, that justice to your own family requires that you should leave your children very rich; which has, perhaps, cost some parsimonious parents the lives of those darlings, for whom they laid up the portion of the poor; and what fatal consequences of divine displeasure may attend it to those that yet survive, God only knows, and I heartily pray that you or yours may never learn by experience.

§. 11. And that your heart may be yet more opened, and that your charity may be directed to the best purposes, let me briefly mention a variety of good uses, which may

B b

(h) Mat. xix. 24.

may call for the consideration of those, whom God has, in this respect, distinguished by an ability to do good. To assist the hints I am to offer, look round on the neighborhood in which you live. Think how many honest and industrious, perhaps too, I might add religious people, are making very hard shifts to struggle through life. Think what a comfort that would be to them, which you might, without any inconvenience, spare from that abundance which God hath given you.—Hearken also to any extraordinary calls of charity which may happen, especially those of a public nature; and help them forward with your example, and your interest, which, perhaps, may be of much greater importance than the sum which you contribute, considered in itself. Have a tongue to plead for the necessitous, as well as a hand to relieve them, endeavour to discountenance those poor, shameful excuses, which covetousness often dictates to those, whose art may indeed set some varnish on what they suggest, but, so slight a one, that the coarse ground will appear through it.—See how many poor children are wandering naked and ignorant about the streets, and in the way to all kinds of vice and misery; and consider what can be done towards clothing some of them at least, and instructing them in the principles of religion. Would every thriving family in a town, which is able to afford help on such occasions, cast a pitying eye on one poor family in its neighborhood, and take it under their patronage, to assist in feeding, and clothing, and teaching children, in supporting it in affliction, in defending it from wrongs, and in advising those that have the management of it, as circumstances might require, how great a difference would soon be produced in the appearance of things amongst us? Observe who are sick, that if there be no public infirmary at hand to which you can introduce them, (where your contribution will yield the largest increase,) you may do something towards relieving them at home, and supplying them with advice and medicines, as well as with proper diet and attendance. Consider also the spiritual necessities of men; in providing for which, I would particularly recommend to you the very important and noble charity, assisting of young persons of genius and piety,
with

with what is necessary to support the expence of their education for the ministry, in a proper course of grammatical or academical studies. And grudge not some proportion of what God hath given you, to those, who, resigning all temporal views to minister to you the gospel of Christ, have surely an equitable claim to be supported by you, in a capacity of rendering you those services, however laborious, to which, for your sakes, and that of our common Lord, they have devoted their lives. And while you are so abundantly 'satisfied with the goodness of God's house, even of his holy temple,' (i) have compassion on those who dwell in a desert land; and rejoice to do something towards sending among the distant nations of the heathen world, that glorious gospel which hath so long continued unknown to multitudes, tho' the knowledge of it, with becoming regard, be life everlasting.— These are a few important charities, which I would point out to those, whom providence has enriched with its peculiar bounties: And it renders gold more precious, than it could appear in any other light, that it is capable of being employed for such purposes. But if you should not have gold to spare for them, contribute your silver: Or as a farthing, or a mite, is not overlooked by God, when it is given 'from a truly generous and charitable heart,' (k) let that be cheerfully dropped into the treasury, where richer offerings cannot be afforded.

§. 12. And, that amidst so many pressing demands for charity, you may be better furnished to answer them, seriously reflect on your manner of living. I say not, that God requires, you should become one of the many poor, relieved out of your income. The support of society, as at present established, will not only permit, but require, that some persons should allow themselves in the elegancies and delights of life; by furnishing which, multitudes of poor families are much more creditably and comfortably subsisted, with greater advantage to themselves and safety to the public, than they could be, if the price of their labours, or the commodities in which they deal, were to be given them as an alms: Nor can I imagine it grateful to God, that his gifts should be refused, as if they were
meant

(i) P^{sal.} lxxv. 4. (k) Mark xiii. 42, 43.

meant for snares and curses, rather than benefits. This were to frustrate the benevolent purposes of the gracious father of mankind, and if carried to its rigour would be a sort of conspiracy against the whole system of nature.— Let the bounties of providence be used; but let us carefully see to it, that it be in a moderate and prudent manner, lest, by our own folly, ‘that which should have been for our welfare become a trap.’ (1) Let conscience say, my dear reader, with regard to yourself, what proportion of the good things you possess your heavenly father intends for yourself, and what for your brethren; and live not, as if you had no brethren; as if pleasing yourself, in all the magnificence and luxury you can devise, were the end for which you were sent into the world. I fear this is the excess of the present age, and not an excess of rigour and mortification. Examine therefore your expences, and compare them with your income. That may be shamefully extravagant in you, which may not only be pardonable, but commendable in another of superior estate. Nor can you be sure, that you do not exceed, merely because you do not plunge yourself in debt, nor render yourself incapable of laying up any thing for your family. If you be disabled from doing any thing for the poor, or any thing proportionable to your rank in life, by that genteel and elegant way of living which you affect, God must disapprove of such a conduct; and you ought, as you will answer it to him, to retrench it. And tho’ the divine indulgence will undoubtedly be exercised to those, in whom there is a sincere principle of faith in Christ, and undissembled love to God and man, though it act not to that height of beneficence and usefulness which might have been attained; yet be assured of this, that he, who rendereth to every one according to his work, will have a strict regard to the degrees of goodness in the distribution of final rewards: So that every neglected opportunity draws after it an irreparable loss, which will go into eternity along with you. And let me add too, that every instance of negligence indulged renders the mind still more and more indolent and weak, and consequently more indisposed to recover the ground which has been lost or even to maintain that which has hitherto been kept.

(1) P^sal. lxx. 22.

§. 13. Complain not, that this is imposing hard things upon you. I am only directing your pleasures into a nobler channel; and indeed that frugality, which is the source of such a generosity, far from being at all injurious to your reputation, will rather, amongst wise and good men, greatly promote it. But you have far more nobler motives before you, than those which arise from their regards. I speak to you, as to a child of God, and a member of Christ; as joined therefore by the most intimate union to all the poorest of those that believe in him. I speak to you, as an heir of eternal glory, who ought therefore to have sentiments great and sublime, in some proportion to that expected inheritance.

§. 14. Cast about therefore in your thoughts, what good is to be done, and what you can do, either in your own person, or by your interest with others; and go about it with resolution, as in the name and presence of the Lord. And as 'the Lord giveth wisdom, and out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding,' (m) go to the foot-stool of his throne, and there seek that guidance and that grace, which may suit your present circumstances, and may be effectual to produce the fruits of holiness and usefulness, to his abundant glory, and to the honour of your Christian profession.

The established CHRISTIAN breathing after more extensive usefulness.

“ O BOUNTIFUL father, and sovereign author of all good, whether natural or spiritual! I bless thee for the natural talents, with which thou hast enriched so undeserving a creature, as I must acknowledge myself to be. My soul is in the deepest confusion before thee, when I consider to how little purpose I have hitherto improved them. Alas! what have I done, in proportion to what thou mightest reasonably have expected, with the gifts of nature which thou hast bestowed upon me, with my capacities of life, with my time, with my possessions, with my influence over others! Alas! through my own negligence and folly, I look back on a barren wilderness, where I might have seen a fruitful field, and a springing harvest!

b 2

(m) Prov. ii. 6.

harvest! Justly do I indeed deserve to be stripped of all, to be brought to an immediate account for all, to be condemned as, in many respects, unfaithful to thee, and to the world, and to my own soul; and, in consequence of that condemnation, to be cast into the prison of eternal darkness! But thou, Lord, hast freely forgiven the dreadful debt of ten thousand talents. Adored be thy name for it! Accept, O Lord, accept that renewed surrender, which I would now make of myself, and of all I have, unto thy service! I acknowledge, that it is 'of thine own that I give thee.' (n) Make me, I beseech thee, a faithful steward for my great Lord; and may I think of no separate interest of my own, in opposition to thine!

"I adore thee, O thou God of all grace, if while I am thus speaking to thee, I feel the love of thy creatures arising in my soul; if I feel my heart opening to embrace my brethren of mankind! O make me thy faithful almoner, in distributing to them all that thou hast lodged in mine hand for their relief! And in determining what is my own share, may I hold the balance with an equal hand, and judge impartially between myself and them! The proportion thou allowest, may I thankfully take to myself, and those who are immediately mine! The rest, may I distribute with wisdom and fidelity, and cheerfulness! Guide mine hand, O ever merciful father, while thou dost me the honor to make me thine instrument in dealing out a few of thy bounties; that I may bestow them where they are most needed, and where they will answer the best end! And, if it be thy gracious will, do thou 'multiply the seed sown;' (o) prosper me in my worldly affairs, that I may have more to impart to them that need it; and thus lead me on to the region of everlasting plenty, and everlasting benevolence! There may I meet with many, to whom I have been an affectionate benefactor on earth; and, if it be thy blessed will, with many, whom I have also been the means of conducting into the path to that blissful abode! There may they entertain me in their habitations of glory! And in time and eternity, do thou, Lord, accept the praise of all, through Jesus Christ; at whose feet I would bow; and at whose feet, after the most useful

(n) 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

(o) 2 Cor. ix. 10.

useful course, I would at last die, with as much humility, as if I were then exerting the first act of faith upon him, and had never had any opportunity, by one tribute of obedience and gratitude in the services of life, to approve its sincerity !”

C H A P. XXIX.

THE CHRISTIAN REJOICING IN THE VIEWS OF DEATH AND JUDGMENT.

Death and judgment are near ; but the Christian has reason to welcome both : §. 1. Yet nature recoils from the solemnity of them. §. 2. An attempt to reconcile the mind, [I.] To the prospect of death, §. 3. from the consideration, (1.) of the many evils that surround us in this mortal life, §. 4. (2.) Of the remainder of sin which we feel within us. §. 5. And, (3.) Of the happiness which is immediately to succeed death. §. 6, 7. All which might make the Christian willing to die, in the most agreeable circumstances of human life. §. 8. [II.] The Christian has reason to rejoice in the prospect of judgment : §. 9. Since, however awful it be, Christ will then come, to vindicate his honor, to display his glory, and to triumph over his enemies : §. 10. As also to complete the happiness of every believer, §. 11. and of the whole church. §. 12, 13. The meditation of a Christian, whose heart is warmed with these prospects.

§. 1. **W**HEN the visions of the Lord were closing upon John, the beloved disciple, in the island of Patmos, it is observable, that he, who gave him that revelation, even Jesus the faithful and true witness, concludes with those lively and important words : ‘ He, who testifieth these things faith, surely I come quickly : And John answers with

with the greatest readiness and pleasure, amen, even so come, Lord Jesus!' (a) Come, as thou hast said, surely and quickly!—And remember, O Christian, whoever you are that are now reading these words, your divine Lord speaks in the same language to you: Behold, I come quickly. Yes, very quickly will he come by death, to turn the key, to open the door of the grave for thine entrance thither, and to lead thee through it into the now unknown regions of the invisible world. Nor is it long before 'the judge who standeth at the door,' (b) will appear also to the universal judgment: And though perhaps, not only scores, but hundreds of years may lie between that period and the present moment, yet it is but a very small point of time to him, who views at once all the unmeasurable ages of a past and future eternity. 'A thousand years are with him but as one day, and one day as a thousand years.' (c) In both these senses then does he come quickly: And I trust, you can answer with a glad amen, that the warning is not terrible or unpleasant to your ears; but rather, that his coming, his certain, his speedy coming, is the object of your delightful hope, and of your longing expectation.

§. 2. I am sure, it is reasonable it should be so; and yet, perhaps, nature, fond of life, and unwilling to part with a long known abode, to enter on a state to which it is entirely a stranger, may recoil from the thoughts of dying; or, struck with the awful pomp of an expiring and dissolving world, may look on the judgment day with some mixture of terror. And therefore, my dear brother in the Lord, (for as such I can now esteem you,) I would reason with you a little on this head, and would intreat you to look more attentively on this solemn object, which will, I trust, grow less disagreeable to you, as it is more familiarly viewed. Nay, I hope, that instead of starting back from it, you will spring forward towards it with joy and delight.

§. 3. Think, O Christian, when Christ comes to call you away by death, he comes—to set you at liberty from your present sorrows,—to deliver you from your struggles with remaining corruption,—and to receive you to dwell

with

(a) Rev. xxii. 20. (b) Jam. v. 9. (c) 2 Pet. iii. 8.

with himself in complete holiness and joy. You shall 'be absent from the body, and be present with the Lord.' (d)

§. 4. He will indeed call you away from this world. But O, what is this world, that you should be fond of it, and cling to it with so much eagerness? How low are all those enjoyments that are peculiar to it; and how many its vexations, its snares, and its sorrows? Review your pilgrimage thus far, and though you must acknowledge, that 'goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life,' (e) yet has not that very mercy itself planted some thorns in your paths, and given you some wise and necessary, yet painful intimations, that 'this is not your rest?' (f) Review the monuments of your withered joys, of your blasted hopes; if there be yet any monuments of them remaining, more than a mournful remembrance they have left behind in your afflicted heart. Look upon the graves, that have swallowed up many of your dearest and most amiable friends, perhaps, in the very bloom of life, and in the greatest intimacy of your converse with them; and reflect, that if you hold it out a few years more, death will renew its conquests at your expense, and devour the most precious of those that yet survive. View the living, as well as the dead: Behold the state of human nature, under the many grievous marks of its apostasy from God; and say, whether a wise and good man would wish to continue always here. Methinks, were I myself secure from being reached by any of the arrows that fly around me, I could not but mourn, to see the wounds that are given by them, and to hear the groans of those that are continually falling under them. The diseases and calamities of mankind are so many, and (which is most grievous of all,) the distempers of their minds are so various and so threatening, that the world appears almost like an hospital: And a man, whose heart is tender, is ready to feel his spirits broken, as he walks through it, and surveys the sad scene; especially when he sees, how little he can do for the recovery of those whom he pities. Are you a Christian, and does it not pierce your heart, to see how human nature is sunk in vice, and in shame? to see with what amazing insolence some are

(d) 2 Cor. v. 8. (e) Psa. xxiii. 6. (f) Mic. ii. 10.

making themselves openly vile, and how the name of Christ is dishonored by many too who call themselves his people? to see the unlawful deeds and filthy practices of them that live ungodly, and to behold, at the same time, the infirmities at least, and irregularities of those, concerning whom we have better hopes? And do you not wish to escape from such a world, where ‘a righteous and compassionate soul must be vexed from day to day, by so many spectacles of sin and misery?’ (g)

§. 5. Yea, to come nearer home, do you not feel something within you, which you long to quit, and which would imbitter even Paradise itself? Something, which were it to continue, would grieve and distress you even in the society of the blessed? Do you not feel a remainder of indwelling sin, the sad consequence of the original revolt of our nature from God? Are you not struggling every day with some residue of corruption, or at least, mourning on account of the weakness of your graces? Do you not often find your spirits dull and languid, when you would desire to raise them to the greatest fervour in the service of God? Do you not find your hearts too often insensible of the richest instances of his love, and your hands feeble in his service, even when ‘to will is present with you?’ (h) Does not your life, in its best days and hours, appear a low unprofitable thing, when compared with what you are sensible it ought to be, and with what you wish that it were? Are you not frequently, as it were, stretching the pinions of the mind, and saying, ‘O that I had wings like a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest?’ (i)

§. 6. Should you not then rejoice in the thought, that Jesus comes to deliver you from these complaints? That he comes to answer your wishes, and to fulfil the largest desires of your hearts, those desires that he himself has inspired? That he comes to open upon you a world of purity and joy, of active, exalted, and unwearied services?

§. 7. O Christian, how often have you cast a longing eye towards those happy shores, and wished to pass the sea, the boisterous, unpleasant, dangerous sea, that separates you from them? When your Lord has condescended to make you a short visit in his ordinances on

earth,

earth, how have you blest the time, and the place, and pronounced it, amidst many other disadvantages of situation, to be ‘the very gate of heaven?’ (k) And is it so delightful to behold this gate, and will it not be much more so to enter into it? Is it so delightful to receive the visits of Jesus for an hour, and will it not be infinitely more to dwell with him forever? “Lord” may you well say, “when I dwell with thee, I shall dwell in holiness, for thou thyself art holiness; I shall dwell in love, for thou thyself art love; I shall dwell in joy, for thou art the fountain of joy, as ‘thou art in the father, and the father in thee.’” (l) Bid welcome to his approach, therefore, to take you at your word, and to fulfil to you that saying of his, on which your soul has so often rested with heavenly peace and pleasure; ‘Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.’ (m).

§. 8. Surely, you may say in this view, “The sooner Christ comes, the better.” What though the residue of your days be cut off in the midst? What though you leave many expected pleasures in life untasted, and many schemes unaccomplished? Is it not enough, that what is taken from a mortal life shall be added to a glorious eternity; and that you shall spend those days and years in the presence and service of Christ in heaven, which you might otherwise have spent with him, and for him, in the imperfect enjoyments and labours of earth.

§. 9. But your prospects reach, not only beyond death, but beyond the separate state. For with regard to his final appearance to judgment our Lord says, surely I come quickly, in the sense illustrated before: and so it will appear to us, if we compare this interval of time with the blissful eternity which is to succeed it; and probably, if we compare it with those ages which have already passed, since the sun began to measure out to earth its days and its years. And will you not here also sing your part in the joyful anthem, Amen; even so come, Lord Jesus!

§. 10. It is true, Christian, it is an awful day; a day, in which nature shall be thrown into a confusion as yet
unknown.

(k) Gen. xxviii. 17. (l) John xvii. 21. (m) John xvii. 24.

unknown. No earthquake, no eruption of burning mountains, no desolation of cities by devouring flames, or of countries by overflowing rivers or seas, can give any just emblem of that dreadful day ; when ‘ the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, as well as the earth, and all that is therein shall be burnt up ;’ (n) when all nature shall flee away in amazement ‘ before the face of the universal Judge,’ (o) and there shall be a great cry, far beyond what was known in the land of Egypt, when ‘ there was not a house in which there was not one dead.’ (p) Your flesh may be ready to tremble at the view ; yet your spirit must surely ‘ rejoice in God your saviour.’ (q) You may justly say, “ Let this illustrious day come, even with all its horrors !” Yea, like the christians described by the apostle, (r) you may be looking for, and hastening to that day of terrible brightness and universal doom. For your Lord will then come, to vindicate the justice of those proceedings which have been, in many instances, so much obscured, and because they have been obscured, have been also blasphemed. He will come, to display his magnificence, descending from heaven ‘ with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God ;’ (s) taking his seat upon a throne infinitely exceeding that of earthly, or even of celestial princes, clothed with ‘ his father’s glory and his own ;’ (t) surrounded with a numberless host of ‘ shining attendants,’ when ‘ coming to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.’ (u) His enemies shall also be produced to grace his triumph : The serpent shall be seen there rolling in the dust, and trodden under foot by him and by all his servants : Those, who once condemned him, shall tremble at his presence ; and those, who once bowed the knee before him in profane mockery, shall, in wild despair, ‘ call to the mountains to fall upon them, and to the rocks to hide them from the face of that lamb of God,’ (x) whom they once led away to the most inhuman slaughter.

§. 11. O Christian, does not your loyal heart bound at the thought ? And are you not ready, even while you read these

(n) 2 Pet. ii. 10, 12. (o) Rev. xx. 11. (p) Exod. xii. 30.
 (q) Luke i. 47. (r) 2 Pet. iii. 12. (s) 1 Theff. iv. 16.
 (t) Luke ix. 26. (u) 2 Theff. i. 10. (x) Rev. vi. 16.

these lines, to begin the victorious shout in which you are then to join? He justly expects, that your thoughts should be greatly elevated and impressed with the views of his triumph; but, at the same time, he permits you to remember your own personal share in the joy and glory of that blessed day: And even now he has the view before him, of what his power and love shall then accomplish for your salvation. And what shall it not accomplish? He shall come, to break the bars of the grave, and to re-animate your sleeping clay. Your bodies must, indeed, be laid in the dust, and be lodged there as a testimony of God's displeasure against sin; against the first sin that was ever committed, from the sad consequences of which the dearest of his children cannot be exempted. But you shall then have an ear to hear the voice of the son of God, and an eye to behold the lustre of his appearance; and shall 'shine forth like the sun' (y) arising in the clear heaven, 'which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber.' (z) Your soul shall be new dressed to grace this high solemnity; and be clothed not with the rags of mortality, but with the robes of glory; for he 'shall change this vile body, to fashion it like his own glorious body.' (a) And when you are thus royally arrayed, he shall confer public honors on you, and on all his people before the assembled world. You may now, perhaps, be loaded with infamy, called by reproachful names, and charged with crimes, or with views which your very soul abhors: But he will then 'bring forth your righteousness as the light,' (b) 'and your salvation as a lamp that burneth.' (c) Tho' you have been dishonored by men, you shall be acknowledged by God; and though treated 'as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things,' (d) he will shew that he regards you, 'as his treasure, in the day that he makes up his jewels.' (e) When he shall 'put away all the wicked of the earth like dross,' (f) you shall be pronounced righteous in that full assembly; and though, indeed, you have broken the divine law, and might in strict justice have been condemned, yet, being clothed with the

C c

righteousness

- (y) Mat. xiii. 43. (z) Psal. xix. 5. (a) Phil. iii. 21.
 (b) Psal. xxxvii. 6. (c) Isai. lxii. 1. (d) 1 Cor. iv. 13.
 (e) Mal. iii. 17. (f) Psal. cxix. 119.

righteousness of the great redeemer, even ‘that righteousness which is of God by faith,’ [g] justice itself shall acquit you, and join with mercy in ‘bestowing upon you a crown of life.’ (h) Christ ‘will confess you before men and angels,’ (i) will pronounce you ‘good and faithful servants, and call you to enter into the joy of your Lord:’ (k) He will speak of you with endearment, as his brethren, and will acknowledge ‘the kindnesses which have been shewn to you, as if he had received them in his own person.’ (l) Yea, then shall you, O Christian, who may, perhaps, have sat in some of the lowest places in our assemblies, though (it may be) none of the rich and great of the earth would condescend to look upon or speak to you, be called to be an assessor with Christ on his judgment seat, and to join with him in the sentence he shall pass on wicked men and rebellious angels.

§. 12. Nor is it merely one day of glory and of triumph. But, when the judge arises and ascends to his father’s court, all the blessed shall ascend with him, and you among the rest: You shall ascend together with your favour, ‘to his father and your father, to his God and your God.’ (n) You shall go, to make your appearance in the New Jerusalem, in those new shining forms that you have received, which will, no doubt, be attended with a correspondent improvement of mind; and take up your perpetual abode in that fulness of joy, with which you shall be filled and satisfied ‘in the presence of God,’ (o) upon the consummation of that happiness, which the saints in the intermediate state have been wishing and waiting for. You shall go, from the ruins of a dissolving world, to ‘the new heavens and new earth wherein righteousness forever dwells.’ (p) There all the number of God’s elect shall be accomplished, and the happiness of each shall be completed. The whole society shall be ‘presented before God, as the bride, the lamb’s wife,’ (q) whom the eye of its celestial bridegroom shall survey with unutterable delight, and confess to be ‘without spot or wrinkle, or any
such

(g) Phil. iii. 9. (h) 2 Tim. iv. 8. (i) Luke xii. 8.
(k) Matt. xxv. 21. (l) Matt. xxv. 40. (n) John xx. 17.
(o) Psa. xvi. 11. (p) 2 Pet. iii. 13. (q) Rev. xxi. 9.

such thing :’ (r) its character and state being just what he originally designed it to be, when he first engaged to ‘ give himself for it, to redeem it to God by his blood.’ (s) ‘ So shall you ever be with each other, and with the Lord ;’ (t) and immortal ages shall roll away, and find you still unchanged ; your happiness always the same, and your relish for it the same ; or rather ever growing, as your souls are approaching nearer and nearer to him, who is the source of happiness, and the centre of infinite perfection.

¶ 13. And now, look round about upon earth, and single out, if you can, the enjoyments or the hopes, for the sake of which you would say, Lord, delay thy coming ; or for the sake of which you any more should hesitate to express your longing for it, and to cry, ‘ even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly !’

The MEDITATION and PRAYER of a CHRISTIAN, whose heart is warmed with these prospects.

“ O BLESSED Lord ! My soul is enkindled in these views, and rises to thee in the flame.’ (u) Thou hast testified, thou comest quickly : And I repeat my joyful assent, ‘ Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus !’ (x) Come, for I long to have done with this low life ; to have done with its burthens, its sorrows, and its snares ! Come, for I long to ascend into thy presence, and to see the court thou art holding above !

“ Blessed Jesus, death is transformed, when I view it in this light. The king of terrors is seen no more as such, so near the king of glory and of grace. I hear with pleasure the sound of thy feet, approaching still nearer and nearer : Draw aside the veil, when ever thou pleasest ! Open the bars of my prison, that my eager soul may spring forth to thee, and ‘ cast itself at thy feet ; at the feet of that Jesus, whom, having not seen, I love : and in whom, tho’ now I see thee not, yet believing, I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory !’ (y) Thou, Lord, shalt shew me the path of life : Thine hand shall guide me to thy blissful abode, where ‘ there is fulness of joy, and rivers of everlasting

(r) Eph. v. 27. (s) Rev. v. 9. (t) 1 Thess. iv. 17.
(u) Judg. xiii. 20. (x) Rev. xxii. 20. (y) 1 Pet. i. 8.

everlasting pleasure.' (z) Thou shalt assign me an habitation with thy faithful servants, whose separate spirits are now living with thee; while their bodies sleep in the dust. Many of them have been my companions in thy laborious work, and 'in the patience and tribulation of thy kingdom;' (a) my dear companions, and my brethren. O shew me, blessed saviour, how glorious and how happy thou hast made them! Shew me, to what new forms of better life thou hast conducted them, whom we call the dead! In what nobler and more extensive services thou hast employed them! That I may praise thee better than I now can, for thy goodness to them! And O give me to share with them in their blessings and their services, and to raise a song of grateful love, like that which they are breathing forth before thee!

" Yet, O my blessed redeemer, even there will my soul be aspiring to a yet nobler and more glorious hope; and from this as yet unknown splendor and felicity, shall I be drawing new arguments to look and long for the day of thy final appearance. There shall I long more ardently than I now do, to see thy conduct vindicated, and thy triumph displayed; to see the dust of thy servants reanimated, and 'death, the last of their enemies and of thine, swallowed up in victory.' (b) I shall long for that superior honor that thou intendest me, and that compleat bliss to which the whole body of thy people shall be conducted. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, will mingle itself with the songs of paradise, and sound from the tongues of all the millions of thy saints, whom thy grace has transplanted thither.

" In the mean time, O my divine master, accept the homage which a grateful heart now pays thee, in a sense of the glorious hopes with which thou hast inspired it! It is thou, that hast put this joy into it, and hast raised my soul to this glorious ambition; whereas I might otherwise have now been groveling in the lowest trifles of time and sense, and been looking with horror on that hour, which is now the object of my ardent wishes.

" O be with me always even to the end of this mortal life! and give me, while waiting for thy salvation, to be doing

(z) Psa. xvi. 11. (a) Rev. i. 9. (b) 1 Cor. xv. 26. 34.

doing thy commandments! May my loins be girded about and my lamp burning; (c) and mine ears be still watchful for the blessed signal of thine arrival: That my glowing soul may with pleasure spring to meet thee, and be strengthened by death to bear those visions of glory under the extasies of which feeble mortality would now expire!



C H A P. XXX.

THE CHRISTIAN HONORING GOD BY HIS DYING BEHAVIOR.

Reflections on the sincerity with which the preceding advices have been given. §. 1. The author is desirous, that (if providence permit) he may assist the Christian to die honorably and comfortably. §. 2, 3. With this view it is advised. (1.) To rid the mind of all earthly cares. §. 4. (2.) To renew the humiliation of the soul before God, and its application to the blood of Christ. §. 5. (3.) To exercise patience under bodily pains and sorrows. §. 6. (4.) At leaving the world, to bear an honorable testimony to religion. §. 7. (5.) To give a solemn charge to surviving friends, §. 8. especially recommending faith in Christ. §. 9. (6.) To keep the promises of God in view. §. 10, 11. And, (7.) To commit the departing spirit to God, in the genuine exercises of gratitude and repentance, faith and charity; §. 12. which are exemplified in the concluding meditation and prayer.

§. 1. **T**HUS, my dear reader, I have endeavoured to lead you through a variety of circumstances; and those, not fancied and imaginary, but such as do indeed occur in the human and Christian life. And I can truly and cheerfully say, that I have marked out to you the path which I have myself trod, and in which it is my desire still to go

on. I have ventured my own everlasting interests on that foundation, on which I have directed you to adventure yours. What I have recommended as the grand business of your life, I desire to make the business of my own: and the most considerable enjoyments, which I expect or desire in the remaining days of my pilgrimage on earth, are such as I have directed you to seek, and endeavoured to assist you in attaining. Such love to God, such constant activity in his service, such pleasurable views of what lies beyond the grave, appear to me (God is my witness,) a felicity incomparable beyond any thing else which can offer itself to our affection and pursuit: And I would not for ten thousand worlds resign my share in them, or consent even to the suspension of the delights which they afford, during the remainder of my abode here.

§. 2. I would humbly hope, through the divine blessing, that the hours you have spent in the review of these plain things may have turned to some profitable account; and that in consequence of what you have read, you have either been brought into the way of life and peace, or been induced to quicken your pace in it. Most heartily should I rejoice in being further useful to you, and that even to the last. Now there is one scene remaining; a scene, through which you must infallibly pass; which has something in it so awful, that I cannot but attempt doing a little to assist you in it; I mean the dark valley of the shadow of death. I could earnestly wish, that, for the credit of your profession, the comfort of your own soul, and the joy and edification of your surviving friends, you might die, not only safely, but honorably too: And therefore I would offer you a few parting advices. I am sensible, indeed, that providence may determine the circumstances of your death in such a manner, as that you may have no opportunity of acting upon the hints I now give you. Some unexpected accident from without, or from within, may as it were whirl you to heaven before you are aware: and you may find yourself so suddenly there, that it may seem a translation, rather than a death. Or it is possible, the force of a distemper may affect your understanding in such a manner, that you may be quite insensible of the circumstance in which you are; and so your desolation
(though

(though others may see it visibly and certainly approaching,) may be as great a surprize to you, as if you had died in full health.

§. 3. But as it is on the whole probable, you may have a more sensible passage out of time into eternity ; and as much may, in various respects, depend on your dying behaviour ; give me leave to propose some plain directions with relation to it, to be practised, if God give you opportunity, and remind you of them. It may not be improper to look over the xxixth chapter again, when you find the symptoms of any threatenng disorder : And I the rather hope, that what I say may be useful to you, as methinks I find myself disposed to address you with something of that peculiar tenderness which we feel for a dying friend ; to whom, as we expect that we shall speak to him no more, we send out as it were all our hearts in every word.

§. 4. I would advise then, in the first place, ‘ that, as soon as possible, you would endeavour to get rid of all further care with regard to your temporal concerns, by settling them in time in as reasonable and Christian a manner as you can.’ I could wish, there may be nothing of that kind to hurry your mind when you are least able to bear it, or to distress or divide those who come after you. Do that, which in the presence of God you judge most equitable, and which you verily believe will be most pleasing to him. Do it in as prudent and effectual a manner, as you can : And then, consider the world as a place you have quite done with, and its affairs as nothing further to you, more than to one actually dead ; unless as you may do any good to its inhabitants, while yet you continue among them ; and may, by any circumstances in your last actions or words in life, leave a blessing behind you to those who have been your friends and fellow travellers, while you have been dispatching that journey through it, which you are now finishing.

§. 5. That you may be the more at leisure, and the better prepared for this, “ enter into some serious review of your own state : and endeavour to put your soul into as fit a posture as possible, for your solemn appearance before God.” For a solemn thing, indeed, it is, to go into his immediate presence ; to stand before him, not as a supplicant

supplicant at the throne of his grace, but at his bar as a separate spirit whose time of probation is over, and whose eternal state is to be immediately determined. Renew your humiliation before God for the imperfections of your life, though it has in the main been devoted to his service. Renew your application to the mercies of God as promised in the covenant of grace, and to the blood of Christ as the blessed channel in which they flow. Resign yourself entirely to the divine disposal and conduct, as willing to serve God, either in this world or the other, as he shall see fit. And sensible of your sinfulness on the one hand, and of the divine wisdom and goodness on the other, summon up all the fortitude of your soul to bear as well as you can whatever his afflicting hand may further lay upon you, and to receive the last stroke of it, as one who would maintain the most entire subjection to the great and good father of spirits.

§. 6. Whatever you suffer, “endeavour to shew yourself an example of patience.” Let that amiable grace ‘have its perfect work;’ (a) and since it has so little more to do, let it close the scene nobly. Let there not be a murmuring word; and that there may not, watch against every repining thought: And when you feel any thing of that kind arising, look by faith upon a dying saviour, and ask your own heart, “Was not his cross much more painful, than the bed on which I lie? Was not his situation among blood thirsty enemies infinitely more terrible, than mine amidst the tenderness and care of so many affectionate friends? Did not the heavy load of my sins press him in a much more overwhelming manner, than I am pressed with the load of these afflictions? And yet he bore all ‘as a lamb that is brought to the slaughter.’ (b) Let the remembrance of his sufferings be a means to sweeten yours; yea, let it cause you to rejoice, when you are called to bear the cross for a little while, before you wear the crown. Count it all joy, that you have an opportunity yet once more of honouring God by your patience, which is now acting its last part, and will in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, be superseded by compleat everlasting blessedness. And I am willing to
hope,

(a) Jam. i. 4. (b) Isai. liii. 7.

hope, that in these views you will not only suppress all passionate complaints, but that your mouth will be filled with the praises of God; and that you will be speaking to those that are about you not only of his justice but of his goodness too. So that you will be enabled to communicate your inward joys in such a manner, as may be a lively and edifying comment upon those words of the apostle, 'tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; even a hope which maketh not ashamed, while the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the holy ghost which is given unto us.' (c)

§. 7. And now, my dear friend, "now is the time, when it is especially expected from you, that you bear an honourable testimony to religion." Tell those that are about you, as well as you can, (for you never will be able fully to express it,) what comfort and support you have found in it. Tell them, how it has brightened the darkest circumstances of your life: Tell them how it now reconciles you to the near views of death. Your words will carry with them a peculiar weight at such a season: There will be a kind of eloquence, even in the infirmities with which you are struggling, while you give them utterance; and you will be heard with attention, with tenderness, with credit. And therefore, when the time of your departure is at hand, with unaffected freedom breathe out your joy, if you then feel (as I hope you will,) an holy joy and delight in God. Breathe out, however, your inward peace and serenity of mind, if you be then peaceful and serene: Others will mark it, and be encouraged to tread the steps which lead to so happy an end. Tell them, what you feel of the vanity of the world; and they may learn to regard it less: Tell them, what you feel of the substantial supports of the gospel; and they may learn to value it more: For they cannot but know, that they must lie down on a dying bed too, and must then need all the relief which the gospel itself can give them.

§. 8. And to enforce the conviction the more, "give a solemn charge to those that are about you, that they spend their

their lives in the service of God, and govern themselves by the principles of real religion." You may remember, that Joshua and David, and other good men did so; when they perceived that the days drew near in which they should die. And you know not, how the admonitions of a dying friend, or (as it may be with respect to some,) of a dying parent, may impress those who may have disregarded what you and others may have said to them before. At least, make the trial: and die, labouring to glorify God, to save souls, and generously to sow the seeds of goodness and happiness in a world, where you have no more harvests to reap. Perhaps they may spring up in a plentiful crop, when the clouds of the valley are covering your body: But, if not, God will approve it; and the angels, that wait around your bed to receive your departing soul, will look upon each other with marks of approbation in their countenance, and own, that this is to expire like a Christian, & to make a glorious improvement of mortality.

§. 9. And in this last address to your fellow-mortals, whoever they are that providence brings near you, "be sure that you tell them, how entirely and how cheerfully your hopes and dependance in this season of the last extremity are fixed, not upon your own merits and obedience, but on what the great redeemer has done, and has suffered for sinners." Let them see that you die, as it were, at the foot of the cross: Nothing will be so comfortable to yourselves, nothing so edifying to them. Let the name of Jesus therefore be in your mouth, while you are able to speak; and, when you can speak no longer, let it be in your heart, and endeavour that the last act of your soul, while it continues in the body, may be an act of humble faith in Christ. come unto God by him: enter into that which is within the veil, as with the blood of sprinkling fresh upon you. It is an awful thing for such a sinner, (as you, my christian friend, with all the virtues the world may have admired, know yourself to be,) to stand before that infinitely pure and holy being, who has seen all your ways, and all your heart, and has a perfect knowledge of every mixture of imperfection which has attended the best of your duties: but venture in that way, and you will find it both safe and pleasant.

§. 10. Once more, "To give you comfort in a dying hour, and to support your feeble steps while you are travelling thro' this dark and painful way, take the word of God as a staff in your hand." Let books and mortal friends, now do their last office for you. Call, if you can, some experienced christian, who has felt the power of the word of God upon his own heart; and let him bring the scripture, and turn you to some of those precious promises, which have been the food and rejoicing of his own soul. It is with this view, that I may carry the good office I am now engaged in as far as possible, I shall here give you a collection of a few such admirable scriptures, each of them 'infinitely more valuable than thousands of gold and silver.' (d) And to convince you of the degree in which I esteem them, I will take the freedom to add, that I desire, they may (if God give an opportunity,) be read over to me, as I lie on my dying bed, with short intervals between them; that I may pause upon each, and renew something of that delightful relish, which, I bless God, I have often found in them. May your soul and mine be then composed to a sacred silence, (whatever be the commotion of animal nature,) while the voice of God speaks to us, in language which he spake to his servants of old, or which he instructed them how they should speak to him, in circumstances of the greatest extremity!

§. 11. Can any more encouragement be wanting, when he 'says, fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousnes.' (e) And he is not a man, that he should lie; or the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' (f)—'The Lord is my light, and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?' (g) 'This God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.' (h) Therefore, 'though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.' [i]

(d) Psal. cxix. 72. (e) Isai. xli. 10. (f) Num. xxiii. 19.
 (g) Psal. xxvii. 1. (h) Psal. xlvi. 14. (i) Psal. xxxiii. 4.

me.' (i) 'I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.' (k) 'O continue thy loving kindness unto them that know thee, and thy righteousness to the upright in heart! For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light.' (l) 'Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.' (m) 'As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.' (n) 'For I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him until that day.' (o) 'Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope.' [p] 'For, if we believe, that Jesus died, and rose again, those also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.' [q]—'I give unto my sheep eternal life, (said Jesus, the good shepherd,) and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.' [r] 'This is the will of him that sent me, that every one, that believeth on me, shall have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.' [s] 'Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you: And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.' [t] 'Go, tell my brethren, I ascend unto my father and your father, and to my God and your God.' [u] 'Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them.' [x]—'He, that testifieth these things, saith surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!' [y] 'O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our lord Jesus Christ.' [z]

§. 12.

[k] Gen. xlix. 18. [l] Psal. xxxvi. 9, 10. [m] Psal. xvi. 11. [n] Psal. xvii. 15. [o] 2 Tim. i. 12. [p] Psal. xvi. 9. [q] 1 Theff. iv. 14. [r] John x. 28. [s] John vi. 40. [t] John xiv. 1, 2, 3. [u] John xx. 17. [x] John xvii. 24, 26. [y] Rev. xxii. 20. [z] 1 Cor. xv. 55, 57,

§. 12. Thus may that God, who ‘knows the souls of his children, in all their adversities,’ (a) and ‘in whose sight the death of his saints is precious,’ (b), cheer and support you and me in those last extremities of nature! May he add us to the happy number of those, who have been more than conquerors in death! And may he give us those supplies of his spirit which may enable us to pour out our departing souls in such sentiments, as those I would now suggest; though we should be no longer able to utter words, or to understand them if they were to be read to us! Let us at least review them with all proper affections now, and lay up one prayer more for that awful moment! O that this, and all we have ever offered with regard to it, may then ‘come in remembrance before God!’ (c)

A MEDITATION and PRAYER, suited to the case of a dying CHRISTIAN.

“O THOU supreme ruler of the visible and invisible worlds! Thou sovereign of life, and of death, of earth, and of heaven! Blessed be thy name, I have often been taught to seek thee. And now once more do I pour out my soul, my departing soul, unto thee. Bow down thy gracious ear, O God, and let my cry come before thee with acceptance!

“The hour is come, when thou wilt separate me from this world, with which I have been so long and so familiarly acquainted, and lead me to another, as yet unknown. Enable me, I beseech thee, to make the exchange, as becomes ‘a child of Abraham, who, being called of thee to receive an inheritance, obeyed and went out, though he knew not particularly whither he went;’ (d) as becomes a ‘child of God, who knows, that through sovereign grace, it is his father’s good pleasure to give him the kingdom!’ (e)

“I acknowledge, O Lord, the justice of that sentence by which I am expiring; and own thy wisdom and goodness in appointing my journey through this gloomy vale which is now before me. Help me to turn it into the happy occasion of honoring thee, and adorning my pro-

D d

fession!

(a) Psal. xxi. 7. (b) Psal. cxvi. 25. (c) Acts x. 4, 31.
(d) Heb. xi. 8. (e) Luke xii. 32.

cession ! and I will bless the pangs, by which thou art glorified, and this mortal and sinful part of my nature is dissolved.

“ Gracious father, I would not quit this earth of thine, and this house of clay in which I have sojourned during my abode upon the face of it, without ‘ my grateful acknowledgments to thee, for all that abundant goodness which thou hast caused to pass before me here.’ (f) With ‘ my dying breath, I bear witness to thy faithful care, I have wanted no good thing.’ (g) I thank thee, O my God, that this guilty, forfeited, unprofitable life was so long spared : That it hath been still maintained by such a rich variety of thy bounty. I thank thee, that thou hast made this beginning of my existence so pleasant to me. I thank thee, for the mercies of my days and nights, of my months and years, which are now come to their period : I thank thee, for the mercies of my infancy, and for those of my riper age ; for all the agreeable friends which thou hast given me in this house of my pilgrimage, the living and the dead ; for all the help I have received from others, and for all the opportunities which thou hast given me of being helpful to the bodies or souls of my brethren of mankind. ‘ Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life,’ (h) and I have reason to rise a thankful guest from the various and pleasant entertainments with which my table has been furnished by thee. Nor shall I have reason to repine, or to grieve at quitting them : For, O my God, are thy bounties exhausted ? I know, that they are not. I will not wrong thy goodness and thy faithfulness so much, as to imagine, that because I am going from earth, I am going from happiness. I adore thy mercy, that thou hast taught me to entertain nobler views through Jesus thy son. I bless thee with all the powers of my nature, that I ever heard of his name, and heard of his death : And would fain exert a more vigorous act of thankful adoration, than in this broken state I am capable of, while I am extolling thee, for the riches of thy grace manifested in him ; for his instructions and his example, for his blood
and

(f) Exod. xxxiii. 19. (g) Psal. xxxiv. 10. (h) Psal. xxiii. 6.

and his righteousness, and for that blessed spirit of thine which thou hast given me, to turn my sinful heart unto thyself, and to bring me ‘into the bonds of thy covenant; of that covenant, which is ordered in all things and sure,’ (i) and which this death, though now separating my soul from my body, shall never be able to dissolve.

“ I bless thee, O Lord, that I am not dying in an unregenerate and impenitent state; but that thou didst graciously awaken and convince me; that thou didst renew and sanctify my heart, and didst by thy good spirit work in it an unfeigned faith, a real repentance, and the beginning of a divine life. I thank thee, for ministers and ordinances: I thank thee, for my sabbaths, and my sacrament days; for the weekly and monthly refreshments which they gave me: I thank thee, for ‘the fruits of Canaan, which were sent me in the wilderness, and are now sent me on the brink of Jordan. I thank thee, for thy blessed word, and for those exceeding rich and precious promises of it, which now lie as a cordial warm at my heart in this chilling hour; promises of support in death, and of glory beyond it, and of the resurrection of my body to everlasting life. O my God, I firmly believe them all, great and wonderful as they are, and am waiting for the accomplishment of them, through Jesus Christ; in whom they are all yea, and amen.’ (k) ‘Remember thy word unto thy servant, on which thou hast caused me to hope!’ (l) I covenanted with thee, not for worldly enjoyments, which thy love taught me comparatively to despise; but for ‘eternal life, as the gift of free grace thro’ Jesus Christ my Lord:’ (m) And now permit me ‘in his name to enter my humble claim to it! Permit me to consign this departing spirit into thine hand; for thou hast redeemed it, O Lord God of truth!’ (n) ‘I am thine: save me,’ (o) and make me happy!

“ But may I, indeed, presume to say, I am thine? O God, now I am standing on the borders of both worlds, now I view things as in the light of thy presence and of eternity, how unworthy do I appear, that I should be taken to dwell with thy angels and saints in glory! Alas,

I

(i) 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. (k) 2 Cor. i. 20. (l) Psal. cxix. 49.
 (m) Rom. vi. 23. (a) Psal. cxxxi. 4. (o) Psal. cxix. 94.

I have reason to look back with deep humiliation, on a poor unprofitable sinful life, in which I have daily been deserving to be cast into hell. But I have this one comfortable reflection, that I have fled to the cross of Christ; and I now renew my application to it. To think of appearing before God in such an imperfect righteousness as my own, were ten thousand times worse than death. No, Lord! I come unto thee as a sinner; but as a sinner, who has believed in thy son for pardon and life: I fall down before thee as a guilty polluted wretch; but thou hast made him to be unto thy people for 'wisdom and righteousness, for sanctification and redemption.' (p) Let me have my lot among the followers of Jesus! Treat me, as thou treatest those who are his friends and his brethren! for thou knowest, my soul has loved him, and trusted him, and solemnly ventured itself on the security of his gospel. And 'I know in whom I have believed.' (q) The infernal lion may attempt to dismay me in this awful passage: But I rejoice, that I am 'in the hands of the good shepherd;' (r) and I defy all my spiritual enemies, in a cheerful dependance on his faithful care. I lift up my eyes and my heart to him, who 'was dead and is alive again; and behold, he lives for evermore, and hath the keys of death and of the unseen world.' (s) Blessed Jesus, I die by thine hand, and I fear no harm from the hand of a favourer! I fear not that death, which is allotted to me by the hand of my dearest Lord, who himself died to make it safe and happy. I come, Lord, I come, not only with a willing, but with a joyful consent. I thank thee, that thou 'rememberest me for good; that thou art breaking my chains, and calling me to the glorious liberty of the children of God.' (t) I thank thee, that thou wilt no longer permit me to live at a distance from thine arms; but, after this long absence, wilt have me at home, at home forever.

"My feeble nature faints in the view of that glory, which is now dawning upon me: But thou knowest how, gracious Lord, to let it in upon my soul by just degrees, and to 'make thy strength perfect in my weakness.' (u) Once more for the last time, would I look down on this

poor

(p) 1 Cor. i. 30. (q) 2 Tim. i. 12. (r) John x. 11. 28. (s) Rev. i. 18. (t) Rom. viii. 21. (u) 2 Cor. xii. 9.

poor world which I am going to quit, and breathe out my dying vows for its prosperity, and that of thy church in it. I have loved it, O Lord, as a living member of the body ; and I love it to the last. I humbly beseech thee, therefore, that thou wilt guard it, and purify it, and unite it more and more ! Send down more of thy blessed spirit upon it, even the spirit of wisdom, of holiness, and of love ; till, in due time, ‘ the wilderness be turned into a garden of the Lord, (w) and ‘ all flesh shall see thy salvation !’ (x)

“ And as for me, bear me, O my heavenly father, on the wings of everlasting love to that peaceful, that holy, that joyous abode, which thy mercy has prepared for me, and which the blood of my redeemer hath purchased ! Bear me ‘ to the general assembly and church of the first born, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect !’ (y) And whatever this flesh may suffer, let my steady soul be delightfully fixed on that glory to which it is rising ! Let faith perform its last office in an honorable manner ! Let my few remaining moments on earth be spent for thy glory ; and so let me ascend, with love in my heart, and praise on my faltering tongue, to the world where love and praise shall be complete ! be this my last song on earth, which I am going to tune in heaven ; ‘ blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the lamb forever and ever !’ (z) *Amen.*

(w) Isai. li. 3. (x) Luke iii. 6. (y) Heb. xii. 22, 23.

(z) Rev. v. 13.

A PLAIN AND SERIOUS ADDRESS TO THE MASTER
OF A FAMILY.



S I R,

YOU may easily apprehend, that the many interruptions to which personal visits are liable, make it difficult for ministers to find a convenient time, in which they may apply themselves suitably and largely to those committed to their care ; or at least, if they resolve to do it, will necessarily make their progress through large congregations very slow. I therefore take this method of visiting you *while alone*, and of addressing you on the very important subject of *Family Religion*. For your own sake, and the sake of those dearest to you, I entreat you to give me a calm attentive hearing. And I would particularly desire, that if it be by any means practicable, (as with a little contrivance and resolution I hope it may,) you would secure one hour on the morning of the Lord's day after you receive it, not merely to run over this letter in a cursory manner, but deliberately to weigh and consider it, and to come to some determination, as in the sight of God, that *you will*, or that *you will not*, comply with the *petition* which it brings ; if I may not rather say, with the *demand* which *in his name* it makes upon you.

As I purpose to deliver it to every master of a family under my stated care, or to every mistress where there is no master, (that no offence of any kind may be taken, which it is in my power to prevent,) I know it will come to many, who have long been exemplary for their diligence and zeal in the duties I am recommending ; to many, whom their own experience hath instructed in the pleasures and advantages which flow from them ; an experience,

perience, which will enforce them more effectually than any thing which it is possible for me to say. Such will, I hope, by what they read, be confirmed in pursuing the good resolution they have taken, and the good customs they have formed ; and will also be excited more earnestly to endeavour to contribute towards introducing the like, into other families over which they have any influence, and especially into those which may branch out from their own, by the settlement of children or servants. In this view, as well as to awaken their thankfulness to divine grace, which hath inclined them to the discharge of their duty in so great, yet so frequently neglected, an article of it, I hope the heads of praying families will not peruse this letter in vain. But it is intended as an address to those, who have hitherto lived in the omission of it : And if there were *but one* such master of a family under my care, I would gladly submit to the labour in which I am now engaging *for his sake alone*. To such, therefore, I now turn myself ; and O that divine grace might engage every one of such a character to hear me with attention, and might enforce upon his conscience the weight of reasons, the evidence of which the lowest may receive, and to which it is impossible that the highest should find any thing solid to object !

O my dear friend, whoever you are, (for I know no one under my care to whom I may not address that appellation) give me leave to tell you plainly, that while I write this I have that awakening scripture in my view ; *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon THE FAMILIES THAT CALL NOT ON THY NAME.** I appeal to you as a man of ordinary sense and understanding (as it needs no more,) to judge whether this do not strongly imply that it may be taken for granted, *every family*, which is not a *heathen family*, which is not quite ignorant of the living and true God, *will call upon his name*. Well may it then pain my heart, to think that there should be a professedly *Christian family*, whom this dreadful character suits. Well may it pain my heart, to think of the *divine fury*, which may be *poured out* on the heads and on the members of it : And well may it make me

* Jer. x. 25.

me desirous, to do my utmost to secure you and yours from every appearance, from every possibility of such danger. Excuse the earnestness with which I may address you. I really fear, lest, *while you delay*, the fire of the divine displeasure should *fall upon you* : † And as I adore the patience of God in having thus long suspended the storm, I am anxious about every hour's delay, lest it should fall the heavier.

I will, therefore, as plainly and seriously as I can endeavor to convince you of your duty, if, peradventure, you are not already secretly convinced of it ; as truly I believe, most, who neglect it, under the regular administration of gospel ordinances, are. I will then touch on a few of those objections, which have been pleaded to excuse, in some degree, so shameful an omission. And this will naturally lead me to conclude with a few hints, which may serve by way of direction, for the proper introduction and discharge of the services to which I am endeavouring to engage you.

I mean not to handle the subject at large, which would afford abundant matter for a considerable volume ; as, indeed, several volumes have been written upon it, by divines of different denominations, who, however various in other opinions, agree here ; as what intelligent Christians can disagree ? But I mean to suggest a few plain things, which, it is evident, you have not sufficiently considered, and which, if duly weighed, may, by the blessing of God, answer my present purpose.

Now the arguments I shall propose will be such, that if you will not regard them, little is to be hoped from any other : For surely the mind of man can discover none of greater and more universal importance ; though I readily acknowledge, that many others might enforce them with greater energy and address. Yet if the desire, the most earnest desire of succeeding can add any of the proper arts of persuasion, they will not be wanting here. And I would fain speak, as one who considers, how much of the glory of God, how much of your own happiness, and that of your dear children, for time and eternity, depends on the success of what I am now to lay before you.

What

What I desire and entreat of you, is, that you would honour and acknowledge God in your families, by calling them together every day, to hear some part of his word read to them, and to offer, for a few minutes at least, your united confessions, prayers and praises to him. And is this a cause, that should need to be pleaded at large by a great variety of united motives? Truly the petition seems so reasonable, and a compliance with it from one who has not quite renounced religion, might seem so natural, that one would think the bare proposing it might suffice. Yet experience tells us, it is much otherwise. This letter will come into the hands of some, who, though they maintain a public profession of religion, have been again and again exhorted to it in vain, and that, perhaps, for succeeding years. I might say a great deal to *upbraid* such and especially, on account of this neglect; but I rather choose to *entreat* to the future performance of the duty; humbly hoping, that, criminal as former negligence has been, a gracious God will mercifully forgive it, to those who repent and desire to reform.

And O that I could engage you to this, by representing in the plainest, kindest, and most affectionate manner, the *reasonableness* and *advantage* of this duty! For if it be reasonable, if it be evidently advantageous, there are numberless *general precepts of scripture*, which must comprehend and enforce it, if it were less immediately supported than it is by *particular passages*: which yet, as I shall presently shew, do many of them strongly recommend it to us.

Consider, Sir, for I address myself to every particular person, seriously consider *the apparent reasonableness of Family Religion*. Must not your consciences presently tell you, it is fit that persons who receive so many mercies together, should acknowledge them together? Can you in your own mind be satisfied, that you and your nearest relatives should pay no joint homage to that God, who hath set you in your family, and who hath given to you, and to the several members of it, so many domestic enjoyments? Your creator and theirs, your preserver and theirs, your daily benefactor and theirs? Can it be right, if you have any sense of these things, each of you in your own hearts, that the sense of them should be concealed and smothered there,

there, and that you should never join in your grateful acknowledgments to him? Can you imagine it reasonable, that when you have constant dependence upon him for so many mercies, without the concurrence of which, your family would be a scene of misery, you should never present yourselves together in his presence, to ask them at his hand? Upon what principles is public worship to be recommended and urged, if not by such as have their proportionable weight here?

Indeed the force of these considerations hath not only been known and acknowledged by the people of God in all ages; we have not only *Noah* and *Abraham*, *Joshua* and *David*, *Job* and *Daniel*, each under a much darker dispensation than ours, as examples of it: But we may venture to say, that wherever there has been a profession of any kind of religion, it has been brought into private houses as well as public temples. The poor *heathens*, as we certainly know from the remaining monuments of them, had their *Lares* and their *Penates*, which were household images, some of them in private chapels, and others about the common hearth, where the family used to worship them by frequent prayers and sacrifices. And the *brass*, and *wood*, and *stone*, of which they consisted, shall (as it were) *cry out against you*, shall rise up against you and condemn you, if while you call yourselves the worshippers of the one living and eternal God, and boast in the revelation you have received by his prophets and by his Son, you presume to omit an homage, which the stupid worshippers of such vanities as these failed not to present to them, while they called them their gods. Be persuaded then, I beseech you, to be consistent in your conduct. Either give up all pretences to religion, or maintain a steady and uniform regard to it, at home as well as abroad, in the family as well as in the closet, or at church.

But the reasonableness of this duty, and the obligations which bind you in conscience to the practice of it, will farther appear, if you consider the many advantages, which will, by the divine blessing, attend a proper discharge of it. And here I would more particularly represent the good influence, which family devotions are likely to have upon the young persons committed to your care,
upon

upon your own hearts ; and upon the advancement of a general reformation and the propagation of religion to those that are yet unborn.

Consider in the first place, what is most obvious, the happy influence which the duty I am recommending might have upon the young members of your family, the *children* and *servants* committed to your care. For I now consider you, as a parent, and a master. *The father of a family*, is a phrase, that comprehends both these relations ; and, with great propriety, as humanity obliges us to endeavor to take a parental care of all under our roof. And indeed,

You ought to consider your *servants*, in this view, with a tender regard. They are, probably, in the flower of life, for that is the age which is commonly spent in service : And you should recollect how possible it is, that this may be if rightly improved, the best opportunity their whole life may afford them for learning religion, and being brought under the power of it. If your servants are already instructed in it, by being brought up in families where these duties have been maintained ; let them not, if they should finally miscarry, have cause to impute it to you, and to testify before God in the day of their condemnation, “ That it was under your roof that they learnt the neglect and forgetfulness of God, and of all that their pious parents, perhaps, in a much inferior station of life to you, had in earlier days been attempting to teach them ; to teach them in moments taken from labor, or from repose almost necessary for their subsistence.”

On the other hand, if they come to you quite ignorant of religion, (as if they come from prayerless families, it is very probable that they do,) have compassion upon them, I entreat you, and endeavor to give them those advantages which they never yet had ; and, which it is too probable, as things are generally managed, they never will have, if you will not afford them. But I would especially, if I might be allowed to borrow the pathetic words of *Job*, * *entreat you by the children of your own body*. I would now as it were present them all before you, and beseech you by all the bowels of parental affection, (which I have myself so strongly felt,) that to all the other tokens
of

* *Job* xix. 17.

of tenderness and love, you would not refuse to add this, without which many of the rest may be worse than in vain.

Give me leave to plead with you, as the instruments of introducing them into being. O remember, it is, indeed, a debased and corrupted nature you have conveyed to them. Consider, that the world, into which you have been the means of bringing them, is a place in which they are surrounded with many temptations, and in which, as they advance in life, they must expect many more; so that in plain terms, it is on the whole much to be feared, that they will perish in their ignorance and forgetfulness of God, if they do not learn from you to love and serve him. For how can it be expected that they should learn this at all, if you give them no advantages for receiving and practising the lesson at home?

And let me further urge and intreat you to remember that these dear children, whose tender age, and, perhaps, amiable forms and dispositions, might attract the affection and solicitude of strangers, are committed to your especial and immediate care by God their creator. And he has made them thus dependent upon you and others that have, in their infancy and childhood, the care of them, that there might be hereafter a better opportunity of forming their minds, and of influencing them to a right temper and conduct. And can this by any means be effectually done, if you do not at proper times call them together, to attend to the instructions of the word of God, and to join in solemn prayers and supplications to him? At least is it possible, it should be done any other way with equal advantage, if this be not added to the rest?

Family worship is a most proper way of teaching children religion, as you teach them language, by insensible degrees; a little one day and a little another; for to them *line must be upon line, and precept upon precept*. They may learn to conceive aright of the divine perfections, when they hear you daily acknowledging and adoring them: Their hearts may be early touched with pious remorse for sin, when they hear your confessions poured out before God: They will know what mercies they are to ask for themselves, by observing what turn your petitions take:

take : Your intercessions may diffuse into their minds a spirit of love to mankind, a concern for the interest of the church, and of their country ; and, what is not, I think, by any means to be neglected, sentiments of loyalty towards the officers of government, when they hear you daily invoking the divine blessing upon them ; and your solemn thanksgivings for the bounties of providence, and for benefits of a spiritual nature, may affect their hearts with those gracious impressions towards the gracious author of all, which may excite in their little breasts love to him, the most noble and genuine principle of all true and acceptable religion. Thus they may become Christians by insensible degrees, and grow in the knowledge and love of the truth, as they do in stature.

By observing your reverent and solemn deportment, (as reverent and solemn, I hope, it will always at such seasons be,) they may get some notion of an invisible being, before they are of age to understand the definition of the term *God* ; and may feel their minds secretly impressed with an humble awe and veneration, before they can explain to you their sense of it. And whatever instructions you give them concerning his nature and his will, and the way of obtaining his favour by Jesus Christ, all your admonitions relating to the importance of that invisible world we are going to, and the necessary preparation for it, will be greatly illustrated by the tenor of your daily devotions, as well as by those excellent lessons which the word of God, when solemnly read to them morning and evening, will afford. Nor is it by any means to be forgotten, that while they hear themselves, and their own concerns, mentioned before God in prayer, while they hear you earnestly pleading for the divine blessing upon them, (especially if it be in expressions wisely varied, as some particular occurrences in their lives and in yours may require,) it may very probably be a means of moving their impressible hearts ; as it may powerfully convince them of your deep and tender concern for their good, and may add great weight to the instructions you may address to them : So that it may appear, even *while you are praying for them*, that *God hears*.* And, indeed, I have known some instances of excellent persons, who have dated their conversion

* Isa. lxxv. 24.

to God, even after they had begun visibly to degenerate, from the prayers, from the serious and pathetic prayers, which they have heard their pious fathers, perhaps I might add their pious mothers, presenting before God on their account.

Indeed were this duty properly attended to, it might be expected, that all Christian families would according to their respective sizes and circumstances, become nurseries of piety; and you would see in the most convincing view the wisdom of Providence, in making human infants so much more dependent on their parents, and so much more incapable to shift for themselves, than the offspring of inferior creatures are.

Let me then entreat you, my dear friend, to look on your children the very next time you see them, and ask your own heart how you can answer it to God, and to them, that you deprive them of such advantages as these? Advantages, without which it is to be feared, your care of them in other respects will turn to but little account, should they be ever so prosperous in life. For what is prosperity in life without the knowledge, and fear, and love of God? What, but the poison of the soul, which swells and kills it? What, but the means of making it more certainly, more deeply, more intolerably miserable; when all its transient and empty amusements are passed away, *like a dream when one awaketh?** In short, not to mention, the happy influence it may have on their temporal affairs, by drawing down the divine blessing, and by forming their minds to those virtues, which pave the way to wealth and reputation, health and contentment, which make no enemies, and attract many friends; it is, with respect to the eternal world, the greatest cruelty to your children thus to neglect giving them those advantages, which *no other cares in education itself* exclusive of these can afford: And it is impossible you should ever be able to give them any other equivalent. If you do your duty in this respect, they will have reason to bless you living and dying; and if you neglect it take care that you and they come not, in consequence of that neglect, into a world, where (horrid as the thought may now seem,) you will forever be cursing each other. ! And thus I am fallen insensibly, because

so naturally, from what I was saying of the concern and interest of those under your care, to your own, so far as it may be distinguished from theirs.

Let me therefore press you to consider, how much *your own interest* is concerned in the matter ; the whole of your interest both spiritual, and temporal.

Your *spiritual interest* is infinitely the greatest, and therefore I will begin with that. And here let me seriously ask you, do you not need those advantages for religion, which the performance of family duty will give you, added to those of a more secret and a more public nature, if peradventure they are regarded by you ? These instructions, these adorations, these confessions, these supplications, these intercessions, these thanksgivings, which may be so useful to your children and servants, may they not be useful to yourselves ? May not your own hearts have some peculiar advantage for being impressed, when you are the mouth of others in these domestic devotions, beyond what, in a private station of life, it is otherwise possible you should have ? O these lessons of religion to your own souls, every morning and evening, might be (if I may be allowed the expression) either the seed, or foretaste of salvation to you. Nay, the remoter influence they may have on your conduct, in other respects, and at other times, when considered merely in the general as religious exercises performed by you in your family, is to be recollected as an argument of vast importance.

A sense of common decency would engage you, if you pray with your family, to *avoid a great many evils*, which would appear *doubly evil* in a father or a master, who kept up such religious exercises in his house. I will not now, Sir, speak of yourself, for I would not offend by supposing any thing grossly bad of you. But do you imagine, that, if reading the scripture and family-prayer were introduced into the houses of some of your neighbours, drunkenness and lewdness, and cursing and swearing, and profaning the Lord's day, would not, like so many *evil demons*, be quickly driven out ? The master of the family would not for shame indulge them, if he had nothing more than the form of duty kept up ; and *his* reformation, though only external, and at first on a kind of constraint, would

would carry with it the reformation of many more, who have such a dependence on his favor as they would not sacrifice, though by a madness very prevalent among the children of men they can venture to sacrifice their souls to every trifle.

And may it not, perhaps, be your more immediate concern, to recollect that if you prayed with your family, you would *yourself* be more careful to *abstain from all appearance of evil*?* You would find out a way to suppress that turbulency of passion, which may now be ready to break out before you are aware, and other imprudences, in which your own heart would check you by saying, "Does this become one, that is by and by to kneel down with his domestics, his children and servants, and adore God with them, and pray against every thing which displeases God, and makes us unfit for the heavenly world?" I will not say this will cure every thing that is wrong; but, I believe, you are already persuaded, it would often have a very good influence. And I fear, it is the secret desire of indulging some irregularities without such a restraint, that, infamous as such a victory is, hath driven out family prayer from several houses where it was once maintained, and hath excluded it from others. But if you have any secret disinclination of heart arising against it in this view, it becomes you seriously to take the alarm; for, to speak plainly, I have hardly known a blacker symptom of damnation, than a fear of being restrained in the commission of sin.

After this, it may seem a matter of smaller importance, to urge the good influence which a proper discharge of family duty may have upon your own *temporal affairs*; both by restraining you from many evils, and engaging you to a proper conduct yourself, and also by impressing your children and servants with a sense of religion. And it is certain, the more careful they are of their duty to God, the more likely they will be to perform their duty to you. Nor can any thing strengthen your natural authority among them more, than your presiding in such solemnities, if supported by a suitable conduct. But I would hope, nobler motives will have a superior weight.

And

* 1 Theff. v. 22.

And therefore waving this topic, I intreat you as the last argument to consider,

The influence it may have on a general *reformation* and on the *propagation of religion* to those who are yet unborn. You ought to consider every child and servant in your family, as one who may be a source, not only of life, but (in some degree) of character and happiness, to those who are hereafter to arise into being; yea, whose conduct may in part affect those that are to descend from them in the following generation. If they grow up while under your eye, ignorant of religion, they will certainly be much less capable of teaching it to others; for these are the years of discipline, and if they be neglected now, there is little probability of their receiving after-instruction—Nor is this all the evil consequence; for it is highly probable, that they will think themselves authorised by your example to a like negligence, and so you may entail *heathenism*, under disregarded Christian forms, on your descendants and theirs in ages to come. Whereas your diligence and zeal might be remembered, and imitated by them, perhaps, when you are in your grave; and the stock which they first received from you, might with rich improvements be communicated to great numbers, so that *one generation after another* might learn to fear and serve the Lord. On the whole, God only knows what a church may arise from one godly family, what a harvest may spring up from a single seed, and on the other hand, it is impossible to say, how many souls may at length perish by the treacherous neglect of a single person, and to speak plainly, by your own.

These, Sir, are the arguments I had to plead with you, and which I have selected out of many more: And now give me leave seriously to ask you, as in the presence of God, whether there be not, on the whole, an unanswerable force in them? And if there be, what follows, but that you immediately yield to that force, and set up family worship *this very day*. For methinks, I would hardly thank you for a resolution to do it *to-morrow*, so little do I expect from that resolution. How can you excuse yourself in the continued omission? Bring the matter before God; He *will* be the final judge of it; and if you cannot

debate the question as in his presence, it is a sign of a bad cause and of a bad heart too; which is conscious of the badness of the cause, and yet will not give it up, nor comply with a duty, of your obligations to which you are secretly convinced, and yet in effect say, "I will go on in this sin and venture the consequence." O it is a dreadful venture, and will be found in effect *provoking the Lord to jealousy, as if you were stronger than he.**

But, perhaps, there may arise in your mind some objections, which may, in some degree, break the force of this conviction, and which, in that view, it may be expedient for me to discuss a little, before I dismiss the subject and close my address to you. You may, perhaps, be ready to object,

I. "That *family prayer is not in so many words commanded in scripture*; and therefore however expedient in some cases, it cannot be so universal and so important a duty, as we represent it."

I answer plainly, that it is strongly recommended in scripture, and consequentially commanded; as there are precepts, which plainly include, though they do not particularly express it. And I appeal to yourself in this matter. When God is represented as giving this reason to his angels for a particular favor to be bestowed on *Abraham*, because *he knew, that he would command his children and household to keep the way of the Lord, that he might obtain the blessing promised*; † did he not intend to declare his approbation of the care he took to support religion in his family? And can it be supported in a total neglect of prayer? Again, do you not, in your conscience, think, that the spirit of God meant, that we should take *Joshua* for an example, when he tells us, that he resolved, and publicly declared the resolution, *that he and his house would serve the Lord*; ‡ which must express a religious care of his family too? Do you not believe, that this blessed spirit meant it as a commendation of *Job*, that he *offered sacrifices for all his children*; § sacrifices, undoubtedly attended with prayers; when he feared lest the gaiety of their hearts in their successive feastings might have betrayed them into some moral evil? And was it not to do an honor to *David* that the scripture informs

* 1 Cor. x. 22. † Gen. xviii. 19. ‡ Josh. xxiv. 15.
§ Job i. 5.

informs us, that he *went home to bless his household* ;* that is, to perform some solemn act of domestic worship, when he had been spending the whole day in public devotions ? What think you of the example of *Daniel*, who *prayed in his house, with his windows open towards Jerusalem*,† and would rather run the risk of being cast into the den of lions, and being torn in pieces by those cruel beasts, than he would either omit or conceal it ? And do you think, that when our *blessed Lord*, whose whole life was employed in religious services, so frequently *took his disciples apart to pray with them*, that he did not intend this as an example to us, of praying with those under our special care, or in other words, with the members of our own family, who are most immediately so ? Or can you by any imaginable artifice delude yourself so far as to think, that when we are solemnly charged and commanded to *pray with all prayer and supplication*,‡ this kind of prayer is not included in that apostolical injunction ?

On the whole the question lies in a very little room.— Have I proved by what I have said before, that *family prayer* is a reasonable thing ? That it has a tendency to promote the honor of God, and the interest of religion, and your own salvation, with that of those who are committed to your care ? If you are really convinced of this, then all the general precepts which require the love of God and your neighbor, all that recommend a regard to the interest of Christ, and a concern for our own everlasting happiness, bind it in this connection as certainly upon us, as if it had been commanded in words as express as those, in which we are required *to enter into our closets, and there to pray to our father which is in secret*.§

And I will farther add, that if the care of *family religion* be (as I suppose every man's conscience will secretly testify that it is) a proper part of *religious education*, then all those many passages of scripture which recommend this, must in all reason be understood as including that.*

But

* 2 Sam. vi. 20. † Dan. vi. 10. ‡ Eph. vi. 18. § Mat. vi. 6.

* This part of the argument is enforced with peculiar strength by that great and excellent writer, Mr. Howe, in his *Posthumous Sermons on the subject* ; which I earnestly recommend to every reader that can get an opportunity of perusing them.

But, perhaps, you may be ready to plead,

2. "That it is *generally neglected*."

Yet scarce can you have made or thought of this objection, but you will see at the first glance, that this must turn upon yourself, rather than on the whole appear favorable to your cause. It is the reproach of our age, if it be, indeed, *generally neglected*. And if it be generally excluded from the families of the rich and the great, (who too frequently set the fashion, where they are most apt to set it wrong) let it rather awaken a generous indignation in our breast, to think that it is so excluded. At least, let it awaken a holy zeal to exert ourselves so much the more, as it is certain that no association in vice can secure those that join in it: For it is expressly said, *though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished*.† So will your obedience be the more acceptable, in proportion to the degree in which it is singular. Were there not one praying family in the whole nation, in the whole world, methinks it should instigate you to the practice, rather than tempt you to the neglect, and you should press on as ambitious of the glory of *leading the way*: For what could be a nobler object of ambition, than to be pointed out by the blessed God himself, as *Job* was; of whom he said, with a kind of triumph, *hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the land, or even on the earth?*‡ But blessed be God, this supposed *universal neglect* is far from being the case. Let it however rejoice us, if God may say, "There are such and such families, distinguished from those in the neighborhood on this account; as prevalent as the neglect of *family prayer* is, they have the resolution to practise it, and like my servant *Daniel*, fear not the reproach and contempt which profane and ungodly men may cast upon them, if they may but honor me, and engage my favor: *I know them; I hearken and hear, and a book of remembrance is written before me for them that fear me, and think on my name.*"§ Nor should you urge,

3. "That you have *so much business of another kind*, as not to be able to attend to this."

I might cut this objection short at once, by applying to your conscience, whether you have not time for many other

† Prov. xi. 21.

‡ Job i. 8.

§ Mal. iii. 16.

other things, which you know to be of much less importance. How many hours in a week do you find for amusement, while you have none for devotion in your family? And do you, indeed, hold the blessing of God so very cheap, and think it a matter of so little importance, that you conclude your business must succeed the worse, if a few minutes were daily taken solemnly to seek it together? Let me rather admonish you, that the greater your business is, the more need you have to pray earnestly, that your hearts may not be engrossed by it. And I would beg leave further to remind you, that if your hurry of business were, indeed, so great as the objection supposes, (which I believe is seldom the case) prudence alone might suggest, that you should endeavor to contract it.— For there are certain boundaries, beyond which a wise and faithful care cannot extend; and as an attempt to go beyond these boundaries has generally its foundation in avarice, it often has its end in poverty and ruin. But if you were ever so secure of succeeding for this world, how dear might you and your children pay for that success, if all the blessed consequences of *family religion*, for time, and for eternity, were to be given up as the price of that very small part of your gains, which is owing to the minutes you take from these exercises, that you may give them to the world? For you plainly perceive the question is only about *them*, and by no means about a strenuous application to the proper duties of your secular calling through the day.— And if you *will be rich* upon such *profane terms* as are here supposed, (for truly I can call them no better than *profane*) you will probably *plunge yourself into final perdition*, and may, in the mean time, *pierce yourself through with many sorrows*;* while religious families learn, by blessed experience, that *the blessing of the Lord, which they are so often imploring together, maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow with it*;† or that *a little with the fear of the Lord, is better than great treasure with that intermingled trouble*,‡ which in the neglect of God must necessarily be expected. But I conclude that yet more will be objecting,

4. “That they *want ability* for a work of this kind.”

To this I must, in the first place, reply, that where the heart:

* 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. † Prov. x. 22. ‡ Prov. xv. 16.

heart is rightly disposed, it does not require any *uncommon abilities* to discharge *family worship* in a decent and edifying manner. *The heart of a wise and good man*, in this respect, *teacheth his mouth, and addeth knowledge to his lips* ;* and *out of the fullness of it*, when it is, indeed, full of pious affections, *the mouth will naturally speak*. † And if it speak naturally, and in the main properly, it is enough. There is no need at all of speaking elegantly. The plainest and simplest language, in addresses to the majesty of heaven, appears to me far preferable to laboured, pompous and artificial expressions. Plain, short sentences, uttered just as they rise in the mind, will be best understood by them that join with you. And it should, on such occasions, be our endeavour, to *let ourselves down*, as much as possible, to the understanding of the least and meanest of them : And this will in itself be more pleasing to God, than any thing which should proceed from ostentation and parade.

I must also desire you to consider, how many *helps* you may easily procure. The *scripture* is a large and noble magazine of the most proper sentiments, and most expressive language ; which if you will attend to with a becoming regard, will soon *furnish you for every good word and work*, and most apparently for this. And besides this we have in our language a great variety of excellent *forms of prayer*, for families as well as for private persons ; ‡ which you may use, at least at first, with great profit. And if it be too laborious to you to learn them by heart, or, if having learnt them, you dare not trust your memory, what should forbid your *reading them* reverently and devoutly ? I hope I shall give no offence to any good Christian by saying, but on this occasion I should offend my conscience by not saying, that I have long

* Prov. xvi. 23.

† Luke vi. 45.

‡ I must beg leave on this occasion to mention and recommend two excellent collections of this kind, Jenk's Devotions, and The Family Prayer Book, printed for Mr. Waugh. Readers of almost every taste may find themselves suited by one or the other of these ; and there are many admirably devout and judicious forms in both, which I should think every wise and good man might hear with pleasure and improvement, and to every clause of which he might put his most hearty Amen.

long thought an irreconcilable aversion to *forms of prayer*, even of human composition, as vain a superstition, as a passionate attachment to them. And if any had rather, that a family should be prayerless, than that a well chosen form should be gravely and solemnly read in it, I think he judges as absurdly, as if he would rather see them starving to death, than fed out of a dish whose materials or shape are disagreeable to him. The main thing is, that God be reverently and sincerely adored, that suitable blessings, temporal and spiritual, be sought from him for ourselves and others, and cordial thanksgivings returned to him for the various gifts of his continual bounty: and if this be done, the circumstances of doing it, though I cannot think them quite indifferent, are comparatively of small importance. I know by sure experience, in a great variety of instances, that it is very possible for Christians of no extraordinary genius, and with a very low education, to acquit themselves honorably in prayer without the assistance of *forms*: And they, who at first need them, may, and probably, if they seriously set about it, would soon outgrow that need. But if they did not, God might be glorified, and families edified, by the continued use of such helps. And, on the whole, if it be, indeed, come to this, that you will rather sacrifice all the benefits of *family prayer*, than submit to the trouble of reading, or appointing another to read, a well composed address, which, perhaps, with a small portion of scripture before it, might not take up one quarter of an hour's time, indeed, you must be condemned by God, and your own conscience. In such a view, both must testify, that it is neither want of leisure, nor want of ability, that prevents your discharging your duty, but a stupid indifference about it, or rather a wretched aversion to it; the natural consequence of which, might, if a little reflected upon, be sufficient to throw the most careless and arrogant sinner into an awful alarm, if not a trembling consternation.

I apprehend, that the most plausible objections have now been canvassed; for I suppose, few will be so weak and cowardly as to plead,

5. "That their domestics will not submit to the introduction of such orders as these." But

But as this may be secretly thought of, where it would not be pleaded, especially where these duties have unhappily been omitted when families were first formed, and in their most flexible and pliant state, I will bestow a few words on this head.

And here I must desire, that you would not rashly conclude this to be the case with respect to your own. Do not think so unkindly of your domestics, if they be not extremely wicked indeed, as to imagine they would be secretly discontented with spending a little time daily in hearing the word of God, and being present at your domestic devotion; much less should you allow yourself to think, till it appears in fact, that they will have the arrogance openly to dispute so reasonable a determination as this. Perhaps, on the contrary, they are even now secretly wishing, that God would put it into your heart to make the attempt; and thinking with a kind of tender regret, "Why are we denied such a blessing, when the members of this and that family in the neighborhood are favored with it?"

But if it be, indeed, as you suppose, that they would think of it with a secret aversion, and come into it with apparent reluctance, if they can be induced to come into it at all; you would do well to reflect, Whether this profaneness and perverseness may not, in a great measure at least, be owing to that very neglect, which I am now pressing you to reform? Which, if it be, it ought certainly to convince you, in the most powerful and effectual manner, of the necessity of endeavoring to repair as soon as possible the mischief already done. And if there be really an *opposition*, you ought to let any, in whom you discover it, know, that your measures are fixed, and that you *cannot* and *will not* resign that just authority, which the laws of God and man give you in your own house, to the petulancy of their humour, or the impiety of their unhappy temper. Make the trial, whether they will dare to break with you, rather than submit to so easy a condition, as that of being present at your hours of family worship. If it be a *servant* that disputes it, you will no doubt, think it a great blessing to your family to rid it of so detestable a member in that relation. And if it be a *child*

child, grown up to years that should be years of discretion, that sets himself against this reformation, (and it is not possible that any others should *oppose* you, though it is certain, that, wherever such a *son of Belial* be, he must be a great grief to your heart, you will be delivered from a great deal of distress, which the sight of his wickedness must daily give you by refusing him a place in your own family, which he would only disgrace and corrupt, and leaving him to practise those irregularities and scandals which always go along with such a presumptuous contempt of religion, any where else rather than under your own roof.

I can think of but one objection more, and that is,

6. "That you may not know *how to introduce* a practice which you have so long neglected."

But this is an objection so very soon removed, that I hope, if nothing else lie in the way, your family will not continue another week in the unhappy circumstances in which your negligence has hitherto kept it. I were unworthy the name of a minister of the Gospel, if, whatever my other engagements are I were not willing to give you my utmost assistance, as soon as possible, in so good a work as the reformation of this great and lamentable evil. Far from thinking it a trouble to visit you, and spend an hour with you upon such an occasion; who would not esteem it a refreshment, and a blessing, to come and inform your domestics, when gathered together for this purpose, how wise and happy a resolution you had taken, to represent the reason they have to rejoice in it, and to bless God who had inspired you with it? And how sweet a work would it be to perform it, as for the first time, imploring the blessings of providence and grace on you and yours, and entreating those assistances of his holy spirit, which may qualify you more abundantly for discharging your peculiar part in it, and may render it the successful means of planting, or of supporting and animating a principle of true religion in every soul under your care? Nor would the joy and delight be confined to the minutes spent with you at such a season: It would be carried home to the study and to the house of God: And the very remembrance of it would, for years to come encourage to other attempts of usefulness, and strengthen our hands in the work of the Lord.

And, O my dear friend, whoever you are, be not ashamed, that a minister should on this occasion tell your children and servants, that you are sensible of your former neglect, and are determined in the strength of God to practise a duty, which it has indeed been criminal hitherto to omit. This is a mean and unworthy shame, and would prevent our reforming evils which are, indeed, shameful. It will be a glory to you, to be willing and solicitous to revive languishing religion; a glory, to give to other families an example, which, if they have the wisdom and courage to follow it, will undoubtedly bring down a rich variety of blessings on themselves, and, if followed by considerable numbers, on the public. At least, it will be an honor to you in the sight of men, and what is infinitely more, in the sight of God to have made the generous effort; and not to make the guilty neglect of former years, an excuse for continuing to neglect, what it should rather be a powerful argument immediately to practise.

But I would by no means insist upon it, that divine worship should be introduced into your family in the particular manner I have recommended. Use your own judgment, and pursue your own inclination; so that it be but effectually and immediately done. You may, perhaps, think it convenient to call them together, and read over *this letter* to them; telling them at the conclusion that you are, in your conscience, convinced there is reason in it which cannot be answered, and that therefore you are resolved to act agreeably to it. You may then proceed to read a portion of scripture, and to pray with them in such a manner as you may think most expedient. But in whatever manner it be done, you will remember, that it must be, with reverence and solemnity, and with unfeigned fervor of devotion, as in the sight of the heart searching God. And you will farther remember, that, when once introduced, it must be resolutely and constantly carried on; for to cast out this heavenly guest, will, in some degree, be more shameful than not to admit it. But, I hope, sweet experience of the pleasure of these duties will be instead of a thousand arguments, to engage your adherence to them. May God give you resolution *immediately* to make the attempt! and may he assist and accept you, and scatter down every

every desirable blessing of providence and of grace on you and yours ! So that *this day*, (for I hope it will be introduced this very day) may become memorable in your lives, as a season from whence you may date a prosperity and a joy hitherto unknown, how happy soever you may have been in former years : For very imperfect, I am sure, must that domestic happiness be, in which domestic religion has no part.

How shall I congratulate myself, if, in consequence of the representation and address I have now been making to you, I may be the blessed instrument in the divine hand of inspiring you with such a resolution ! What an additional bond will then be added to our friendship, while God continues us together in life ! Yea, what an everlasting bond of a nobler friendship, in a future state ; where it will be, before the throne of God, my joy to have given such admonitions as these, and yours faithfully and obediently to have received them !

But if after all you will not be persuaded, but will hearken to the voice of cowardice, and sloth, and irreligion, in defiance of so many awakening and affecting reasons, you must answer it at large. If your children and servants grow up in the neglect of God, and pierce your heart with those sorrows, which such servants and especially such children, are like to occasion ; if they raise profane and profligate families ; if they prove the curse of their country, as well as the torment and ruin of those most intimately related to them ; the guilt is in part yours, and (I repeat it again) you must answer it to God at the great day, that you have omitted the proper and appointed method of preventing such fatal evils. In the mean time, you must answer the omission to your own conscience ; which probably has not been easy in former days, and in future days may be yet more uneasy. Yes, Sir, the memory of this address may continue, to *torment you*, if it cannot *reform you* : And if you do not forsake the house of God, as well as exclude God and his worship from your own house, you will meet with new wounds ; for new exhortations and admonitions will arm reflection with new reproaches. And in this uncomfortable manner you will probably go on, till what has been the grief and shame of your life, be-
come

come the affliction of your dying bed ; nor dare I presume to assure you, that God will answer your last cries for pardon. The best you can expect under the consciousness of this guilt is to pass trembling to your final doom :—But whatever that doom be, you must acquit your minister who has given you this faithful warning ;* and this letter, transcribed, as it were, in the records of the divine omniscience, shall testify, that a matter of so great importance hath not been wholly neglected, hath not been coldly and slightly urged, by,

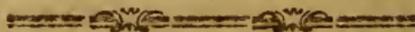
Dear Sir, your affectionate Friend,

and faithful Servant in our common LORD,

P. DODDRIDGE.

NORTHAMPTON, DEC. 20, 1749.

* *If this Letter should be presented by any of my brethren in the ministry to any of their bearers, they may easily see that this expression may be applicable to them, as well as to those who may receive it from my hands.*



A P R A Y E R,

Which may be used as an introduction to a stated course of Family Prayer, where it hath been formerly neglected.

O MOST great and glorious God ! When we consider thee, as the gracious author of all those mercies which we enjoy in our persons and in our family, we have great reason to humble ourselves before thee, that we have not more solemnly acknowledged that goodness, on which we have so long and so comfortably subsisted. Justly mightest thou, O thou almighty Jehovah, have poured out thy fury upon those, that herein have acted as if they knew thee not, even upon this family which hath not called on thy name. But, confessing and lamenting this our sinful and inexcusable neglect, we earnestly entreat thee through Jesus Christ to pardon it, and to accept and strengthen the resolution, which, in dependence on thy grace, we would now form, to be for the future diligent in it, and to do all we can in our respective stations to encourage and support it.

And we entreat thee to bless those religious opportunities,

ties, which as a family we may enjoy. Enable us to hear thy word with due attention: Open our minds to all instruction we receive from it, and bow our hearts to humble obedience.

Be favorably present with us, when we are offering our addresses to thy throne! While we are adoring thine infinite perfections, may we feel a reverent and joyful sense of them upon our hearts! While we confess our sins before thee, may we inwardly abhor them and mourn over them, and be inspired with firm resolutions, that we will never return to them any more, but will guard against every appearance of evil! Excite in our souls earnest desires after those spiritual blessings, which we ask at thine hands! May we intercede for others with fervent charity! May we acknowledge thy mercies with the most lively gratitude, and devote ourselves to thee with full purpose of heart.

And, on the whole, may every one of us find the divine life growing and advancing in our souls by every opportunity of this nature; that we may rejoice in each other, and in thee; and that true religion, being firmly established in our own hearts, may by our means be communicated to others, so far as our influence over them may extend; till at length, having worshipped thee together in such institutions as these in an holy and acceptable manner, we may join that large and blessed family above, which is forever rejoicing in thy presence; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee, O father, and thine holy spirit, be everlasting praises. *Amen.*



A P R A Y E R for a F A M I L Y,

To be used either Morning or Evening, with such variations as may easily be understood by any who are able to read it.

MOST great, eternal, and ever blessed God! We, thine unworthy creatures, desire at this time with all humility to bow ourselves down in thine awful and majestic presence, acknowledging thine infinite Adoration. perfections and glories. [We adore thee, as the first and the last, the greatest and the best of beings;

who art originally and necessarily possessed of knowledge and power, wisdom and righteousness, holiness and truth, mercy and goodness, in degrees which no other being can conceive.] We pay thee our homage, as the author and support of universal nature, the Lord and life of the creation. We acknowledge ourselves thy creatures, whose bodies and souls have been formed by thine hand, and continually maintained and defended by thy care and favor.

Most justly mightest thou therefore, O our heavenly father, have expected from us the most constant Confession. gratitude, duty and obedience: But we humbly confess before thee (and we desire to do it with the deepest humiliation and shame, remorse and sorrow) that we have been very much wanting in those returns; yea, that we have all most grievously offended thee.— [We confess, O thou holy, holy, holy Lord God, that we are polluted and guilty creatures, and so most unworthy and unfit to appear in thy presence.] We acknowledge, O Lord, that we were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mothers conceive us; and that we have, from our very childhood, been renewing our provocations and transgressions in our thoughts, our words and our actions: and all these attended with circumstances of high aggravation. [We own and lament, O thou most gracious sovereign, that we have in numberless instances, negligently, yea and presumptuously broken those wise and holy laws, which thou gavest us for our good; and that by the breach of them we have deserved thy righteous displeasure:] So that we might have been made examples of justice, and spectacles of misery, to all thy rational creation. [We might long since have been cut off from this pleasant abode which thy goodness has assigned us, and from all the comforts thou hast given us in it, and been sent down to everlasting darkness, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.]

But we humbly implore thy pardon and mercy in Christ Jesus our Lord, thine only begotten and well beloved son; who hath by thine appointment, O compassionate father, visited this world of ours, not only to give it the most excellent instructions, confirmed by the most astonishing

Petition for pardon and grace in Christ

tonifying miracles, and recommended by the most amiable example ; but also to redeem us to God by his blood, and to offer up his own life a sacrifice for us : He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification : And as he is now ascended into heaven, there to make a prevailing intercession for all that come unto God thro' him ; we presume to approach thy sacred presence with all becoming regards to him, humbly pleading that atoning blood which he shed on the cross, and that all perfect merit and righteousness of his, by which alone sinners may draw near unto thee with acceptance. And we entreat thee for his sake, and in regard to our relation to him, fully and freely to forgive us all our numberless transgressions, and to be graciously reconciled to us ; yea, to take us, unworthy as we are, into the number of thy dear children. For his sake we also humbly entreat thee, to free us from the power of sin ; as well as from its guilt. Shed down, O thou God of all grace, thine holy spirit upon our hearts in a rich abundance, to inspire us with a hatred of every thing that is displeasing to thee, and to form us to a love of universal goodness, and a desire of making continual improvements in it !

[Fill us, O Lord, we humbly beseech thee, with a fervent love to thy blessed self ! In all things may we be obedient to thine holy precepts, and submissive to thy wise and gracious disposal ! May we be united to Christ by a sincere faith, which shall work by love, and shew itself in keeping his commandments, as well as trusting his atonement, intercession, and grace ! may we be always led by the Holy spirit of God, and cherish his influence on our hearts as the spirit of holiness and of love ! To our brethren of mankind may we be strictly just, and affectionately kind, doing to others as we could reasonably desire they should do to us, and rejoicing in every opportunity of advancing their temporal or spiritual happiness !

While we continue here in this uncertain world, give us, if it be thy blessed will, food to eat, and raiment to put on, health of body, and cheerfulness of mind, and whatever other enjoyments thou seest necessary to make our journey through life comfortable ! But let us not have our portion on earth ! May our hearts be more and more in-
different

different to it, and our views continually raised above it ! [May we learn to govern with strict authority our appetites and passions, and to deny ourselves wherever the precepts of thy gospel require it !] On the whole, may every part of our conduct, in every relation and circumstance of life, adorn religion ; and may the lustre of our good works engage many around us to glorify our Father in heaven ? May we continually remember the shortness of time, and the importance of eternity ; and behave in such a manner, that should we be summoned away ever so suddenly, death may not be a terrible, but a joyful surprize ! Support us, O Lord, in our last extremities, and help us to honor thee by our dying behavior ! Receive our departing spirits to the embraces of thy mercy, and give us a triumphant part in the resurrection of the just !

We pray for the advancement of thy gospel in the world, and for the conversion of *Jews* and *Gentiles* to the Intercession. faith as it is in Jesus. We pray, O Lord, for the progress and improvement of reformation, abroad and at home. We affectionately recommend to thee those who are called to the government of this land, and earnestly pray thee that they may be endued with all the wisdom and grace which are necessary to the faithful discharge of the duties of their respective offices. We entreat thee by thy grace to animate all, who are distinguished by power, riches, or other advantages, that they may improve all their talents for the public good ; And we earnestly pray, that the ministers of thy gospel of every denomination, may, with united affection, ardent zeal, and eminent success, be carrying on the work of the Lord !

May it please thee, O thou God of mercy, to spread among Christians of every profession, a spirit of forbearance, candor, and love ; and to visit all that are in any kind of affliction, whether personal or relative, of mind, body, or estate ! Graciously support them under their sorrows, and in thine own time send them deliverance !

We beseech thee to bless us as a family ; whether we preside over it, or belong to it, as children, sojourners, or servants, may we all be found in a faithful discharge of our duty to thee, and to each other ! May our united and retired devotions be so performed, as to have the happiest influence on our temper and our conduct ! And

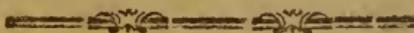
And now, O most gracious and merciful Father, we desire with all our hearts to bless and adore thine holy name, for all thy great and unmerited goodnes to us, and to the whole human race. Thanksgiving.

We praise thee for our creation and preservation, for health and ease, for food and raiment, for liberty and safety, for friends and success; and above all, for our redemption, for the inestimable privilege of approaching to thee through a Mediator, and for the rich and full provision thou hast made in him for the forgiveness of our daily sins, for our receiving all the supplies of grace we stand in need of here, and our enjoying everlasting happiness hereafter. And, under a sense of thy mercies, we desire to devote ourselves to thee as the Lord our God, and renew our covenant with thee through our Lord Jesus Christ; humbly resolving, by the assistance of thy Spirit and grace, to serve thee with all good fidelity unto the end of our lives.

We particularly bless thee for the mercies of the day [or night] past, and would humbly commit ourselves to thy gracious protection and favor this night, [or day] entreating thee to guard us from all evil, and to grant that at our next assembling together we may have reason to unite our praises for the continuance of thy goodness: And may we be perpetually advancing in our preparation for that heavenly world, where we hope to worship thee without any of those imperfections which now attend us; which we ask and hope, through the merits of thy son Christ Jesus, in whom we have righteousness and strength, and in whose name and words we conclude our addresses, calling on thee as our father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name: Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven: Give us this day our daily bread: And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. *Amen!*

N. B. As this prayer may be deliberately read over in about ten minutes, or leaving out what is included in *crotchets* in half a quarter of an hour, I think I may take it for granted, that the affair is brought to a crisis: For, if just after reading this letter, being thus disarmed of every excuse

excuse as to the want of necessary helps, you will not call your family together to attend to it for so small a space of time, or to put up some other petitions with them, I fear it is a sad sign, you will live and die in the neglect of this important duty, and I must leave you to answer it in the presence of God.



FRIENDLY ADVICE.

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

[ADDED BY ANOTHER HAND.]

YOU have a soul, an immortal soul, a soul which must shortly live either with God in heaven or with the devils in hell. Do you ever think of this? Do you *seriously* reflect upon it! For which state is your soul prepared? To which is it hastening? The inquiry is important; for what will it profit you to gain the whole world and lose your soul? O delay not to think of eternity till it be too late! If you should be lost, can you endure everlasting burnings? But you hope to be saved; take care, then, that your hope be well founded. You trust, perhaps, to the mere mercy of God; but remember, that God is just and true, as well as merciful. God has made laws, every one of which you and I have broken. Are you not bound to love God with all your heart: yet do you not love the world? The world is at enmity with God, and the apostle John says, that if any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him, 1 John ii. 15. Are you not living as the generality of the world are living? Then you are in the broad road which leadeth to destruction, Mat. vii. 13, 14. Have you not profaned God's holy name and sabbaths? Have you not indulged anger, envy, lust, and many evil tempers, and affections? Has there been no deceit in your lips? I will suppose that you never omit morning nor evening prayer; but do you ever pray for mercy as fervently as a starving beggar asks for a piece of bread, or a condemned criminal for pardon? I will suppose that you never omit to praise God twice every day for the blessings you receive from him? but do you ever return God thanks for sending his own son to suffer for the ungodly, as heartily as you would thank a man that had saved you from being drowned? That is such praise as you are bound to offer him. Your conscience must plead guilty, and God's word declares that such people cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Gal. v. 19—21. Rev. iii. 16. Mat. xv. 8.—But, perhaps, you think, that they only who live constantly in these sins deserve eternal punishment; there you are much mistaken; God's holy law curses us for one offence, Gal. iii. 10. Think then how many curses must hang over your unhappy and neglected soul! If for one offence

sence you are condemned forever, what an account have you to give! what a dreadful sentence have you to expect! And now let me ask you if you know how to escape this misery? Suppose you are sorry for your sins; will that sorrow procure your pardon? No—would you forgive a man twenty pounds because he was sorry that he owed it to you? Neither will God forgive you merely on account of your sorrow: Judas repented thus, but was not saved. Will sorrow for the past, and amendment of your future life, save you? No—would you forgive a man a large debt, because he did not continue to increase the debt? Neither will God. Whilst, therefore, you hope to be saved by any repentance, amendment or merits of your own, be assured you cannot possibly be saved. God hath said, “the soul that sinneth it shall die;” his justice and his truth are both engaged to enforce this law; so that if God were to forgive you in the way in which you expect forgiveness, he would neither be just nor true. He, however, out of his great mercy, has provided a way, in which he can pardon sinners, without violating either his justice or his truth. Do you know this way? Do you know how mercy and truth can meet together? Stop a while, lay down the book for two or three minutes, and consider with yourself whether you know how your soul is to be saved—Have you lived so many years obnoxious to eternal death, in hourly danger of its execution, and are you ignorant of the only method by which you may escape it? In what a deplorable condition is your poor soul! O think if you die this day, what must be your state forever? If you had died yesterday, where would your soul have been at this instant; would it have been in heaven? How could you have been there, when, so far from having embraced the way of salvation declared in the gospel, you do not even know what it is? Well then, bless God that he has spared your life, and may he enable you to receive the following instruction.

Do you ask what you must do to be saved? To this most important question, I answer, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Read the account of the jailor, Acts xvi. 25.—35. Christ, after his resurrection, said to his disciples, (Mark xvi. 16.)—“He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.”

But what is it to believe in him? It is to believe that Jesus Christ is God equal with the father; that he took our nature upon him in order to obey that law which we had broken, and bear that vengeance which our sins deserved; and that no man, however honest, chaste, sober, and charitable he may be, can be delivered from hell, or enjoy the happiness of heaven, but only on account of Christ’s obedience unto death, which is imputed to all who believe in him.

Do not imagine that your own works will save you; or that you are to be saved, partly by your own works, and partly by the righteousness of Jesus Christ; if you are ever saved, it must be thro’ the merits of **CHRIST ALONE**; for there is no other name under

heaven;

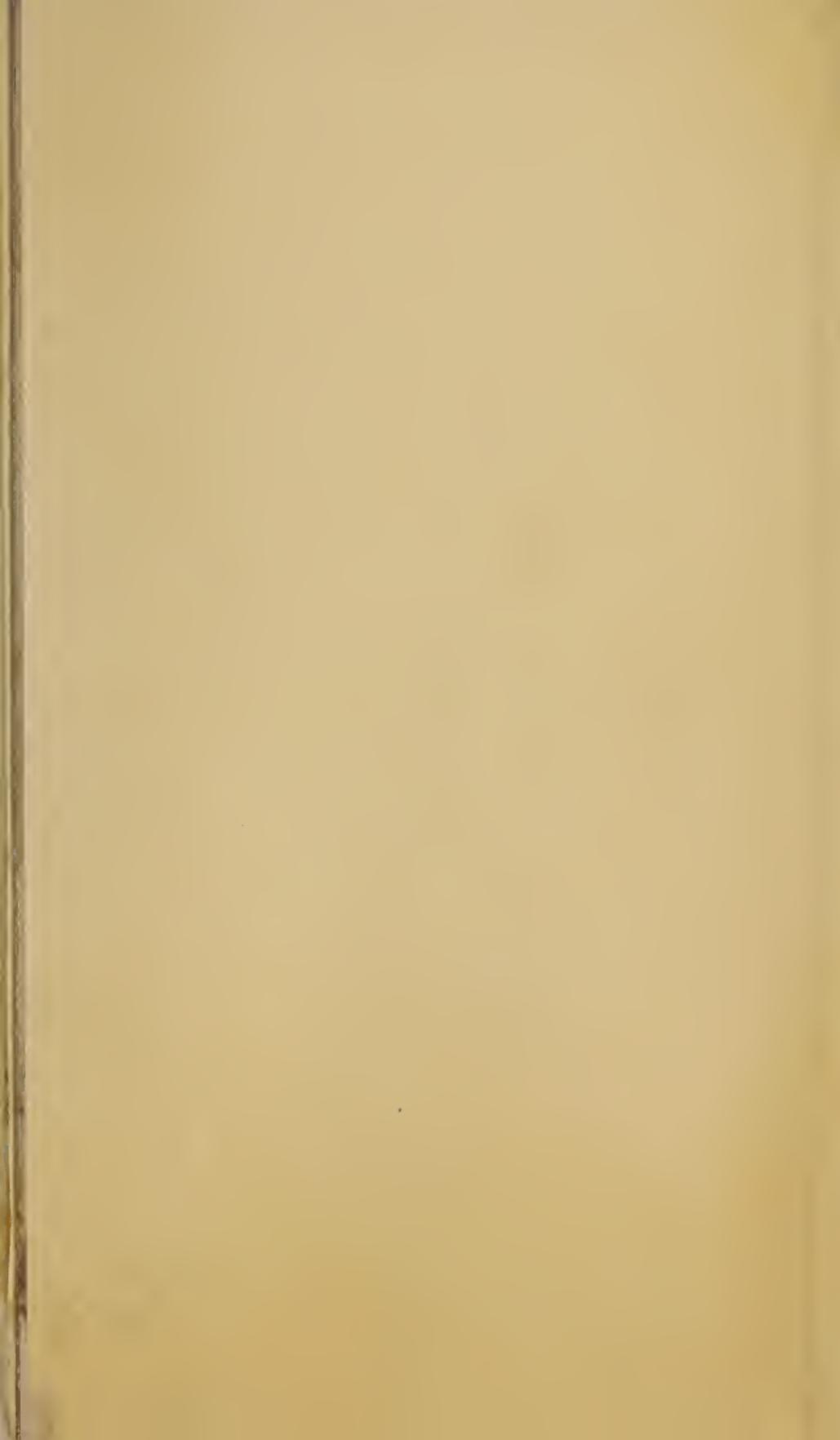
heaven, given among men, whereby we can be saved: And if God enable you to receive it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; you will trust in CHRIST ALONE for the forgiveness of your sins; you will look up to Christ for grace to follow the example of his holy life; in short, you will take Christ as your prophet to teach you, your priest to atone and intercede for you, and your king to rule over you and in you, and you must, you cannot but be saved.

I said above that you cannot be saved by your repentance or amendment. Indeed, repentance is not in your own power. It is the gift of God, 2 Tim. ii. 25. You may dread the consequences of your sins, and on this account be sorry for them, and in a great degree forsake them, and yet be lost. This is the sorrow of the world which worketh death, 2 Cor. vii. 10. Godly sorrow for sin can only proceed from believing what Jesus Christ has done and suffered; then will you look on him whom you have pierced by your iniquities, and mourn, Zech. xii. 10. then will you hate sin, and abhor yourself from a sense of your own vileness. Faith in Christ alone can change your heart, and sanctify your nature, Acts xxvi. 18. If any man, says an inspired apostle, be in Christ, (that is believes in him) he is a new creature, 2 Cor. v. 17. he is born again, John i. 13. Have you been born again? If so, you love those things which you before hated, and hate what you before loved. You have hitherto loved the world, self, and sin; now you love God, his word, commandments, house and ordinances. You have hitherto neglected your soul; now you are ever looking up to heaven, for pardon, grace and glory. Unless all your aims, designs, and pursuits, be changed, that is, "except you be born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God. John iii. 3.

You are not necessarily born again in baptism; baptism is an outward work upon the body; the new birth is an inward work upon the soul. I beseech you, do not rest, but search the scriptures daily, that you may obtain further instruction in the nature of this new birth. When you understand the true state of every man who is born into the world, as set forth, Rom. iii. you will be better able to see the nature and necessity of the new birth, spoken of in John iii.

Attend to the scriptures of truth, as the word of the living God who cannot lie; believe what they testify concerning your lost state by nature, and the character of Jesus, as having finished the work of salvation, and now exalted as a prince and saviour to give repentance and remission of sins, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; in believing you shall assuredly experience a peace and joy which the world cannot give or take away. May God bless these words to the benefit of your soul!

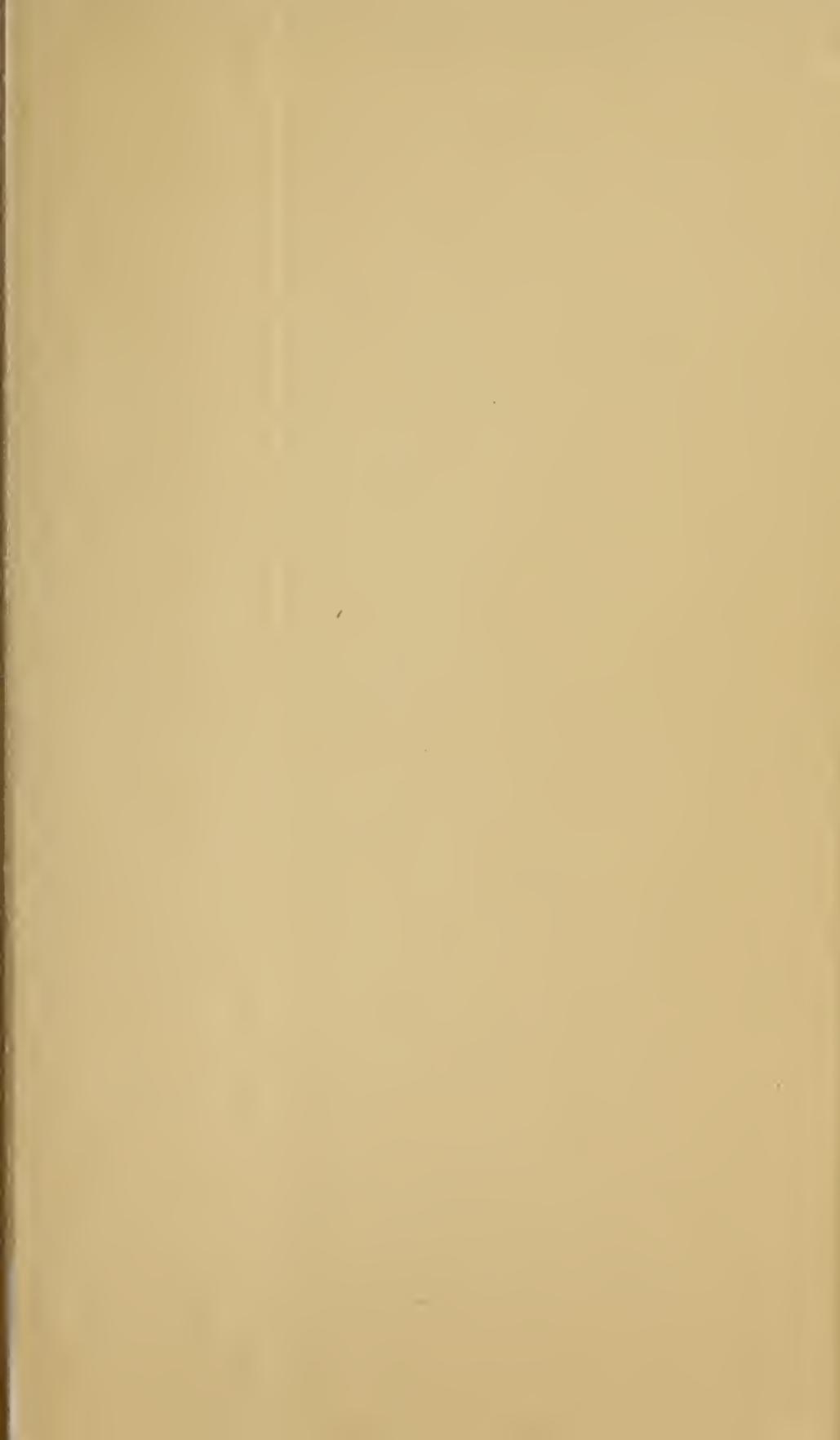
Turn to the passages of scripture to which I have referred you.



Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Oct. 2005

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 017 043 191 1

