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A sacramental directory, or,  
A treatise concerning the





A  
SACRAMENTAL DIRECTORY,  
OR  
A TREATISE  
CONCERNING  
THE SANCTIFICATION  
OF A  
COMMUNION-SABBATH.

CONTAINING  
Directions in order to our preparing for and rightly receiving of, &c. the Sacrament  
of the Lord's Supper.

WITH

A Preface, persuading Ministers to the frequent dispensing of this Ordinance, by  
evangelical preaching, looking for the Spirit's effusion, &c.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

Meditations and Ejaculations proper for Communicants before, in time of, and  
after partaking of this Holy Ordinance, found among the Author's papers.

BY THE  
REV. JOHN WILLISON,  
LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT DUNDEE.

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The Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after  
the due order.—1 CHRON. XV. 13.  
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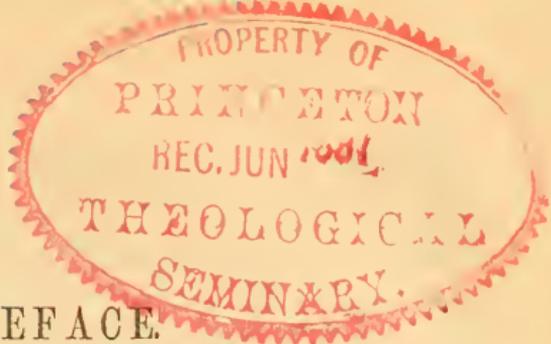
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## PREFACE.

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THIS DIRECTORY being first published in the year 1716, the preface was added to the second edition of it in the year 1726, in which now I have made some additions and alterations. The book itself also is considerably enlarged from what it was at first, namely, in proving and pressing the necessity of communicating in obedience to our dying Lord's command; and it is to be regretted that there should be still so much need for urging it. Ah! that so many christians, who profess respect to Christ as their Saviour, should live in neglect of his dying charge. Perhaps, my friends, upon viewing the hazard of eating unworthily, some of you may think that you are on the safest side to keep away from this ordinance altogether; not considering that the danger of unworthy refusing is fully as great as that of unworthy receiving. For, you see, those who made light of Christ's invitation to the marriage-supper escaped no better than he that came without the wedding-garment; Matt. xxii. 7, 13. Likewise I have adduced many arguments to press frequency in communicating, and have answered objections against it; which, if you duly consider, you must own that frequent partaking is most advantageous and necessary for the exigencies of your souls, and highly acceptable unto God. If there be a "book of remembrance written before the Lord, for them that fear the Lord, think upon his name, and speak often to one another;" Mal. iii. 16; we have no ground to question that there

is a book of remembrance written for them that love their Redeemer and often remember his death and sufferings in the sacrament, which he hath instituted for that end. And as I would have you to come frequently to this solemn ordinance, so I would always have you to come with suitable preparation; and, for your help in this matter, I have composed the following **DIRECTORY**. Special care should be taken that our frequency do not breed formality, but that we be as devout as we are frequent; and, though we communicate ever so frequently, that we trust not to former preparations, but that we examine and prepare ourselves of new for every communion.

But seeing it is in vain to exhort christians to frequent receiving, unless ministers do also frequently administrate this ordinance, and call their people to partake thereof, it may be proper to speak something of the necessity of frequent dispensing of the Lord's supper. All the arguments and reasons which I bring, in the ensuing treatise, to prove the necessity of people's frequent partaking, do as much prove the necessity of ministers' frequent dispensing; seeing, if ministers do not dispense, people cannot partake: but besides these, I shall, with all humility and becoming respect, add some things here, which I hope may be of weight, with myself and other ministers of the gospel, to persuade to frequent dispensing.

I. The inspired apostles of Christ, and other pastors of the church that were contemporary with them, did, in obedience to the intimation which their Lord and master gave them at the first institution, frequently dispense the Lord's supper to the christians in their days; yea, it was their ordinary custom to do it every Lord's day; Acts ii. 46; xx. 7. The inspired penman of that book doth mention the breaking of bread as a constant concomitant to the apostles' doctrines and prayers; Acts ii. 42.

II. In imitation of the apostles, the pastors of the ancient church did keep up the practice of celebrating the Lord's supper every Lord's day through the second, third, fourth, and fifth centuries. To evidence this—if it were called in question—I might cite many passages from the histories of Eusebius and Socrates, and the writings of Justin Martyr, Cyprian, Chrysostom, Hierom, Ambrose, Augustine, and several others, who, on that account, used to call the Lord's day, *dies panis*; but it being a matter of fact so notour, I need not blot paper with quotations to this purpose. Nay, it is plain, from the foresaid ancient writers, that the Lord's supper continued to be dispensed in some places, not only every Lord's day but every day in the week, and that for several centuries; which practice Augustine—who lived in the fifth century—doth not seem so heartily to approve: for, lib. *De Ecclesiasticis*, cap. 52, he hath these words:—“*Quotidie Communionem Eukharistiae nec vitupero nec laudo; omnibus tamen Dominicis diebus communicandum vellem Deo;*” *i. e.* “I neither praise nor dispraise daily receiving of the Lord's supper; but I would have all men to communicate each Lord's day.” Moreover, learned men, who are best acquainted with the antiquities of the christian church, do observe, that infrequency in celebrating this sacrament did creep in together with other antichristian errors and defections into the church of Christ.

III. I shall, therefore, pass the ages of darkness and defection, and come to the two last centuries of the church, and take a short view of the practice of some Protestant churches since our Reformation from Popery. I grant, the Lord's supper hath not been celebrated so often since that time, as in the first ages of the church. We have the reason pointed at in a book which represents the practice of the church of Geneva, particularly in celebrating the sacrament of the Lord's supper, which was four

times in the year. The book is entitled, "Laws and Statutes of Geneva anent Ecclesiastic Discipline," translated out of the French, and printed, London, anno 1643; p. 7, we have these words:—"For as the supper hath been instituted by our Saviour Jesus Christ, to be frequented and used; and also it hath been observed in the primitive christian church, until such time as the devil hath turned all upside down, setting up the mass instead thereof, which fault ought to be corrected, and also the rare celebrating thereof: We have determined and ordained that it shall be administered four times a-year."

Again, let us look into the practice of the reformed churches of France, whilst liberty continued there. In the acts of the national synod, held at Charenton, printed, London, anno 1644, cap. art. 14, we have these words:—"Although it hath been a custom in the most of the churches in those parts, to celebrate the holy communion only four times every year; yet it is much wished and desired that it might be used more frequently."

As for the reformed churches in the United Provinces, or the Dutch churches, we see what was their practice, in "*Corpus Disciplinæ*" published by the ministers and elders of the Dutch congregation in London, anno 1645, cap. 3, sect. 2, art. 3. "It is appointed that the Lord's supper be administered every two months,—i. e. six times a-year,—wherein the churches under persecution are left to their liberty."

As for the churches in New England, we have an account of their practice,—"*Brief narration of the Practice of the Churches in New England*," printed, London, anno 1651, p. 8. "As for the administration of the Lord's supper, because Christ desires us to do it often, we commonly have it monthly, though we tie not ourselves to any set time, but alter it as often as reason appears."

Let us come to the Church of Scotland, and consider

the ancient practices of our worthy reformers in this matter. And in the first place, if we look to the old Scots liturgy, or the “Book of Common Order,” which was written by John Knox, first for the order of the English kirk at Geneva, whereof he was minister, and approved by John Calvin, printed at Geneva, anno 1556, and afterwards received and used by the Reformed Kirk of Scotland; we will find, in the 10th chapter, concerning the manner of the administration of the Lord’s supper, these words:—“The day when the Lord’s supper is ministered, which is commonly used once a-month, or so oft as the congregation shall think expedient, the minister useth to say as followeth,” &c. From which it appears that the first practice of our reformers, after the Reformation of this nation from Popery, was, to administer the Lord’s supper commonly once a-month. Afterwards, it seemeth, they found that the people did not so generally fall in with the foresaid order for monthly sacraments as could be wished; and therefore, in the General Assembly which was held at Edinburgh in December, 1562, they thought fit to condescend to a less frequent administration of this ordinance; for, in their act thereanent, as recorded by Calderwood in his History, p. 816, we have these words:—“It is ordained, that the communion be four times ministered in the year within burgh-towns, and twice in country parishes.”

Here, indeed, there is a distinction made betwixt the frequency of burghs and country parishes; but in the first book of discipline, which was compiled by several of our famous reformers, by way of address to the civil government, and much about the same time approved and established both by church and state, we find four times in the year condescended upon for the sacrament, without any distinction of congregations; cap. ii. par. 3. They tell us, indeed, that the order of Geneva, concerning the ministration of the sacraments, was at that time

used in some of their churches, *i. e.* the “Book of Common Order” forecited, which declareth for monthly sacraments; but in cap. xi. par. 5, they give their judgment for quarterly communions, in these words:—“Four times in the year we think sufficient to the administration of the Lord’s table, which we desire to be distincted, that the superstition of times may be avoided so far as may be: For our honours are not ignorant how superstitiously the people run to that action at Pasch, even as if the time gave virtue to the sacrament; and how the rest of the whole year they are careless and negligent, as if it appertained not to them but at that time only: We think therefore most expedient, that the first Sunday of March be appointed for one time to that service; the first Sunday of June for another; the first Sunday of September for the third; the first Sunday of December for the fourth. We do not deny but any several kirk, for reasonable causes, may change the time, and may minister oftener; but we study to repress superstition.”

From all which we may see what it was that came to be the more general, settled, and declared mind of the Church of Scotland after the Reformation, concerning the frequency of the Lord’s supper, viz. that it should be at least celebrated once in the quarter, allowing liberty to any minister or congregation to administer it oftener, if they thought fit. Some, perhaps, may doubt if it was altogether right in our reformers to reduce the primitive practice of celebrating the Lord’s supper once a-week to once a-month, and afterwards to once in the quarter; but we are to suppose that they had weighty reasons for it at that time. But there are many now in the mind that we of this age cannot so well account for reducing the ancient practice of this church in administering this sacrament once in the quarter to once in the year. Is not this a lamentable deviating from the sentiments and practice of our great and zealous reformers? What can our unfre-

quency in celebrating this Christ-memorating ordinance be imputed to so much as a sad decay of love to a crucified Jesus? Alas! that love to our unchangeably lovely Redeemer should cool by length of time. We sadly verify what he foretold of the latter days; Matt. xxiv. 12, "Iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold." But, oh! are not Christ's benefits as great as ever? his blood as fresh and efficacious as ever? Why then should not christians' love be as warm as ever? Oh, that the christians of this age were sensible from whence they are fallen! how far we have departed from the zeal of our ancestors, and left our first love to a crucified Christ: so that all ranks were concerned to revive and recover it, in and by the use of means which God hath appointed for that end; that by degrees we might again attain to our reformers' frequency of celebrating this Christ-exalting and love-inflaming ordinance, and so change our annual to quarterly communions! I know it is affecting to some hearty well-wishers to the prosperity and credit of the Church of Scotland, to think that a church so excellently well constituted, and which had attained to a greater pitch of reformation in other things than her neighbours, should yet lie behind them in this point.

I acknowledge, that matters were so put out of order in this church, by reason of the long oppression she groaned under, and the great defections of many, before the late happy Revolution, that ministers in several places were afraid to dispense this sealing ordinance to their flocks for some time; and finding themselves very much straitened betwixt the indisposition of their people and the hazard of a total omission, they came to an unfrequent celebration of this ordinance, perhaps but once in two or three years, till this unfrequency became customary and general. Serious christians, indeed, flocked into those places where it was dispensed, whereby their loss at home was in some measure repaired.

But the General Assembly, being sensible of the evil of this unfrequency, began to take notice of it, and make several excellent acts for the more frequent celebration of the Lord's supper, as in the years 1701, 1710, 1712, and 1724. Though these acts have not hitherto had their full effect, yet they have been so far effectual as to bring ministers generally to administrate this ordinance in their congregations at least once in the year. I know several worthy ministers have some years ago given a most laudable example to their brethren, in celebrating the Lord's supper in their congregations twice a-year; though, indeed, it is to be regretted that so few hitherto have copied after it.

The authority and judgment of the great Calvin—whom the Church of Scotland doth most deservedly regard and esteem—concerning annual and frequent communicating, hath very great weight with me: we have it in his *Institutiones*, lib. 4, cap. xvii, par. 46, *mihi, fol. 507*. After he had showed what was the practice of the ancient church in purest times, he hath these words:—“*Et sane hæc consuetudo quæ semel quotannis communicare jubet, certissimum est diaboli inventum, cujus cunquo tandem ministeriæ invecata fuerit. Quum certa lex de una quotannis communicatione posita est qua factum est, ut fere omnes quum semel communicaverunt, quasi in reliquum anni tempus pulchre defuncti, in utramque aurem securi dormiant. Longe aliter factum oportuit: Singulis ad minimum hebdomadibus, proponenda erat Christianorum cætui mensa Domini declarendæ promissiones quæ nos in ea spiritualiter pascerent; nullus quidem necessitate cogendus, sed cohortandi omnes et stimulandi; objurgandus etiam ignavorum torpor;*” *i. e.* “And indeed this custom which commands to communicate once only in the year, is most certainly the invention of the devil, whoever was instrumental to introduce it. When there was a law made for communicating once in the year, it came to pass

that almost all, when they had once communicated, turned slothful, and slept securely throughout the rest of the year. But it should have been far otherwise: every week at least the Lord's table should have been set before the assembly of christians, and the promises therein set forth, upon which we shall feed spiritually; no man, indeed, should be compelled to come by force, but all should be exhorted and excited, and the sloth of the negligent reprov'd." And upon the margin we have these words:— "*Papistica autem consuetudo quotannis semel communicare jubens, execrandum est inventum;*" *i. e.* "The Popish custom, which enjoins men to communicate once a-year, is a cursed invention." And certainly the godly and judicious Calvin's observation is most just; for when we call our people to come to the Lord's table but once in the year, and there believingly to remember a crucified Christ for the remission of their sins, the most part are tempted to think, when they have done, that their main work is over for that year, and so fall asleep, and turn easy and secure through the rest of the year; upon which account he calls this Popish custom a "cursed invention," and an "invention of the devil." It is hoped that the Church of Scotland, which so much abhors Popery and all Popish customs, will at length throw out this annual communicating, as well as they have done others.

## OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

*Objec. 1.* By divine appointment the passover was celebrated but once in the year; and now the Lord's supper is come in room of the passover.

*Ans. 1st.* It must be remembered, that as the passover served to signify and prefigure Christ's death and sufferings to the Jews, and their spiritual redemption thereby; so it was instituted to preserve the memorial of their temporal freedom and deliverance from the bondage of

Egypt, which God wrought for them on the fourteenth of the first month; Exod. xii. 17, 18. And therefore he appointed them to keep the passover annually upon that day of the month. But the Lord hath fixed no certain day of the year for the Lord's supper, under the New Testament times, but only in general hath enjoined a frequent celebration of it.

*2dly.* The Jews did not need a very frequent celebration of the passover, to put them in mind of the coming, death, and sufferings of the Messiah; seeing, besides the passover, they had by divine appointment many other lively types, figures, and institutions, which were designed for that very same end, such as the sacrifices of slain beasts, which they frequently witnessed in the temple; yea, every day they had, both morning and evening, a lamb killed in the temple, its blood poured out, and its flesh burnt on the altar, for a sacrifice to God for their sins; which did, in a most eminent and lively manner, represent to them the death, bloodshed, sufferings, and bitter agonies of Christ, the great sacrifice for the sins of the world, just in the same manner as the passover did; only it was not eaten in every house, as that was. So that we see a plain reason why the Jews did not stand in need of such a frequent celebration of the passover to be a remembrance of Christ under the law, as we do of the Lord's supper under the New Testament times, when we have no other ordinance instituted to keep up the remembrance of Christ's death and sufferings, but this alone; and therefore it ought much more frequently to be celebrated than the Jewish passover was.

*3dly.* Supposing the Jews had no other ordinance but the passover, to keep up the remembrance of the Messiah that was to come; yet, seeing our Messiah hath now come, and actually sacrificed himself upon the cross for our redemption, hath fully completed the work, and made far more bright displays of his love and glory to us chris-

tians, than he did to the Jews under the law, and hath instituted the Lord's supper for a memorial of what he hath done and suffered, limiting us to no time, but enjoining frequency in the use of it—I say, seeing the case is so with us, we are under many strong ties to be more zealous and frequent in celebrating the memorials of Christ's love to us in the Lord's supper, than the Jews were to do it in the passover. The apostles and primitive christians were so sensible of this, that they thought themselves bound to remember Christ crucified once a-week in their gospel-passover; which the Jews did but once a-year in theirs. From all which we see no argument can be brought, from the Jews' annual custom in celebrating the passover, to justify annual communions.

*Objec. 2.* To administrate the Lord's supper frequently, would tend to diminish the respect and reverence which is due to it, and at length bring it into contempt among the people.

*Ans. 1st.* If we make conscience of our duty, our Lord will see to the credit of his own ordinance.

*2dly.* Will any say that the apostles and primitive pastors brought his ordinance into contempt, by celebrating of it every Lord's day? Did they not esteem and prize it much higher than we who celebrate it but once a-year? And why should we think that the administering of the Lord's supper twice, thrice, or four times in the year, would at all derogate from the credit of it?

*3dly.* Were this reason valid against the frequent dispensing of this ordinance, why not against other ordinances also? And so we should but seldom preach or read the scriptures in the audience of the people; we should seldom pray or sing psalms with our flock; lest we contribute to lessen the esteem and reverence due to these ordinances, by the frequent use of them.

*4thly.* Are there not many serious exercised christians

who communicate almost every Sabbath during the summer season, when they can have the occasion in neighbouring congregations, who can tell us, that they reap spiritual advantage by so doing; that their esteem of the ordinance is much increased; and that they do not at all find that their frequent partaking tends to bring this solemn institution into contempt with them? And why should it be thought that their communicating twice, or even four times a-year in their own congregations, at a convenient distance would produce that bad effect? No: I am perswaded it would not; for the oftener that this sacrament is worthily received, instead of diminishing our respect, it increaseth our reverence of God, and our affection to our Saviour. I am sure, a conscientious owning of God's authority is a greater sign of holy reverence, than the neglect of his institutions.

*5thly.* We may, perhaps, think to keep up the credit of this solemn ordinance, among those who are not the better sort, by seldom dispensing it; but it should be minded, that it is not true esteem that ariseth merely from the rarity of a thing, but that which springeth from knowledge of its intrinsic worth, and experience of its usefulness; and those people who have no heart-acquaintance with precious Christ, and the ends, uses, and success of his ordinances, will never have a due respect unto them. Let us by all means recommend to such persons, the worth and excellency of Christ, show them their daily need of him, and his daily usefulness to them, and press their making suitable preparations, by searching themselves, and closing with him, before they be admitted to partake; and then we need not much fear that frequency would detract from the reputation of this ordinance: for frequent experience of its usefulness would beget the highest esteem of it, and sharpen the appetites of people for it. As he prayeth best, and with most delight, that prayeth oftenest; so a worthy communicant increaseth

in the love of God, and of religion, the oftener he receives; the more acquaintance and communion he attains to with Jesus Christ in this ordinance, he values it still more. I cannot think this blessed sacrament will be undervalued by frequent repetitions, but by persons most unworthy, who ought not to be much regarded; for no true-hearted Israelite would loathe this heavenly manna, because it is common, and afforded us in plenty.

*Lastly.* And with all due submission to others, I do strongly incline to have a great regard to the judgment of the famous Mr. Calvin, and many learned and godly divines, who are so far from thinking that annual communicating is a mean to preserve the esteem of this ordinance, and prevent people's carelessness and formality in receiving, that they rather judge it a device of Satan to cherish sloth and security in sin, to stifle true christian love, to discourage endeavours after serious godliness, and to obstruct very much the life and continued exercise of religion.

*Objec. 3.* We see how much the other sacrament, baptism, is contemned, because of its frequent repetition; and so might it also fare with this.

*Ans. 1st.* If the people's contempt of sacraments be a good argument against the frequency of one sacrament, it is as good against the frequency of another; and so we ought to set up for the administration of baptism but once in the year to preserve the esteem and solemnity of it, as much as we do for that of the other sacrament. Are they not both precious institutions of the same Lord?—both seals of the same covenant? Why then should we put the one at so great a distance from the other, and seek to raise its honour so much above the other?

*2dly.* Though baptism be frequently administrate, yet the Lord doth still keep up the reputation of this ordinance, so that no man is easy to be excluded from it: yea, people generally have stronger impressions of the

necessity of this sacrament than of the other, notwithstanding of all our endeavours to maintain the credit of the other more than this; which may teach us, that we ought still to go in the way of our duty, and leave it to God to see to the credit of his own institutions.

*3dly.* It is not so much because of the frequent administration of baptism, that people do slight it, as because they, not being to partake of it themselves, do commonly apprehend they are no more but spectators—though, indeed, there is much more incumbent on them:—but were they bound to partake as frequently of this sacrament as of the Lord's supper, and that under the pain of Christ's highest displeasure, if they either did neglect it, or perform it slightly, all sober people would reckon themselves obliged to attend it, when they had the opportunity of doing it, and that with some awe and fear too.

*Objec.* 4. There is more slightness and formality amongst the communicants in those churches where the Lord's supper is frequently dispensed, than where it is seldom.

*Ans.* *1st.* This is not generally true: for as there may be much slightness and formality in some places where it is but seldom dispensed, so there is much devotion and seriousness in other places where it is frequently administered.

*2dly.* The people's slightness in receiving may proceed very much from the pastor's slightness in administering. Were due pains taken to keep back the unworthy; to inform people of the greatness of the work; to warn them of the danger of unworthy receiving; to observe fast, preparation, and thanksgiving days; to choose suitable texts, preach awakening doctrine, make particular application, and to fence the Lord's table with awful solemnity; perhaps there would not be such slightness amongst the people in receiving.

*Objec. 5.* It will not be easy to get different texts and subjects suitable to such frequent communions.

*Ans.* A crucified Jesus is a subject most suitable, and one so large and copious as cannot be exhausted. The apostle, while he preached at Corinth, “determined to know nothing” among that people “but Christ, and him crucified;” 1 Cor. ii. 2. He resolved to make this the great and constant subject of his sermons; and can any think it too much to preach upon them twice, thrice, or four times a-year?

Certainly a crucified Jesus is the spring and scope, the matter and end of all gospel-preaching. Every thing we say is reducible to him; and the design of all is to exalt him, who is the great founder of our religion, and the foundation of all our hopes: when we depart from sins and vices, we do it mainly because they were the cause of Christ’s sufferings, and do tend to crucify him afresh: when we exhort to duty, we do it chiefly from this topic, that we should live to him that died for us; and that the love of Christ should constrain us to follow his pattern and obey his precepts. We press duties as a necessary fruit of faith in Christ, and of love to him; and we teach, that they are only to be performed by his strength and accepted through his merits. Nay, Christ crucified is the scope and substance of the whole bible; “For to him gave all the prophets witness;” Acts x. 43.

A crucified Christ is a subject so pleasant and so fertile, that we cannot be strained to preach directly thereupon many times a-year, if we take a view of these things in him, viz. the infinite glory and dignity of his person,—the perfections of God that shine on him,—the freeness and greatness of his love,—his eternal undertaking,—his glorious suretyship,—his wonderful incarnation,—his threefold office,—the metaphors and types whereby Christ and his benefits are represented,—his manifold sweet relations to his people,—his mediatory fulness,—his deep

effectual means for it ; for, in this solemn ordinance, we have man's fall and disease, together with his recovery and remedy, set forth to the life ; and that in such a way as makes impression on the outward senses, so that the eye may affect the heart.

Would we have sin and vice kept under constant rebukes amongst our people, let us keep their eyes always fixed upon the bleeding wounds of a crucified Jesus ; would we have them carefully to maintain family religion, secret duties, and a holy, tender walk, let us constrain them to it, by the love of a dying Jesus frequently set before their eyes in this ordinance. This, through the divine blessing, would' be an excellent mean and help to carry about with us always the dying of the Lord Jesus, and to make the print of his wounds keep a lasting impression on our hearts.

If we duly ponder these things, I hope it will appear that the advantage of the frequent celebration of the Lord's supper will abundantly recompense our small toil and pains.

*Objec. 7.* The unworthiness of our people is a great discouragement to the frequent celebration of the Lord's supper amongst them ; we have but few that are in any measure fit to be admitted to it.

*Ans. 1st.* If this reason were valid, it would conclude as strongly against the dispensing of this ordinance at all, as against the frequency of it ; and we know, an argument that would prove too much proves nothing.

*2dly.* I know many are unworthy, but all are not alike ; and the unfitness of many cannot excuse us from administrating to those that are in some measure fit. As it is a sin for parents to keep back from their children their due and necessary food, because of some unworthy persons that are in the family ; so it is a sin for pastors to withhold this soul-nourishing meal from those of their people that have a right to it ; for though not a few do

slight or abuse it, yet there are others hungry, and needful of it; and these ought not to be denied the advantage of frequent partaking, for the fault of their neighbours.

It is the saying of one, "That we find fault upon good ground with the Papists for denying one of the elements to the people: and how can we justify those that deny both elements to their people at least for a long time?"

*3dly.* Though the number of our communicants be small, that should not discourage us from our duty; for the divine blessing is not tied to numbers. God did own the institution of the passover, though there were but few that ate it together; and our blessed Saviour had but a small number that did partake with him at the first communion; but, for our encouragement in that case, he graciously promiseth, that, where two or three are met together in his name, he will own them with his presence and blessing.

*Objec. 8.* To administer this sacrament so frequently as before-mentioned, would require considerable expenses to furnish communion-elements, and otherwise; and we have no sufficient fund for that charge.

*Ans. 1st.* Though we should be put to more charge this way than formerly, I hope no faithful minister will say, that this consideration should be laid in balance with the glory of God and good of souls; we should all be willing to spend and be spent for Christ; and whatever we expend of our private goods this way, is surely lent to the Lord, who will repay it.

*2dly.* The law provides a fund in every parish for such expenses; and where it is not settled, our judges are very favourable to the church, and give a liberal allowance to such ministers as do apply for it: and no doubt, if the sacrament were more frequently celebrated they would not grudge to augment the fund when it is not sufficient.

*3dly.* If a sufficient fund cannot be had otherwise, let collections be made in parishes for defraying this charge; as Eusebius tells us was done by the primitive christians in this case; and surely there is no honest-hearted christian or communicant but would contribute liberally for that effect, rather than the Lord's work should be hindered.

*Lastly.* We may see, from the old Acts of Assembly, that the General Assembly, 1638, had this very objection under their consideration, and declared, that the charges should rather be paid out of that day's collection, than that the congregation want the more frequent use of the sacrament. But I hope the General Assemblies of this church will in due time take this and other objections under further consideration, and provide effectual answers and remedies thereto, so that this solemn ordinance shall be more frequently celebrated amongst us than it is at present; and I wish all may pray fervently, that, together with the foresaid laudable practice, something of the warm love and zeal of the ancient christians may be happily revived in our land.

Before I conclude this preface, there is another thing I would advertise the reader, that, in the following treatise, I have endeavoured to keep by the form of sound words in use amongst us, avoiding both the extremes of Antinomianism and Legalism, seeing the principles of this church do guide us equally to evite both the one and the other. And it must be acknowledged that it is not easy to shun extremes, for people commonly, when their zeal is excited against one extreme, are in great hazard of sliding insensibly into the other, according to the old proverb, "*Dum vitant stulti vitia, in contraria currunt,*" *i. e.*, "Fools, in shunning some faults, at times run into others." And indeed, not only fools, but some of the greatest and wisest of men, have erred in this respect. It was Mr. Baxter's zeal and great

keenness against Antinomianism that drove him to some rash and dangerous assertions on the other side. And this should be a warning to us always to take heed to ourselves, for we are still in hazard this way, and especially when things come to warm disputations with us.

It is possible, that some who preach the gospel may pick out some of the glorious truths thereof; such as, The freedom of grace in the salvation of sinners,—our justification by the righteousness of Jesus Christ as our surety,—the excellency of faith in Christ,—the privilege of the covenant, and blessings of Christ's purchase; and may make these truths almost the only subject of their preaching; and yet perhaps manage them so unhappily, as not to lead people to study regeneration of heart, holiness of life, abhorrence of sin, tenderness of walk, and the conscientious practice of all commanded duties. And, surely, in this way of doing, they in a great measure miss the design of our Saviour's incarnation, and the end of the doctrine of grace, which is, "to destroy the works of the devil," and to teach men to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

On the one hand, it is as possible that others may insist very much in enforcing morality, and make very fine rational harangues of its excellency; and yet make little use of gospel motives to press it, and be at little pains to show the gospel-principles from whence it must proceed. Likewise, they may preach much against vice and immorality, and warn people of the evil of it; and yet take up but little time to teach them concerning the root and spring of vice,—viz., our fall in Adam, and the corruption of our natures,—and the necessity of an inward change by a work of regeneration, for healing of the inward disease and plague of the heart. Also, they may press holy duties very much, and yet make little mention of the true fountain and source of holiness,—viz., our union with Christ by faith, and the renewing of the Holy

Ghost,—and speak little of the necessity of Christ's blood to wash our performances. Now, both these extremes, in the way of preaching, are equally to be avoided.

It is a prevailing conceit among many, that there is no more requisite to make a man a christian than morality, or a blameless walk before men. Morality, indeed, is a very comely thing, and most necessary both to beautify and preserve human societies; and, therefore, it is to be wished there were much more of it in the world than we see there is; and every preacher of the gospel ought strongly to recommend the practice of it; but yet it is certain that morality is not sufficient to make a man a christian, seeing it hath been found in heathens, and those that were ignorant of Christ and the way of salvation through faith in him.

Christianity, indeed, doth enforce morality and moral virtues by the strongest motives and arguments; but, in the meantime, it teacheth us, that these virtues are never good and acceptable to God, until they be the fruit of the Spirit's operation, and spring from their proper principles, faith in Christ and love to him; they must be grafted in Christ as their root, have a new principle to quicken them, and a new end to direct them, before moral virtues can commence christian graces. Unregenerate morality will never please God; let men advance it ever so far, yet, till the heart be renewed, it is still but nature at best; and the fruit is always sour that grows not upon the root, Christ; it can never be acceptable to God, while Christ's strength and Spirit is not sought and employed in it, nor his righteousness to cover it. So that there is a great difference betwixt morality and gospel holiness.

A moral man, then, though he profess himself a christian, yet he really is not so, if he lives not as one that looks for and receives daily influences from Christ; if he hath not Christ in his undertakings, duties, and affec-

tions, and be not saying, "How empty and vain are all my duties without Christ! yea, though I could do ever so much, I should be utterly lost and undone, if it were not for Christ, my surety, and his righteousness. I count all but loss and dung to be found in him."

This church, a good many years ago, manifested much zeal against Antinomianism, and doctrines which seemed to tend that way: and surely it is incumbent upon all churches to watch and take care that the obligation of christians to holiness and good works, and to all kind of duties, both of the first and second table, should never be in the least weakened by preachers of the gospel, under the specious pretext of exalting free grace; seeing free grace and strict holiness do nobly consist together.

Again, on the other hand, it should equally be the church's concern to labour to prevent the spreading of Legalism, or the preaching of morality, and the practice of duties, in a legal strain; that is, in a way tending to the neglect of Christ and his righteousness, or to the disparagement of the doctrine of free grace. It was the flagrant reports of the abounding of that sort of moral preaching, especially among younger clergymen, that occasioned the bringing in an overture to the General Assembly, 1726, for an act to discourage the same, and to direct to the right method of preaching Christ, and how to preach morality in an evangelical strain. But though endeavours were used by severals to get this overture turned into an act, it was hindered by some leading men, lest it should reflect upon the characters of some preachers to whom they had respect; so that an act of this kind could never be got brought a-bearing until the Assembly 1736; and then those who were most zealous to promote the act, in order to get it the more unanimously agreed to, were fain to drop out of its preamble the true cause of making it, namely, the

abounding of legal preaching in the land, or of a wrong strain of preaching the gospel. But, notwithstanding of this, the act itself is of excellent use, if duly regarded and put in execution: and without this, the best acts in the world signify nothing. O that I could persuade all ministers and preachers of the gospel to consider and observe the foresaid acts! It would surely fare the better both with themselves and their hearers; and if no more be done for that purpose, let me at least use some means to get the act made known to them, by transcribing it in this place.

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## ACTS CONCERNING PREACHING.

EDINBURGH, *May* 21, 1736. Sess. 8.

“THE General Assembly, being moved with zeal for the honour of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, especially at a time when the Christian revelation is openly impugned, and infidelity, Deism, and other errors do so much prevail: They do hereby recommend to all ministers and preachers, seriously to consider and observe the Directory of this church concerning the preaching of the word, which is approved by the General Assembly, 1645; and, in particular, that they be careful to warn their hearers against any thing tending to Atheism, Deism, Arianism, Socinianism, Arminianism, Bourigianism, Popery, Superstition, Antinomianism, or any other errors; and that in their sermons they insist frequently upon the truth, necessity, and excellency of supernatural revelation, the Supreme Deity of the Son and Holy Ghost, as well as of the Father; together with the oneness of the Godhead, our sinful and lost estate by nature, the necessity of supernatural grace, and of faith in the righteousness of Christ, without which the best works

cannot please God; and that they make it the great scope of their sermons, to lead sinners from a covenant of works to a covenant of grace for life and salvation, and from sin and self to precious Christ. And the General Assembly recommend to all who preach the gospel, when they handle the doctrines of God's redeeming love, and of his free grace in the justification and salvation of sinners, the blessings of the Redeemer's purchase, and privileges of the new and better covenant, to study to manage these subjects so as to lead their hearers into an abhorrence of sin, the love of God and our neighbours, and the practice of universal holiness; seeing it is one great end of the gospel to destroy the works of the devil, and to teach men to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. Upon which account, it is incumbent on all who preach the gospel, to insist, not only upon the necessity and excellency of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, but also upon the necessity of repentance for sin, and reformation from it; and to press the practice of all moral duties, both with respect to the first and second table of the law, as indispensably necessary, in obedience to God's command, to testify our gratitude to him, to evidence the sincerity of our faith, and for the benefit of human society, the adorning the profession of religion, and making us meet for eternal life, seeing, without holiness no man can see the Lord.

“And the Assembly do seriously recommend to all ministers and preachers of the gospel, that, in pressing moral duties, or obedience to the law, they show the nature and excellency of gospel-holiness, and enforce conformity to the moral law, both in heart and life, not from the principles of reason only, but also, and more especially of revelation. And, in order to attain thereto, it is necessary to show men the corruption and depravity of human nature by their fall in Adam, their natural impotence for, and aversion to, what is spiritually

good, and to lead them to the true and only source of all grace and holiness, viz., Union with Christ, by the Holy Spirit's working faith in us and renewing us more and more after the image of God; and to let their hearers know that they must first be grafted unto Christ as their root, before their fruit can be savoury unto God, that they must have a new principle to animate, and a new end to direct them, before their actions become gracious and acceptable in the sight of God; and that they teach them the necessity of living by faith on the Son of God, in a constant looking to and dependence upon him, as the great Author of all gracious influences, for the performance of every duty; and withal, that, after the best performances and attainments, they must count them but loss and dung in point of justification before God; and to make it their great desire only to be found in Christ and his righteousness. And that ministers, in the application of their sermons, do endeavour rightly to divide the word of truth, speaking distinctly to such various cases of the converted and unconverted, as arise natively from the subjects they have been handling; and that, in the whole of their discourses, they take care to suit themselves to the capacity of their hearers, as to matter, method, and expression, and to the prevailing sins of the time and place, with all prudent and zealous freedom and plainness; as also, that they make gospel-subjects their main theme and study, and press with all earnestness the practice of moral duties in a gospel manner; and that they forbear delivering any thing in public, that may tend more to amusement than to edification; and beware of bringing into their sermons and public discourses matters of doubtful disputation, which tend to gender strife rather than to promote the edification of christians. And the Assembly exhort all to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

“And finally, the General Assembly recommend to

all professors of divinity, to use their best endeavours to have the students under their care well acquainted with the true method of preaching the gospel, as above directed; and that presbyteries, at their privy censures, inquire concerning the observation of this act."

Now, blessed be the Lord that there is such a public act in record, as a standing witness for Christ in the midst of all our backslidings and defections: may God put in the hearts of all who preach the gospel among us, to observe the directions of it; that the scope and tendency of their sermons may still be to exalt Christ, and raise him above all in the business of our salvation; to press the doctrine of regeneration and the new birth; to preach up justification by Christ's righteousness alone, apprehended by faith, and the necessity of the inward operations of the Holy Spirit, which Christ hath purchased and promised, for working that faith in us, and for bringing about the gracious change of the new birth, and carrying on a work of sanctification in us, and for enabling us to live the spiritual life; This being the scope of the act, happy it were for the land if it were also the main scope of our sermons. But, after all, if professors of divinity do not their parts in training up students according to it, and if presbyteries do not theirs in calling to account those who do not observe the act, the church will not reap much benefit by it, as I fear she hath not yet done; for if she had, what meaneth the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen, which we still hear? what means the murmuring of serious christians from several corners for want of the proper food of their souls? what mean the continued complaints of the growth of Deism and infidelity through the land? It is a just observe, that when moral preaching in a Christless way doth much abound, it makes way for the increase of Deism and infidelity: for when persons do long hear moral ser-

mons, and little of Christ in them, or the peculiar doctrines of christianity, they are tempted to think there is but little difference between them and the discourses of Seneca and other heathen moralists; and therefore, that they may be safe enough, and get to heaven, without any christianity at all; and that every moral man is a good enough christian.

O! this is a fundamental defection of most heinous guilt; it is a God-provoking and unchurching evil, which all the ministers and lovers of Christ should be deeply concerned about; for if we suffer ourselves and others to fall from our regard and love to glorious Christ, neglect to exalt him in our sermons, and to preach salvation to men only through Christ's suretiship and sacrifice, and to tell the world, and inculcate it daily upon them, that this, and this only, is the way for them to obtain pardon, peace, grace, glory, and every good thing; I say, if we turn careless and negligent in what so nearly concerns Christ's glory, and our own office as christian preachers, may he not justly plead a controversy with our church, smite us with the most awful judgments, suffer a flood of infidelity, error, and profanity, to invade us, withdraw his Spirit from ordinances and judicatories, infatuate our counsels and conduct, mingle a perverse spirit in the midst of us, and give us up to the most unnatural divisions and mournful breaches among ourselves? Ah! how much is this the case with us at this day! And no wonder, seeing Christ's glory is so little minded, notwithstanding of the foresaid excellent act of Assembly, and many other good acts that are sadly neglected this day by ministers and preachers among us. And how can we expect that any individual man should pay regard to them, and particularly to the 7th Act of Assembly, 1736, concerning preaching, when he sees whole judicatories pay no respect to the 14th Act of that Assembly, against intrusions; nor to the 10th Act of As-

sembly, 1712, and the 9th Act of Assembly, 1715, concerning the usurpation of patronage upon the church, and her right of calling her own ministers; which acts are conform to other ancient acts of this church, and to our Reformation principles, declared in the second book of discipline, (see chap. 3, par. 4 and 5; chap. 12, par. 9, 10,) and which are sworn to in our national covenant, and ratified by many acts both of church and state?

Now, how strange and surprising is it to see men deliberately going contrary to these excellent acts and deeds of the church, both ancient and modern,—which are well-founded upon the word of God and sound reason,—by drawing on the yoke of patronage upon the church, without necessity, voluntarily strengthening the hands of patrons in their spiritual tyranny, and encouraging men in that vile church-breaking and soul-destroying practice of accepting presentations,—which no law doth require,—and adhering to them, in opposition to the people's choice; and yet this way is continued, even after conviction, by long dear-bought experience of the pernicious effects of it. I well remember the time—yea, it is not above twenty years ago—when it was thought to be the universal opinion that accepting of presentations was inconsistent with Presbyterian principles and the rights and rules of this church, which we are solemnly engaged to maintain by our Formula, 1711, and otherwise: at that time presentation-hunters among Presbyterians would have appeared as monsters, and their society frightful: but now, alas! they are become tame and familiar creatures to us. It is a woful practice, together with the itch of pleasing great men, that hath of late been the great snare to draw in judicatories to go cross to the declared principles maintained in this church ever since the Reformation, which we should have firmly cleaved to, and never declined from in any case, by making intrusions and violent settlements in christian

congregations, to the ruin, alas! of the glorious gospel, and of precious souls therein: and upon that account alone, though we had no acts or declared principles against intrusion, it is astonishing to think, how any man, that bath the glory of his Master and the saving of souls at heart, should ever concur in a violent settlement that is manifestly destructive to both. That is an awful threatening to ministers, Jer. xxiii. 1, "Wo be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, saith the Lord;" and yet, notwithstanding, we see many who go under the character of wise men still persisting in that miserable infatuation and destructive course, driving multitudes of hearty friends and serious christians out of the church, and never gaining any to it of those they intend to gratify; yea, acting as if they were joined in a conspiracy against the commons of Scotland, and were carrying on a plot to strengthen the secession from the church. But let me tell these wise brethren, if our conventions and parliaments about fifty years ago had paid as little regard to the inclinations of the people of Scotland as our judicatories do now, we would not have had these courts at this day to sit in. I shall not insist here upon this melancholy subject, having said so much on it elsewhere; only let me add this word,—if leading men go on in these methods, though they may enjoy their ease, power, and preferments for a while, yet upon their grave-stones it is too likely it may be written, "Here lie the men who did destroy the most beautiful national church and constitution that was in the world."

But, alas! we have cause not only to lament our departing from Reformation principles and weakening the establishment, but also our shameful defection from vital and practical religion. The power of godliness is at a very low ebb among us, and little of God's Spirit is to be found in our administrations; God is angry, and threatens to cast us off. Ah! great ground have we to

bewail our mournful case, and cry with the prophet under the fearful tokens of God's anger, Jer. xiv.; Lam. v., "Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? We looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble. We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers, for we have sinned against thee. Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of thy glory; remember, break not thy covenant with us. The anger of the Lord hath divided us, the crown hath fallen from our head; wo unto us that we have sinned! Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, and forsake us so long time? Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned. Renew our days as of old." There are many other passages in Jeremiah's writings very suitable to our present case; such as, Jer. xii. 10, 11, "Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard; they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made a pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. They have made it desolate, and being desolate, it mourneth unto me." Now, what can the sons of Zion do for their mother in such a case? They must even bring her case to the Physician of souls, when it is wholly desperate and incurable as to human help; and cry, as Psalm lx. 11, "O God give us help from trouble; for vain is the help of man." Let us fall in with Christ's call to the man with the lunatic child, whom his mother could not cure; Matt. xvii., "Bring him hither to me," saith our Lord. Let us bring the case to Christ when it is desperate, and incurable by all others. The church's extremity is Christ's opportunity; he can help her, even when all her friends are going with their hands on their mouths in the greatest anguish and trouble, according to that word, Jer. xxx. 6, 7, "Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail,

and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble." Yet even then, when Jacob's trouble comes to that extremity that nothing can match it, the Lord pities, and adds that word, "But he shall be saved out of it." A matchless trouble cannot nonplus his saving skill. Now, how doth he save Jacob out of such extremities? not by human might or power, but "by his own Spirit;" Zech. iv. 6. O that God would help all Zion's friends to plead with him for an outpouring of his Spirit upon ministers, preachers, students, and all ranks, for saving his covenanted land out of extreme distress, and reviving primitive christianity among us! this and nothing else will do it. O that he would speak such a comfortable word to Scotland, as that he said to the Jews when their state was low; Hag. ii. 5, "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not!" He hath remembered his covenant with Scotland in former times, and surprised our fathers with gracious effusions of his Spirit; let us steadily look up to him who hath still bowels of pity, and can help us as well as others in distress.

We have heard of the wonderful goodness of the Lord of late, in pitying other nations and countries, when under great darkness, deadness, and distress, by sending down his Spirit to revive his work among them in an extraordinary manner, which may be ground of hope to others. How glorious was the appearance of his sovereign grace, about eight or nine years ago, in Saltzburgh in Germany, in determining about twenty thousand of the inhabitants to espouse the reformed religion, merely by reading of the bible, and to become so zealous for it, as to be willing to leave houses, lands, temporal goods, and relations, and all they had, in a word, that they might enjoy the preaching of the gospel!

How marvellously did he display the riches of his grace, and the work of his Spirit, in the wonderful conversion of great numbers in Northampton and other parts of New England, by the ministry of Mr. Jonathan Edwards, and others in that country, about five or six years ago, of which we had a well-attested narrative published among us!

Nay, within these two years, we have most surprising accounts of the goings of our God, and the effusions of his Spirit on several places of Old England and Wales, our neighbouring countries, where, by the ministry of Mr. George Whitefield, Mr. John Wesley, and others, who insist mainly on the doctrine of the new birth and justification by faith in Christ, great numbers, even of the most profligate, are convinced and pricked in their hearts, and brought to cry out, "What shall we do to be saved?" Which extraordinary work, I hear, doth still continue in divers places of England.

And this very same year we have like accounts from Georgia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, and others of the English plantations in America, by the ministry of Mr. Whitefield and others. Likewise, we have very strange accounts of the success of the gospel in many different parts in the world, even among the heathens, by Count Zinzendorf, bishop of the Moravian church, and his missionaries.

Verily, these good news which we now hear, of God's glorious appearances in the gospel, do look as if God were about to accomplish his promises to his church in the latter days, when "the whole earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord." O how refreshing are the remotest dawnings of the glory of these days!

Also they serve to teach us how easy it is for God to raise up when he pleaseth, for the revival of his work in decayed churches, when their case seems to be very hopeless. How easy is it for him to raise up instruments to preach his gospel, with such life and power as to awaken

whole towns and countries of sleeping sinners together, to hearken to the gospel-call! he can make a nation to be born at once; which should encourage us to wait on him still. And now, when our Lord is graciously pleased to mount his white horse, as King of Zion, and make his circuit in other countries, to give such evidences of his glorious power, and send down pleasant showers of his grace among them, and make many to bow down at his feet; may we not hope that he hath a great work on the wheels, and is on his march to go through his churches in a conquering manner, to confound Deists and infidels, and quell the daring boldness of his adversaries? And, in that case, may not Scotland look for a visit from him among the rest, and even plead that ancient kindness may revive towards it? May we not draw hope from the second Psalm, and other scripture-passages, where God promiseth to give his Son "the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession;" and that "the isles shall see his salvation, and wait for his law?" among which places Scotland certainly is; and though it is a land that is little, and despised among the nations, yet he whose thoughts are not as a man's thoughts, hath shown a distinguishing respect to it, by his early sending the gospel to it; and when overspread with darkness, promoting reformation in it, against both the power of the mighty and counsels of the crafty; nay, advancing reformation so far, and making gospel-light so clear and powerful in it, by the remarkable down-pouring of his Spirit, that Scotland was noticed by divines of other places, and called "Philadelphia," and the "Morning-star of the Reformation." Nay, he took Scotland into covenant with himself, in a peculiar manner, and gave singular tokens of his presence with his people; he hath wonderfully appeared for the interest of religion, when almost sunk from it; he hath raised up saviours on our Mount Zion, and brought about great deliverances for it, as for Israel of old when grievously

oppressed and brought low. And from these ancient and peculiar proofs of our Redeemer's care, may we not humbly hope, that he will not leave the land that is given him by his Father and solemnly devoted to him by its inhabitants?

Our decays and backslidings from God, indeed, are very great, fearful, and threatening; yet he hath still left a mourning and praying remnant in the land, who are sensible of the want of his presence in ordinances, desire to lament after the Lord, and sigh and cry for all the abominations that are found in the midst of the city; and though her desolations are mournful, the breaches in her walls many, and the glory of the Lord is gone up from the cherub, yet it seems still to hover, and stand over the threshold of the door; and there is a remnant among us, wrestling and pleading against our departure. There are a number who take pleasure in our Zion, have a kindness for her stones and rubbish, and cease not to lift up a prayer for the remnant that is left; and we see gracious promises made to the prayers and tears, wrestlings and witnessings, of a small, godly remnant; Psal. xii. 5; Psal. cii. 13, 14; broken and divided in the way and manner of their witnessing at this day! O that the meek Jesus, who rules in Zion, would meeken all their hearts, save from a spirit of bitterness, and from dangerous extremes in separating from one another! O that the God of peace, that hath the command of hearts, would unite his broken remnant together, give them a Christ-like spirit, and make them one stick in his hand! It is nowise difficult to him to accomplish this union, even when the case is most hopeless in our eyes, and instruments to mediate for breaches are out of sight. Let us remember and plead that promise, Jer. xxx. 17, "For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord, because they have called thee an outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after." Many of

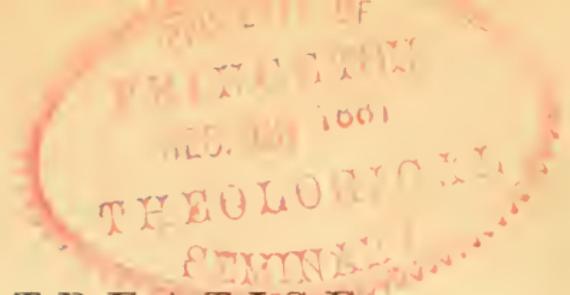
God's worthies, now in glory, have gone off the stage in the belief and hope that God would yet arise and have mercy on his Zion, that he would signally build her up, and appear in his glory; yea, there would be more glorious gospel-days seen in Scotland than either we or our fathers have beheld. Surely these considerations may encourage God's remnant in Scotland to wait and pray in hope, however dark and cloudy our day be at present.

In the mean time, let us rejoice, and bless the Lord, that he is pleased to pour out his Spirit, make bare his holy arm, and glorify his power in other parts of the world, yea, and get himself a great name amongst those that have not known him, whatever he do with us. May his right hand and his holy arm get him the victory among them more and more, that we may hear gospel-songs from the uttermost parts of the earth! Likewise, let us mourn for those sins, both old and late, which provoke God to make our heavens as brass, and to withhold those pleasant showers from us he is letting fall upon others. And let us plead, that Scotland, which formerly was the glory of all lands for the effusions of the Spirit, may not now be passed by, and left behind all others. O let not her fleece be dry, when many others have their fleeces wet; and when they are getting abundance of rain, may we have a little cloud appearing, like a man's hand, to prognosticate a shower a-coming! May the Lord rise up from his place, and come mercifully to decide the quarrel between Deists and us; and let infidels and the profane scoffers of these last days see, that the bible is the word of God, and that the preaching of it is his institution; and that there is a supernatural power attending it, for changing men's hearts as well as lives! May he let the world see, it is not fine moral harangues, nor the enticing words of men's wisdom, but the plain preaching of a crucified Jesus, that is the only remedy for lost sinners, that becomes the power of God to the conversion and salvation of men.

But some have their questions, "By whom shall Jacob arise? Will he show wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise him?" These, indeed, are non-plussing difficulties to us, but none at all to him who raiseth the dead, and calleth the things which be not as though they were. He hath still spirit and clay enough for new instruments; yea, he can make strangers build up his walls, and the greatest enemies become zealous for his glory. And however unlikely the appearance of things may be at present, both scripture and experience assure us, that the time of God's people's extremity (as said before) is his usual season for appearing for them: "It is on the mount that the Lord will be seen;" so may that text be rendered; Gen. xxii. 14. God did not appear any way for Isaac's deliverance all the three days' journey he made with his father, till he came to the top of the mount, and was just ready to be sacrificed; neither did he interpose for the Jews in Esther's time, until the decree was passed, and day fixed, and but a hair-breadth betwixt them and ruin; then God steps in, and posts are instantly despatched to stop the execution. Thus the Lord acts agreeably to his promise; Dent. xxxii. 36, "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left." Here then is food for faith and prayer in the most straitening times. O for grace to pray in hope, mourn in hope, labour in hope, and wait in hope, seeing our dearest Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, which is our hope, is gone up, and sits at the helm! O when shall the power of this great Lord be present to heal us! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.

DUNDEE, *Sept.* 30, 1740.





# A T R E A T I S E

CONCERNING

## THE SANCTIFICATION OF A COMMUNION SABBATH.



### INTRODUCTION.

IT being our great business in the world to promote God's glory and our own salvation, and, in order thereto, to seek acquaintance with, and secure an interest in, the Lord Jesus Christ, the sole Mediator betwixt God and man, and also to labour for the comfortable persuasion and assurance of this interest; it hath pleased God, for our assistance in this matter, graciously to prescribe to us the use of several outward means, as the word, sacraments, and prayer; and also to promise the inward influences of his Holy Spirit, for making these means effectual to the end aforesaid to such as conscientiously attend and use them.

The sacrament of the Lord's supper, one of these means, being instituted, by our Lord Jesus Christ, as a bright representation and compend of the whole christian religion, and an ordinance nobly adapted for carrying on the ends of God's glory and our soul's salvation, and particularly, for clearing up our interest in Christ, and improving our acquaintance with him; it highly concerns every christian to make conscience of attending it in a due and suitable manner. I have elsewhere shown that the Lord's day is of divine appointment, and the celebration of the Lord's supper is the proper work of this day, and one special design of its first institution. Now, if ordinary Sabbaths do require great diligence and care in our preparing for them, and improving of them, much more do communion Sabbaths, which are solemn and high days, and in a special manner days of the Son

of man : these being times wherein we make most near approaches unto God and he makes near approaches unto us : and so may be called days of heaven upon earth ; for they do eminently represent the employments and enjoyments of the glorified saints in heaven ; and, by the right improvement of them, we come to be prepared for living amongst that blessed company. It is, then, our great duty and interest carefully to make ready for these Sabbaths when they draw nigh, and to improve every hour and minute of them with the greatest diligence when they actually do come.

The subject of the Lord's supper is pretty fully handled in my Sacramental Catechism, both in a doctrinal and casuistic manner. And seeing it is needless to repeat what is there written, I must refer my reader to it for a more full explication of several things relative to this ordinance, than what is here to be expected ; seeing I mainly design in this treatise to give practical directions for the right improvement of communion Sabbaths. The subject is still very large and copious, after all that hath been said and written upon it ; and there is room for much more. What I here intend may be comprehended under the three following heads :—

I. Directions how to prepare for a communion Sabbath, before it come.

II. How to spend it when it is come.

III. How to behave ourselves when it is over.

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## CHAP. I.

CONTAINING DIRECTIONS HOW TO PREPARE FOR A  
COMMUNION SABBATH.

### DIRECTION I.

*Carefully endeavour to study to have a just and right up-taking of the Nature, Ends, and Uses of the Lord's Supper, and of the work of Communicating while at the Lord's Table.*

THERE are many who have wrong notions of this ordinance, do greatly mistake the ends and designs of it, and

therefore cannot rightly partake of it ; but, if we would be worthy communicants, we must seriously ponder, and rightly understand the nature and ends of this solemn institution of our Lord Jesus Christ, that so we may approach his table with distinct uptakings of our work and business there.

This ordinance was not instituted to turn bread and wine into the true body and blood of Christ, for people to worship it ; nor to sacrifice Christ again to the Father, to be a propitiation for the sins of the quick and dead, as the Papists do absurdly affirm ; neither was it appointed to make atonement for former sins, to purchase a remission, and insure heaven to us, *opere operato*, as some ignorant people do imagine ; nor was it designed to cloak some wicked practices, or maintain a good name among men, or any other worldly end, as hypocrites do intend ; but it is appointed by our great Lord and Saviour as a visible representation and commemoration of his death and sufferings for his people, till he come again to judge the world. And, in obedience to his command, all his people ought to come to his table, to celebrate this ordinance ; and, while partaking of the outward symbols of bread and wine, they are believingly and thankfully to remember Jesus Christ and his dying love ; and also receive and embrace him, as their bleeding High Priest, into the arms of their faith, apply his benefits, rest upon his merits, seal a covenant with him ; look upon him whom they have pierced, with a mourning heart and a solemn resolve to pierce him no more.

This is a short account of the nature of this sacrament and of the work of communicating. But, in order to give a more full and distinct view of this great and solemn ordinance, we may consider and take it up under the several respects following :—

I. As a peculiar sign and distinguishing badge of the christian church from the infidel world, and a visible token that we profess and own a crucified Jesus for our Redeemer and Saviour, and that we depend only upon his death, and the merit of his blood, for the remission of our sins, and our reconciliation with God.

II. As a lively representation and a memorial of Christ crucified, and the inestimable purchase of his death. This sacrament is a compendious map of the gospel and a visible preaching of Jesus Christ. Tho

word preached holds him forth to the ear ; but this sacrament represents him to the eye, and in a lively way displays his redeeming love, his mighty acts, and unparalleled sufferings for lost sinners. This ordinance is a lasting public monument to the world of Christ's glorious victories and triumphs, as the Captain of our salvation, for his vanquishing death and hell, his spoiling principalities and powers, and his obtaining peace for us. Likewise, we are to look upon it as a sure pledge of Christ's second coming, and taste of the new wine which believers will eternally drink with him in his Father's kingdom.

III. As a special mean appointed by God for our spiritual advantage, namely, for the weakening of corruption and the strengthening of grace. The death of our glorious Redeemer, represented in this ordinance, gives such a discovery of sin to the believer as makes his soul to abhor it. And God blesseth it as a mean to excite and quicken the graces of repentance, faith, love, hope, joy, and thankfulness in believers, by giving them something of a clearer view of the attributes of God than they had before ; as of his wisdom, in the suretiship for us ; of his mercy, love, and compassion, in sparing and saving poor, guilty, and hell-deserving sinners, such as we are ; of his justice and holiness, in punishing sin in such a manner, yea, rather punishing it in his own Son, than suffering it to go unpunished ; of his veracity and faithfulness, in accomplishing the Old Testament types and prophecies, and confirming the covenant of grace, with the mercies therein promised, by the death of Jesus Christ.

IV. As a great feast, wherein Christ holds communion and fellowship with his people, and richly entertains them. This sacrament is the supper of the great God ; the feast-maker is God the Father ; the provision, God the Son, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed ; the guests are a company of poor, unworthy sinners, for whom the crumbs beneath the table are too good ; yet to such doth God give kindly welcome, saying, "Eat, O friends! drink," &c., Cant. v. 1. A strange feast! Christ is both the maker and matter of it, the feeder and the food, the giver and the gift! O what noble provision is Christ's flesh and blood to the soul! John vi. 55. As bread and wine afford strength, comfort, and nourishment to the body, so the flesh and

blood of Christ, received here by faith, do yield the same to the soul. How great is the variety of heavenly dainties presented to us in this feast, viz, Pardon of sin, reconciliation with God, adoption into his family, peace of conscience, spiritual strength, increase of grace, the precious promises of the covenant, the gracious presence of Christ, the smiles of his countenance, the comforting and quickening influences of his Spirit! O what rare and delicious dishes are they for a hungry soul! O for appetites for the full feast which Christ doth furnish us in this wilderness!

V. We ought to view this ordinance as the solemn sealing and confirming of a covenant betwixt God and us. This sacrament is one of the seals of the covenant of grace which God makes with believers in Christ; and by it he gives them seizin and infeftment of all the benefits of the covenant, and of the glorious inheritance purchased for them by Christ. It was usual for people in the eastern countries to ratify their covenants by eating and drinking together; so did Isaac and Abimelech, Jacob and Laban, &c.; Gen. xxvi., xxxi; 2 Sam. iii. This sacrament is a covenanting feast, wherein a bargain is solemnly ratified and sealed betwixt God and us. God's exhibiting the elements to us is a seal of the covenant on God's part, that he will be our God, and doth freely give us his Son, with all his purchase, and will fulfil all his promises to us in him; our taking the elements is a seal, on our part, of our accepting of Jesus Christ upon the terms of grace, our engaging to be his people, and that we will in his strength perform all the duties required of us. Here Christ gives us his body and blood to save us; and here we give our souls and bodies to serve him.

VI. As a solemn military oath, whereby we bind ourselves to be true and faithful soldiers to Jesus Christ, our Captain and General in the spiritual warfare. For the word *sacrament*, according to its ancient use among the Romans, from whom it is borrowed, doth import so much. Let communicants then consider what they do at the Lord's table. You do most publicly, before men and angels, swear allegiance to the King of heaven, over the broken body and shed blood of the Son of God. Now, if the dust of Christ's ministers' feet will be a witness against the slights of his gospel, and cry for vengeance on them; surely Christ's own body and blood will be a

more terrible witness against perfidious communicants. Nay, the oath you here swear is not an ordinary one, but an oath attended with solemn imprecations. When you transact with God in this sacrament, you do on the matter say, "If we be in league with sin and Satan, while we are professing to give ourselves away to the Lord, then let that wrath which Christ suffered, fall upon us: and as certainly as we crumble the sacramental bread betwixt our teeth, let the mill-stone of God's justice grind us to powder; and as we drink the sacramental cup here, so let us drink the cup of God's unmixed wrath eternally, if we deal falsely with God in this covenant." And thus we see how unworthy communicants, and dissemblers with God, do "eat and drink judgment to themselves" with a witness.

VII. We should take up this sacrament, not only as a feast of love betwixt Christ and believers, but also as a bond of mutual love and unity among believers themselves. As this feast of love is a remembrance of the greatest love that ever was manifested, viz., of Christ's dying love to sinners; so it is an excellent mean for procuring and advancing unity and love among the saints and servants of God. It is a mean, not only of uniting believers more firmly to Christ their Head, but also of uniting and endearing the members of his mystical body to one another.

Let us view the Lord's supper in the foresaid seven respects, that we may see what a weighty ordinance it is, and have some distinct uptakings of its nature and ends, before we approach to it.

## DIRECTION II.

*Be firmly persuaded that partaking of the Lord's Supper is a most necessary Duty; and the neglecting of it a very great Sin.*

THAT communicating is a necessary duty incumbent upon us, and not a matter of indifference, which we may do or not, as we think fit, will appear from the following obligations which God hath laid upon us.

I. We have the command of our great Lord and Lawgiver to partake of this feast, oft repeated by the evan-

gelists ; he saith to all his disciples, Take ; he saith to them, Eat ; he saith to them, Drink ye all of it ; he saith to them, “ Do this in remembrance of me.” His precepts to pray, praise, hear, read, meditate, &c., are not more plain or express, than his precepts to communicate. So that we are as much bound to give obedience to this as to those.

II. Gratitude strongly obligeth us to obey his command, if we remember what he who gave it did for us. O believer, did he not offer up himself, soul and body, as an atoning sacrifice to satisfy divine justice for thy sins, and will not this engage you to obey him ? Surely, every time you read or hear these words, “ Do this in remembrance of me,” your heart should melt and warm within you, when you consider what he who spoke them hath done for you : even more than father, mother, wife, brother, and all your relations, would have done ; yea, more than a million of angels could have done for you. And shall not this command have weight with you ?

III. Remember the time when he gave you this charge. It was that night he was to begin his bitter and bloody agonies for you, and wade through a sea of wrath and sorrow upon your account. It was then, when he beheld heaven, earth, and hell, justice, men, and devils, all conspiring against him. Just at the time when he was going to offer up himself a sacrifice in your stead, to save you from eternal flames, he gave you this charge, “ Do this in remembrance of me ;” as if he had said, “ Now, I am just ready to be offered up, to die a cursed death for you, and with my blood to seal my testament, wherein I bequeath to you pardon, peace, light, life, grace, and glory ; and now there is one request I ask of you, that, when I am dead, you keep up the remembrance of my love and sufferings for you, by eating bread and drinking wine together with my people at my table, and there show forth my death till I come again to judge the world.” The words of dying men use to be of great weight with their surviving friends ; and will not the words of your dying Surety, your dying Elder Brother, be of weight with you to obey his dying charge ?

IV. Consider how small and easy the charge is he gives you. It is not to sacrifice your first-born, cut off a member of your body, give all you have to the poor, go in pilgrimage to the ends of the earth ; it is not to go

to the Holy Land, to visit Christ's sepulchre, or to the top of mount Calvary, where the cross stood, in remembrance of him. These he required not, because you might have judged them hard, and yet, for as hard as they seem to be, had he demanded any of them, could you have been answerable to disobey such a one as a dying Jesus? How far less will you be able to answer at the great day for disobeying him, when he requires no such burdensome task, but graciously enjoins an action that is most easy, pleasant, and profitable to you:—Eat and drink at my table, in a thankful remembrance of what I have done for you! And will you not please him in so small a request?

V. Christ gives you this charge, not for his good, but for your own. And your obedience to it contribtues highly both to your pleasure and your profit.

*First.* O believer, is it not pleasant to set and keep a tryst with your dear Saviour? Well, this ordinance is the solemn trysting-place where he hath appointed to meet with you; it is there you may see the King in his beauty: there doth his glory shine. O how glorious is he in his dyed garments and red apparel! with what desire should we go to meet such a beautiful sight! how sweet is it to hear his voice in this ordinance, which is the very music of heaven! how ravishing for a doubting soul to hear him speak as from the cross, It is finished, the ransom is paid, and justice is satisfied! Can there be sweeter melody, than to hear Christ whisper into the soul's ear, "Fear not, I am thy salvation; the Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die; son, be of good cheer, all thy sins are forgiven thee?" How pleasant must it be to eat and drink at Christ's feast, with such heavenly music sounding in our ears!

*Secondly.* Is not this action as profitable to us as pleasant? Knowest thou, O man, what injury thou dost to thy immortal soul by neglecting it? canst thou have any other but a lean, hungry, starved soul, whilst thou slightest the food God hath appointed for it? Dost thou know what benefit some of thy neighbours have got at this feast? Some have come to it poor, and have gone away laden with riches; some have come to it hungry, and have gone satisfied as with marrow and fatness; some have come thirsty, and have got floods poured out upon the dry ground; some have come blind,

and gone away seeing ; others lame, and have gone away walking. Here they have got all their diseases cured and their wants supplied. And have you not as great need of these mercies as others ? Come, then, to this enriching and soul-upmaking ordinance ; take but a view of the benefits and blessings which Christ presents to you, and which he faithfully offers to seal and apply to you in this sacrament, even his own body and blood, and all the benefits and virtues of the same. Surely Christ, and all the benefits of his purchase, is a vast portion ! Behold, O believer, in this ordinance you have a seal and pledge, an earnest and taste of them all.

More particularly, *1st.* You have here a sealed remission of sin presented to you, with the blood that was shed for the same ; Matt. xxvi. 28.

*2dly.* A sealed freedom from wrath and damnation ; for a crucified Jesus, here represented, endured that for you ; and he promises, that he who eats this food shall “ never die eternally ;” John vi. 50, 51.

*3dly.* Adoption into his family, and a right to the children’s privileges confirmed ; for your being admitted to sit at your Father’s table, and eat of the children’s bread, is a pledge of it.

*4thly.* The weakening of sin and subduing of corruption ; for here you have food that kills sin.

*5thly.* The increase of sanctification, and strengthening of grace ; for here you have food that nourisheth grace : and the sanctifying Spirit is promised in that covenant which is here sealed ; Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

*6thly.* Union and communion with Christ in the most intimate manner ; for, saith he, John vi. 56, “ He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.” We dwell in him by faith and love, and he in us by his Spirit.

*7thly.* A title to eternal life ; John vi. 51, “ If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.”

*8thly.* A sealed promise of a glorious resurrection ; John vi. 54, “ Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

*9thly.* A sealed right to all the promises of the new covenant, which are great and precious, viz.—That God will “ put his laws in our inward parts, and write them in our hearts ;” Jer. xxxi. 33. That he will “ forgive our

iniquity, and remember our sin no more ;” Jer. xxxi. 34. That he will “take away the stony heart, and give us a heart of flesh ;” Ezek. xxxvi. 26. That he will “put his fear in our heart, and give us hearts to fear him ;” Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. That he will send sanctified rods and afflictions when they are needful ; Psalm lxxxix. 32. That he will put his Spirit within us ; Ezek. xxxvi. 27 ; and thereupon we shall have the quickening, strengthening, and sin-mortifying influences of the Spirit ; and also his growing, enlightening, comforting, upholding, and preserving influences. And *lastly*, which comprehends all ; That he will be our God, and we shall be his people ; Jer. xxxi. 38. Thus you see what a soul-profitting ordinance this is : to slight it, then, must be a dreadful despising of your mercies and a wronging of your own souls.

VI. Let me put you in mind with what gladness the Israelites of old did welcome the news of the celebration of their passover, in the room of which Christ hath instituted to us the Lord’s supper. O what joy did it occasion in Jerusalem, when the trumpet was blown by the priest to give intimation to the people of the day of the passover ! How cheerful was the psalmist’s heart, when he saith, Psalm lxxxix. 1, 3, “Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob ; blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed on our solemn feast-day !” This feast was still observed upon the fifteenth day after the first appearance of the new moon ; and not having almanacks, as we have, to forwarn them of it, they used to send men to the top of the hill to watch for the appearance of the new moon, who, as soon as they saw it, did run to tell the priest, that he might blow the trumpet, and give the welcome noise of it to the people, who received the news with universal joy. And have not we, christians, more cause to rejoice at the intimation of our gospel-passover, in which we have Christ crucified, with all his benefits, far more evidently set forth before our eyes, than the people of the Jews had ?

Alas ! it is sadly to be regretted, that in our age many people do oft hear the silver trumpet of the gospel sounding loud and long, calling them to the feast of the great King, but are not suitably affected therewith. Were this great gospel-ordinance, like the Jewish passover, to be celebrated but in one place in all the world, with what zeal and desire would people flock thither, to behold and

partake of it? And why should we not come with the same affection and devotion now, when we have it celebrated in many places? shall our hearts be evil, because God is good? shall we despise mercies when they are given in plenty? Surely the frequent occasions we have of this blessed feast should fill our hearts with the greatest thankfulness to the bountiful Maker of it, as they did the christians in the apostolic age.

But besides these arguments for the necessity of the duty of communicating, I shall, in the next place, show the greatness of the sin and danger of neglecting it.

I. You hereby are guilty of disobedience to the command of the highest King and Sovereign in the world; nay, of that King to whom you have sworn allegiance in baptism. Is Jesus Christ your sovereign, and will you not obey his laws? Perhaps, if you neglect any other of his commands, such as to pray, give alms, or to hear the word of one Lord's day, conscience will smite you for it: and have you no check for disobeying this command, which he gave in the most solemn manner? nay, a charge which our dying testator gave us when his heart was full of sorrow for us, and when he was going to underlie God's wrath in the garden, be bound as a malefactor, and led away to the cursed tree for us? As the sovereign Lord, who gave us this command, hath an undoubted right to our obedience, both by nature and dear purchase; so, by the neglect of it, we are at once guilty, both of despising the authority of just power, and the obligation of astonishing love.

II. What a sin must it be to despise a sacrament, which is one of the most solemn ordinances of this great King! You will readily acknowledge, that it is your indispensable duty to receive the sacrament of baptism, and that it is a sin to neglect it. And why do you not own the same of the Lord's supper, seeing the same Lord who said, Matt. xxviii. 19, "Go teach and baptize all nations," said also, Luke xxii. 19, "Do this in remembrance of me?" so that you have the same authority for both sacraments. What inconsistency are some then guilty of, who think, if their children die without baptism, —though there be no sinful neglect in the case,—it endangers their salvation, but are not afraid themselves to live and die without the Lord's supper, though their neglect be wilful and sinful! Surely the practice of many who

overvalue one sacrament, and undervalue another, is most unaccountable.

III. By declining to partake of the Lord's supper, you do upon the matter renounce your baptism,—though the sacrament you pretend to esteem,—seeing hereby you refuse to be christians of free choice, and in effect to say, you will not stand to these engagements your parents took in your name, but will be at liberty to believe what you please, practise what you fancy, and serve the devil, the world, and the flesh, as long as you think fit. You may profess the christian religion; but you are never christians by an act of your own, until you present yourselves at the Lord's table, and there personally own your baptismal engagements, and openly avouch the Lord Jesus Christ to be your Saviour, consent to his religion, and dedicate yourselves to his service. Hearing of sermons is not a sufficient test of your doing so; for many do this from curiosity or custom, more than any other principle; but the Lord's supper is the ordinance which Christ hath instituted chiefly for the foresaid ends. How great, then, must the sin and danger of wilful neglecting it be? in effect, it is no less than an open denying of Christ before men; and such he says “he will deny before his Father in heaven.” I would have all who bear the name of christians to remember this; and, as they would not be reckoned among those that renounce Christ and his religion, let them not contemn that ordinance, which is the appointed badge of the christian profession.

IV. To neglect the Lord's supper is a most unthankful requital of the kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, in coming to free us from the burdensome service of the legal sacrifices, rites, and institutions. If we did rightly consider what we are bound to by the subjection we owe to a sovereign Lord, and by the gratitude we owe to a kind benefactor, though he had enjoined a great number of costly and laborious rites, and had laid upon us a yoke more heavy than that of the Jewish ceremonies, yet in justice we should have thought all but a small homage to his greatness, and a small acknowledgement of his infinite love. But now, when in his mercy he hath freed us from the yoke of ceremonial bondage, and, besides baptism, hath appointed but this one sacred rite for us to observe, and one that is neither costly nor troublesome, but most easy and pleasant, what monsters of ingratitude shall we

make ourselves, if we slight this his gracious institution.

V. By neglecting this divine ordinance, you put greater contempt upon the true and living God, than heathens do upon their dumb idols. How great is the respect that some brutish idolators show to their idols, who cut their flesh, shed their blood, sacrifice their children, and stick at nothing, though ever so hard or painful, to testify their homage and obsequiousness to their ugly deities! and shall we, christians, professed servants of the glorious Son of God, our sovereign Lord and Redeemer, neglect his easy institution, and refuse to please him in so small a thing? Surely the barbarous savages will rise up in judgment against many professed christians, and condemn them for their disobedience. You, perhaps, on some occasions, will profess to pity the blind heathens and brutish Indians, who are strangers to christianity, and live and die in darkness; but have not we as much reason to pity you, who disown and pour contempt on that holy religion you were educated in, and thereby put yourselves in a condition worse than theirs? for the apostle tells us, that it is "better not to have known the way of truth, than, after we have known it, to turn away from the holy commandment;" 2 Pet. ii. 21. And our Saviour saith, that it will be more tolerable for the dark cities of "Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment," than it will be for the enlightened Capernaum and Bethsaida; Matt. xi. 22. Your knowledge and profession of the truths of the christian religion do very much aggravate your disobedience to the laws and institutions thereof. You think their condition dreadful that say there is no God; and no doubt it is so; but what better is your case, who acknowledge there is a God, but live as if you denied him, by open contemning and neglecting of his ordinances?

VI. By slighting this ordinance, you contemn the most advantageous offers that ever God made unto men. Here God the Father offereth to make over Christ to you, and all his purchase, and seal your right thereto; particularly to give you his blessed Son, as your "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" 1 Cor. i. 30. As your *wisdom*, to enlighten you, and free you from ignorance; as your *righteousness*, to justify you, and free you from the guilt of sin; as your *sanctification*, to make you holy, and free you from the reigning power

and pollution of sin ; as your *redemption*, to restore you to the liberty of the sons of God, bring you to the inheritance, and free you eternally from sin and Satan, hell and wrath. Now, O sinner ! if thou declinest to come here and take Christ as thy wisdom, how foolish and ignorant must thou still remain ! If thou refuse Christ as thy righteousness, how naked and guilty will thy soul be ! If thou refuse Christ as thy sanctification, how vile and polluted must thou still continue ! If thou refuse Christ as thy redemption, who will redeem thee from the wrath to come ?

Consider, also, the near and happy relations which Jesus Christ himself offereth to stand in to those who cordially receive him in this ordinance : such as that of a Master, a Father, a Captain, a Shepherd, a Bridegroom, and a Husband. And how great must our sin and danger be, if we slight such kind offers ! If you refuse Christ as a Master now, will not he refuse to own you as a servant in the great day ? If you refuse him as a Father, will he not disown you then as a son ? If you refuse him as a Captain, will he not reject you as one of his soldiers ? If you refuse him as a Shepherd, will he not deny you as one of his sheep ? If you refuse him as a Bridegroom and Husband, will he not disown you as his bride and spouse ? And if Christ thus disown you at the great day, how fearful will your condition be for ever !

VII. Neglecting this feast of memorial is a thing most unreasonable in itself, as being against all the rules of humanity and gratitude. Surely it is most agreeable to reason and equity, that all christians should love their Redeemer and benefactor, and keep up the memorial of his great adventures for ransoming their souls. Is it not a most reasonable demand, and a very small return he requires of you for all his love, only, " Eat and drink in remembrance of me ? " It is not, Go to a scaffold, but, go to a well-covered table ; it is not to bleed and burn, but to eat and drink ; it is not to feed on the bread of affliction, or water of adversity, but bread that strengthens the heart, and wine that cheers the drooping spirits ; delicious fare, which your Saviour hath blessed and sweetened for you. Now, must it not be against all reason to refuse this agreeable demand, in order to preserve the memory of the love of our incomparable Benefactor, and the sufferings of your dying Friend, which he patiently endured for you ?

Ungrateful world! Can ye not endure to think on that which Christ refused not to endure for you? Did he leave the glory of his Father, to be clothed with your nature, and to dwell in a fleshly cottage? Did he live a life of sorrows and sufferings, and at last undergo a shameful, painful, and cursed death? Did he rise again, and ascend on high to prepare mansions, and take possession of them for you? Doth he there abide to agent and plead your cause with God? And do you believe that he is shortly to come again to receive you to himself? And will ye not for a short while here keep up the remembrance of his love? O! did Christ drink vinegar on the cross for you, yea, vinegar made bitter, tart, and poisonous with your sins? And will you not drink wine at his table, that is sweetened and made delicious with the choice blessings of his love, and consolations of his Spirit? Did he drink a cup of wrath for you, and will ye not drink a cup of blessing for him, nay, for yourselves? for the advantage is only yours.

O christians! had we the due impressions of the amazing goodness and incomparable love of our matchless Redeemer, the remembrance whereof he enjoins us to keep up in this ordinance, we would say, Lord, what is sufficient to be done in memory of this love? Every one of our hearts would echo back at Christ's call, "Do this in remembrance of me." Do this! Lord, what is it that I would not do for thy sake? Glorious Jesus! didst thou pass by the angels, and wouldst have no nature but mine? I will then stop mine ears against the solicitations of all the world, and have no will but thine. Remember thee! whom shall I remember, if I forget thee? "If I forget thee," O my Saviour, "let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: If I remember not thee, let my right hand forget her cunning." Lord, I cannot but blush when I think that I should need any memento or token to keep up the remembrance of thee. Ah! shall the trifles of the world find room enough in my heart and memory, and my Redeemer's love have scarce any place there? Lord, hadst thou required the dearest of my blood, and choicest of my substance, to be offered thee in acknowledgement of it, yea, hadst thou demanded my life, I owe it to thee, nay, a thousand lives, if I had them: and shall I not cheerfully give thee my memory and thoughts when thou art pleased to ask them?

O, then, if there be any obligation in the highest authority, any allurements in the sweetest love, any reality in your professed subjection to Jesus Christ, give him this proof of it; remember his love at his feast of memorial, and join hymns of praise therewith. O please him in this so easy and so small a request.

VIII. Finally, I would have you to remember how provoking the neglect of this ordinance is to him that instituted it. You are guilty of despising the greatest preparations which the King of kings makes for his subjects; for in this ordinance he doth, as it were, kill the fatted calf, and furnish his table with his choicest rarities of heaven, and send forth his servants to invite us, saying, "I have prepared my supper, come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled; all things are ready, come to the marriage." So great and costly is this feast, that it cost the Maker of it his own life to prepare it. Pardon of sin, peace with God, and communion with him, which are the dainties here set before you, cost Jesus Christ no less than his life to purchase them for you. And do you think this glorious King can take it well at your hands, if you make light of this rare and costly feast, and slight all the preparations he hath made for you? Can you ever expect to enjoy communion with him in heaven, if you slight the offer of communion with him upon the earth? Nay, you provoke him to cut you off eternally from his presence; for as of old, the Lord threatened cutting off, to the soul of him that neglected to keep the passover, because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season; Num. ix. 13; so he threatens the same to those who should slight the gospel feasts typified thereby; Zech. xiv. 16—18; Luke xiv. 24. We see how his wrath was kindled against those that neglected to come to the marriage of the King's son, and how severely he punished them for it; Matt. xxii. 5, 7, "They made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm and another to his merchandise.—But when the King heard thereof, he was wroth, and he sent forth his armies and destroyed these murderers, and burnt up their city." He reckons your eating not, no less sin than eating irreverently; for, as by this you are guilty of profaning the Lord's body, so by the other you are guilty of despising it, and preferring your lusts before him, which is a heinous crime.

*Objections Answered.*

HERE it may be proper to answer some objections which are made against partaking of the Lord's supper, whether by the profane, slothful, or scrupulous.

*Objec. I.* Some profane persons think meanly of this ordinance, and hence they neglect it. What needs so much noise, think they, about this matter? It is but eating a little bread, and drinking a small portion of wine; what efficacy can there be in that action?

*Ans.* This ordinance is of divine authority, and not appointed by men like ourselves. It hath the stamp of our Lord's institution, which should make it to be highly valued by all christians. For as he hath wisely instituted it for more important ends and uses, so he will certainly make it effectual unto these ends. A little parchment, with ink and wax upon it, is itself a small thing, yet, being of legal authority and institution amongst men, it serveth to convey a right and title to a great inheritance; and so it becometh highly valuable. The brazen serpent that was lift up on a pole for healing the Israelites, was mean to outward view; but, being of God's appointment, it was effectual for healing, and therefore none would despise it. So the elements in this sacrament, however common and mean in themselves, yet being of God's appointment, and consecrated for sacred uses, they are powerful and efficacious to the believing receivers for the ends of their institution.

*Objec. II.* We may remember Christ in the word, and what need is there for doing it in the sacrament?

*Ans. 1st.* It is abominable presumption to think ourselves wiser than Jesus Christ, who is the wisdom of the Father. Hath he thought this ordinance needful, and will any man judge it needless?

*2dly.* The word only presents Christ unto the ear, but the Lord's supper sets forth a crucified Christ unto the eye.

*3dly.* There is more than a simple remembering of Christ required in the Lord's supper; there is also a renewing of baptismal engagements, and a ratifying our covenant with God. And besides, our Lord hath reserved some special blessings and communications to this ordinance, which are in nowise to be undervalued or slighted.

*Objec.* III. It is hard to be at so much pains, and to employ so much time in meditation, examination, prayer, &c. as is requisite to prepare for communicating.

*Ans.* *1st.* There are many who do not grudge to be at much pains and travel, and frequently to hazard their lives both by sea and land, for a little temporal gain. And will you grudge some pains to prepare for this ordinance, which seals a right to the unsearchable riches of Christ, and by means whereof you might, through the divine blessing, be enabled to subdue your sins, reform your lives, grow in grace, and be made ready for death and judgment? Is not this spiritual gain better than the gain of a whole world?

*2dly.* Are there not many who throw away their hours in needless pleasures and pastimes? And with what face can such pretend they have no time to examine themselves and prepare for this blessed ordinance? What are these transient pleasures of time you are so fond of, to the comfortable views of an interest in Christ, and of living with him throughout eternity, which may be got at his table?

*3dly.* Will you be at no pains to please that King and Sovereign to whom you have sworn allegiance, or to obey the command and dying charge of your great Master and Saviour? That vile imposter, Mahomet, forbade his disciples to drink wine, and this command hath been religiously observed among them; and shall our renowned Saviour, who is Lord of angels, and Son of the most high God, enjoin us the use of wine in the sacrament, and will any of his disciples adventure to disobey him! "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon." Let not this be told among Turks, Jews, Infidels, Atheists, and the rest of the adversaries of the christian religion, lest they should insult and triumph.

*4thly.* Our Lord Jesus had a thousand more difficulties and discouragements in the work of our redemption, and yet he did not shrink back, as you do, from communicating. He never objected, The sea is deep, I cannot wade it; the cross is heavy, I cannot bear it; the cup is bitter, I cannot drink it; the wrath is terrible, I cannot endure it. He did not plead, though he had cause, The work is hard, it will cost me dear; and I shall meet with an unthankful world, that will slight my love, refuse my offers, and despise my institutions. No, he overlooked

all that, and went cheerfully through his sufferings. "With desire have I desired to eat this passover; the cup that the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" When the Father called him to drink the very dregs of the cup of trembling for you, he readily answered, "Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will." But when he calls you to take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord, what grudging and backdrawing is there with you? Had Christ so great desire after the bitter cup of God's wrath on your account; and have you no desire after the cup of blessing in the sacrament? Did he go so cheerfully to die for you; and are you unwilling to go and feast with him? Be astonished, O heavens, at this ingratitude!

How wretched and perverse a creature is man! still he would be flying in the face of God's authority; for when God said to him, "Eat not of this forbidden fruit," then he will needs eat, though it will ruin him. But when God saith, "Eat this bread," he is backward to do it, though it be for his eternal welfare. O how long doth a patient and merciful God bear with us!

*Objec. IV.* I am so stated with my worldly business, that I cannot get time to prepare myself in secret, and give such attendance in public as is needful; and so I cannot come.

*Ans. 1st.* Doth not your business afford you time to eat, drink, and sleep, and converse with unprofitable company; and can you find no time to converse with God in his ordinances, or to prepare yourselves for meeting and dwelling with God throughout eternity?

*2dly.* Can you have any greater, any better business in the world, than remember the love of a dying Saviour, to put your souls in order to meet with him at his table, and there to seal a covenant with him, and receive pledges from him, of his pardoning and redeeming love? Is there any business on earth preferable to this?

*3dly.* When sickness and death come, you must find time to attend them, whether you will or not; all your business must of necessity give place to them. And must you find time to be sick and die, however soon the summons cometh; and will you find no time in your health to prepare for sickness and death before they come? Now, if you would take time duly to prepare for the Lord's supper, you should not be found unprepared for death; for the same preparation is needful for both.

*Objec. V.* But, say some, we are not fit for the Lord's table; and perhaps it is very true. Why; we have loose lives and conversations, there is some bad company we cannot be free of, some sins we cannot get left; and so we cannot come to the Lord's table.

*Ans. 1st.* God will surely look upon it as no other than a mocking of him, to say you are not dressed for this feast, when, indeed, you never went about to make yourselves ready. Nay, he will look upon it as the most heinous wickedness for you to go on wilfully in your sins and wicked courses, and then to make your sins an excuse for the neglect of those duties he commands you.

*2dly.* If you say, you are not fit for the Lord's supper here, you must confess you are less fit for the marriage-supper of the Lamb above. And how can you live one day contentedly in that condition you dare not venture to die in, or, if you die in it, you must be eternally excluded from heaven? Consider this, O profane sinner, although you may now sit Christ's charming call to come to his table and remember him, you cannot sit his alarming call to come to his tribunal, to answer before him. And how can you think to look upon that face with comfort at that day, which now you have no pleasure to behold in the symbols of bread and wine.

*3dly.* Let me ask thee, O profane man, do you intend to repent and leave your sins, or do you not? If you do not intend it, then it is in vain to treat with you, seeing you wilfully make choice of everlasting burnings. But there are few so graceless and wicked, but will say they have intentions to do it. Well, if your intentions be hearty and sincere, surely you will put them speedily in execution: and if you do this, your objection evanisheth; your bad life can no longer hinder you from this ordinance, seeing all penitent, reforming sinners are welcome to Christ, and to his table also, whatever their former lives have been.

*Objec. VI.* But, saith one, I am not in charity with my neighbours, I am at variance with such a person that hath injured me; and so I cannot come to the Lord's table.

*Ans. 1st.* I do acknowledge, the want of love to our neighbours, and the entertaining of angry strife and discord with them, do very much discompose and unfit us for approaching to the feast of love; and therefore, we

should use all endeavours to remove these impediments beforehand.

*2dly.* Suppose thy neighbour hath done thee wrong, and given you a just ground of displeasure with him; yet you ought to use endeavours to get the difference removed, by seeking to convince him of his fault, and showing your readiness to forgive him, and be reconciled with him.

*3dly.* Suppose thy neighbour, after all christian methods taken with him, persists in his injuries, without repentance or reparation, it is no uncharitableness to be displeased with him, if thy anger keep within just bounds, and thou dost not hate his person, or study revenge against him. The apostle saith, Eph. iv. 26, "Be angry and sin not." Whence we see, that anger may be separated from sin. Now, what is not sin doth not make us unfit for this holy ordinance. A man may be innocently angry, when he is justly displeased with another both for offending God and himself; but, in the mean time, is so far from desiring revenge, or seeking his hurt, that he pities and prays for the injurious person, and is ready to render good for evil. Now, when this is the case, as our anger or displeasure doth not indispose us for the sacrament, so neither should our neighbour's unchristian behaviour, and backwardness to reconciliation, deter us from our duty, or tempt us to deprive ourselves of the benefit of this ordinance.

*4thly.* But if you be of the number of those who keep up quarrels with your neighbour, are of unforgiving and revengeful spirits, you are altogether unfit for this ordinance, and you should tremble to approach in such a condition; seeing in effect you renounce Christ as a Saviour, reject his example, and despise his precepts. You cannot pray as he directs, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us;" for this were no other than a fearful imprecation of wrath against yourselves. Would you then have forgiveness of the injuries you have done to God? would you have this blessing sealed to you in the sacrament, and openly declared at the great day? then be ready to forgive those that wrong you, lay aside quarrels, abhor revenge, let not the sun go down upon your wrath, seek peace and friendship with all. Remember, that those who harbour wrath and malice in their hearts, are as unfit to appear at God's tribunal as at his table.

*Objec.* VII. Though we be not in case for this, yet we resolve to prepare and go to the next communion.

*Ans.* 1st. All delays in well-doing are highly dangerous, and particularly in the present case. For, 1st. Your lives are wholly uncertain; you may not live to see another communion. Many were alive at the last communion that are now dead, and fixed in their everlasting lot; and many now living will, in all likelihood, be in the same state before the next communion; and you know not but you may be among them. And if so, consider what stinging reflections the slights of Christ and his institutions will have through eternity: therefore neglect not the present opportunity.

2dly. Though God should spare you to see another occasion of this sort, what ground have you to think you shall be more willing and fit to communicate than at present? Do you not know, that by delays the heart is still more hardened, and the habits of sin the more strengthened? And if you refuse to hearken to God's call now, he may refuse to hear your cry afterwards; Zech. vii. 13.

*Objec.* VIII. But, say some scrupulous and doubting souls, this is an awful and tremendous ordinance; and it is not safe for such poor, unworthy, and unprepared creatures as we are, to meddle with it.

*Ans.* 1st. It is very ordinary for people to run into extremes about this ordinance. Either they entertain too low an opinion, or else they have too frightful thoughts of it; and both these are to be equally guarded against. Remember, that the sacrament was not instituted to terrify believers, but to bring them into converse and familiarity with their Lord and Saviour, and to give them the tokens and intimations of his love. And why should a feast of love be terrible to us?

2dly. Every man, in a legal sense, is unworthy to approach to this holy table: "We are all as an unclean thing, and our righteousness is as filthy rags" before God. But he is graciously pleased to accept of them who abhor themselves for their pollution, and seek shelter under the covert of Christ's righteousness.

3dly. How long will ye make use of this excuse of unfitness and unpreparedness? Do you intend to do it all your days? Or will it be of any use to you when you are called to die? When God commands you to die, will you have confidence to say, Lord, I cannot obey at

this time, for I am not prepared? No, no; it would be in vain then to hang back, seeing death will not spare when it gets commission, whether prepared or unprepared. Would ye not therefore, in such a case, set about immediate preparation, and do what you are able to get yourselves prepared for death? So do in this case: when Christ commands you to come to his table, though matters be sadly out of order with you, yet set about the work in obedience to his command, prepare what ye are able, and look to him for strength, who pities the weak, and accepts of sincere mints at duty.

*Objec. IX.* But, some may insist to say, we are unworthy, for we have not only many defects in our lives, but also many inward distempers, heart-plagues, hardness, deadness, darkness, prevailing corruptions, &c.

*Ans. 1st.* No wonder you complain of many distempers, when you refuse the means of healing. May not God look upon it as a dissimulation, to complain of the hardness of your heart, while you come not to apply the blood of Christ to soften it; or of the prevailing of your corruptions, while you come not to Christ's cross to subdue them? No wonder that God withdraw from your souls, when you withdraw from your duty. No wonder you are strangers to spiritual joy, when you will not come to draw water out of the wells of salvation. No wonder you complain of the weakness of grace, when you will not make use of the means of strengthening it. Many have found at this ordinance a cure for all their diseases, a supply to all their wants, and an answer to all their complaints.

*2dly.* Study to do your part, by serious preparation, and you may expect God will not fail to do his part: spread out your sores and diseases before the great Physician, and look unto him for healing; press through all doubts and discouragements towards him, believing you shall be healed, if you can but touch the border of his garment. If you sincerely, heartily, and impartially repent of all known sins, and rely on Jesus Christ for mercy and pardon, you have no reason to question but you shall be welcome guests at the Lord's table, although you find in your hearts many infirmities and plagues, and in your lives many defects and shortcomings.

*Objec. X.* But, say some, that word DAMNATION frights us; 1 Cor. xi. 29. It is terrible to eat and drink

damnation to ourselves, as unworthy communicants do.

*Ans.* It is very true, unworthy communicants are liable to damnation; but so also are all other sinners. Whosoever hears the word unworthily, or prays unworthily, incurs the peril of damnation, as well as he that communicates unworthily; and yet you do not think you ought to desist from hearing or praying on any account, and why only from communicating? Every sin indeed is damning in its own nature, and so is unworthy receiving in a special manner; but sincere repenting and believing in Christ is an expedient against this as well as other sins; "for the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

*Objec. XI.* We are afraid, say some, to come and enter into covenant with God, and take on vows at the Lord's table, lest we do not keep them, but fall again into new sins, and so increase our guilt.

*Ans. 1st.* If it were left as a matter of indifference to come to, or absent yourselves from, the Lord's table as you pleased, your objection might be pertinent; but remember, this is a duty enjoined under the highest pains. You see what fearful destruction came upon them that refused to come to the marriage-supper; Matt. xxii. 7.

*2dly.* It is good always to be jealous of ourselves; for we have good reason for it, considering the deceitfulness of our hearts. But this should not keep us from the ordinance, or make us neglect our duty.

*3dly.* Breach of vows, or sins committed after a sacrament, though they be of greater guilt than other sins, yet we are not to judge them unpardonable; for who is it that liveth and sinneth not? Such a notion, perhaps, hath possessed the ignorant Muscovites, who endeavour to fall asleep as soon as they have received the sacrament, to prevent by that means any occasion of sin.

*4thly.* There is ground to suspect that this excuse or pretence is not real with many; but rather that they are unwilling to come under new bonds and engagements to a holy life. They entertain some affection to their old sins, and are not willing to renounce them altogether, and prepare sincerely for this holy ordinance.

*5thly.* If you be so much afraid of sin, and of sinning after the sacrament, why are you not afraid of this sin of neglecting the sacrament, which I showed before to be very heinous? Now, why do you live in this sin so

quietly? Surely, if you were afraid of all sin, you would be afraid of this heinous sin too; and so would make conscience of preparing yourselves for the Lord's table, that you might be preserved from the guilt of slighting this solemn ordinance.

*Lastly.* Consider, you are not to vow and engage here in your own strength, but in the strength of the Lord Jesus: you are to trust and rely upon him who performeth all things for us; Psalm lvii. 2; for he is become surety for our duty as well as for our debt. Now, whatever be our own weakness, we should not scruple to engage with such an able surety.

### DIRECTION III.

*Believe, and be persuaded, that communicating is not only a duty, but that it is a duty incumbent upon you to communicate frequently.*

BAPTISM being a sacrament appointed for the initiation and implantation of believers into the church, it is to be received but once by the same person, and not to be reiterated; but the Lord's supper being a sacrament instituted for the nutrition, increment, and growth of believers, it is often to be received and repeated by them. And this may be confirmed by many reasons:—

I. Frequent partaking of the Lord's supper is enjoined by the same authority which instituted it. For Christ tells us, that we are not only to eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, but we are to do it often, as is clearly imported in our Lord's words, recited by the apostle; 1 Cor. xi. 25, "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." And again, ver. 36, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come." Now, when our Lord doth expressly command the duty in these words, the word OFTEN, as necessary in the doing of it, it is all one as if he had said, "Do this often in remembrance of me." So that for christians to communicate seldom, is disobedience to Christ, and a contempt of divine authority; for our Redeemer is God, and we are to look upon his commands as the same with the commands of God the Father, seeing he approved of our Mediator, and of every thing he did. Had not his institution been agreeable to

his Father's will, he had not been so welcomed at his return to heaven, and advanced to such royal dignity, to sit upon his throne of glory.

II. In obedience to Christ's authority, the apostles and primitive christians did frequently partake of the Lord's supper; yea, it was their ordinary practice every Lord's day, as is evident from Acts xx. 7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them." The christians there are brought in as meeting together for partaking of the sacrament,—which is oft expressed by breaking of bread,—without any previous warning, because it was their ordinary custom so to do. And this practice was kept up in the church for several centuries after the apostles' death, as is testified by the historians and fathers of the ancient church. And from their practice of constant breaking of bread every Lord's day, the day was anciently called *dies panis*,—August epist. 119. And this primitive practice—according to some—was grounded upon that word; Ezek. xliii. 27, "And when these days are expired, it shall be on the eighth day, and so forward, the priests shall make your burnt-offerings upon the altar, and your peace-offerings, and I will accept you, saith the Lord God." Now, this vision containing a prophetic description of the gospel-times, and of the ceasing of the ceremonial law for daily sacrifices, by the eighth day they understand the Lord's day, as being the eighth day following upon the seventh, viz., the Jewish Sabbath, in room whereof it was to succeed. By burnt-offerings, the Lord's supper, as being the remembrance of the great burnt-offering whereby our peace was made. By peace-offerings, prayer and thanksgivings, which are called sacrifices, Heb. xiii. 15, and are the proper work for every Lord's day. The primitive christians were peculiarly fond of the Lord's supper: when they had the opportunity of a public assembly, though upon a week-day, as severals do observe from Acts ii. 46, they could not think of parting till they had celebrated the memorials of Christ's dying love. They reckoned this piece of worship a principal part of the christian religion, which in a manner doth comprehend all other parts of it, and is an epitome of the whole. They accounted it a chief means of conveying to them the benefits of their Redeemer's death. And they would not slight the occa-

sion of taking this provision and *Viaticum* in those stormy times, when they knew not when they might be snatched away by the fury of persecutors before the next day of public meeting.

III. The Lord's supper was appointed for the commemoration of the death and sufferings of Christ, and of his love to us manifested therein; and therefore we ought frequently to celebrate it for that end. Though gratitude to a merciful God, and love to him that loved us, and washed us in his blood, should engage us constantly to remember redeeming love; yet, alas! we are naturally unmindful of God, ungrateful to Christ our Saviour, and apt to forget his matchless love; and therefore we frequently need his help, which he of purpose hath instituted to renew our remembrance of him. Say not you can remember Christ frequently without this; for this were to make yourselves wiser than the institutor of this ordinance. Besides, may not experience tell you what faint thoughts and languid remembrance you ordinarily have of him, notwithstanding of the word read and preached, until this solemn ordinance doth return, and revive the memory of his love, and fix your thoughts more solemnly upon him? Ah! the body of death doth hinder us from remembering the Lord of life. It is not sufficient to commemorate his love once a year; there ought to be a constant and habitual remembering of our Redeemer's death;—and this habit must be acquired by frequent and reiterated acts of communicating. But supposing we could remember him without this, yet surely it would be base ingratitude to neglect to remember him in his own method, and by the means of his own choosing, when he might have put far harder conditions upon us.

IV. Christ hath appointed this sacrament as a spiritual meal for the nourishment and strength of his people, and for the growth and increase of their graces; and therefore it ought to be frequently received. Meals for the nourishment of our bodies must be often repeated, because of the frequent recurring of our needs: we are all so sensible of it, that we do not refuse to come frequently to our stated meals. And though it be not told us how often we should eat and drink, yet our craving appetites, and the sense of our want of food and strength are sufficient to direct in this matter; and should not the

sense of our soul's need of spiritual food and strength, direct us to frequency in communicating? We are weak of ourselves, and the best are liable to frequent decays of grace; and we have all need of frequent supplies of strength, to enable us to perform duties, bear crosses, resist enemies, and beat down lusts; and consequently we have frequent need of this quickening, restoring, and strengthening meal, which Christ hath graciously provided for us in this ordinance. It is hereby that faith is strengthened, repentance renewed, love inflamed, desires sharpened, and the soul encouraged, and confirmed in the ways of God.

V. This ordinance was instituted for bringing us to near communion with God; and therefore should be frequently celebrated and attended by us. Hence it is that we call it the communion, according to that word; 1 Cor. x. 16. And as the apostle tells us there, ver. 19, 20, that the partaking of things sacrificed to idols was a fellowship with devils; so here the partaking of that which was sacrificed to God is a fellowship with God. In this ordinance there is more communion to be had with God, than in any other; more than in prayer or praise; for we have not so near communion with a prince or great man, by petitioning him, or returning him thanks for a favour received, as we have by sitting with him at his table, and partaking of the same bread and the same cup with him. It is here that believers sit, feast, and converse familiarly with Jesus Christ. Christ was made known to his disciples in the breaking of bread, though they knew him not before in the opening of the scriptures; Luke xxiv. 30, 31. Now, if it be our duty to seek frequent communion and converse with God, and frequent views and discoveries of Jesus Christ, then surely it is our duty to make frequent approaches to the Lord's table. Do we think that we can too oft behold a crucified Jesus? Can we too oft clasp about our bleeding High Priest? can we too oft hear the music of his voice, or see the beauty of his face? Surely, if we love him, we will desire frequently to be in those ways where we may meet with him.

VI. This sacrament is an excellent mean for the weakening of sin, and keeping it under; and therefore we should frequently attend it. The soul is most animated and resolved against sin, when it sees God's wrath and

indignation manifested against it: now, where can we behold this so well as in this ordinance, which represents the dreadful agonies and sufferings of Christ, our surety? Here we may see Christ sacrificed to justice, overwhelmed with blood, made a curse, and bearing all that wrath and vengeance which the law threatened for sin. The soul's looking upon Christ here, doth open the spring of sorrow for sin; Zech. xii. 10. Our frequent approaches to a wounded Saviour here, do kindle frequent resolutions against sin that pierced him, and make us look and cry to him for grace to subdue it. Now, this is what we are constantly needing: for there is still a root of bitterness in us always sprouting up; but frequent approaches to this ordinance do contribute to curb and crop it. Sin and lusts of themselves are apt to revive and gather strength; but the sacramental cup is poison to them. Do you think, then, that we can too oft take up this cup into our hands, or put our hands into Christ's wounds, or take a view of this sin-killing blood?

VII. This ordinance is a choice mean of strengthening our faith in the promises, and confirming us in the sense of Christ's love; and therefore it should be frequently celebrated. It was upon this account that so great joy and gladness did attend the keeping of the passover of old; 2 Chron. xxx. 21, 26. It was the frequent breaking of bread that made the primitive christians to continue in their gladness of heart; Acts ii. 46. And no wonder a man's heart be glad, and he be encouraged to go on his way rejoicing, when he gets a new seal of his pardon and peace with God. We frequently contract guilt, and thereby blot our evidences, and disturb our peace; and therefore we need to come frequently to this ordinance to get the blood of sprinkling applied, for removing our guilt, clearing our evidences, sealing our peace, and renewing our joy. It is matter of joy to see the rainbow appearing frequently in the clouds, as a sign of God's minding his covenant, and securing the world against a destroying deluge. In like manner, it should rejoice the heart, and strengthen faith, frequently to behold this sacrament, which, like the rainbow in the clouds, is a sign of God's securing the believing world against the overflowing flood of God's wrath.

VIII. We need frequently the influences of the Holy Spirit; and therefore should come frequently to this or-

dinance ; for in this sacrament it is most likely that the Spirit will work and exert himself—when the office of the Spirit, and end of the institution, do meet and agree in one. The office of the Spirit is to bring things to our remembrance, and the chief design of this ordinance is to bring a crucified Jesus, and his love and sufferings, to remembrance. Now, surely, it is the most likely time for the Holy Spirit to come and exercise his blessed function, and join in with the end of the sacrament. Hither then should becalmed souls frequently repair, and wait for the Spirit's gales.

I might add many other arguments ; but surely, if we had a due sense of our soul's necessities, we should need no more to convince us of the necessity of frequent communicating. Do not we feel our needs frequently recurring, our graces languishing, faith weakening, love cooling, affections turning dead ? Are we not apt frequently to grow cold and formal in hearing and praying, yea, dull and lukewarm in all our performances ? And have we not frequent need of this reviving and enlivening ordinance, to recruit us with new strength and quickening ? but, alas ! we have little sense of our soul's wants, and little sense of our Saviour's love ; otherwise we would not be so unwilling frequently to remember such an incomparable friend and benefactor, who took our sins upon himself, and cast upon us the robe of his righteousness. Did primitive christians think once a-week little enough to commemorate his love, and shall modern christians reckon once a-year sufficient ? Is this our kindness to the always lovely and loving Jesus ? O, will we not remember him frequently, who remembers believers perpetually !

### *Objections Answered.*

*Objec. I.* But, say some, the zeal and devotion of the apostolic age is now gone ; and christians are become more careless and formal in religious duties than in those days, and so are unfit for frequent partaking of this solemn ordinance.

*Ans. 1st.* I grant, indeed, the first christians were animated with more life and love, and were habitually in a better frame for this love-feast, than, alas ! the most of us are : yet I am persuaded you will not deny but we

are under the same obligations of love and gratitude to our dying Redeemer that they were, and have as much need of the frequent application of his blood, and a confirmed interest in his meritorious death, as they had. And seeing our obligations and exigencies are the same, our differing so widely from their practice cannot be justified.

*2dly.* The ancient church did follow the example of the apostolic age, in communicating generally every Lord's day, for several hundreds of years after the apostles' days, as might be made appear by many quotations, if it were needful, out of the histories and writings of Eusebius, Cyprian, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, and many others of the ancient fathers. As the blood of Christ is as fresh and efficacious in the present as the first centuries of the church, so it should be as dear and precious to christians in this as any former age.

*3dly.* It is most sad that christians should be so easy under the decay of piety and love to a crucified Jesus, that is so visible in these latter days. Should not the consideration hereof be matter of bitter lamentation and complaint to all the lovers of Christ, and put us incessantly to cry to heaven, Wilt thou not revive us again? Renew our days as of old.

*4thly.* Is there not ground to think, that the decay of piety and christian love in our days is much owing to the neglect and infrequent use of this soul-quickening ordinance? No wonder that our hearts turn hard, when we so seldom have recourse to Christ's blood for softening them: that our graces grow weak and withered, when we so little use Christ's appointed means for cherishing and strengthening them: and that we have but little of the smiles of his face, when we so little regard his dying words. Frequent communicating in Christ's own way and method, might be a mean, through his blessing, to revive decayed religion, to keep sin under constant rebukes and disgrace, and Christ in continual esteem and respect among us. This might contribute to cure and prevent that formality in duty, carelessness of spirit, and forgetfulness of Christ, which so wofully prevails in our land.

*Objec. II.* If we communicate often, as you urge us, we are afraid frequency will breed formality in this duty.

*Ans. 1st.* The apostles and primitive christians found no such bad effect of their frequent partaking; but were

farther from formality, and far more serious, fervent, and spiritual in this duty, than those christians who now partake but once a-year.

*2dly.* Our formality in attending this ordinance is nowise chargeable upon the institution of Christ, or its frequent administration, but upon the corruption and carelessness of our hearts, which all christians should carefully watch and wrestle against, and labour in the strength of Christ, so oft as they partake, to prepare for it with all seriousness and solemnity.

*3dly.* Were this a good reason against frequency in this duty, it might be pleaded against frequency in other duties also; and so we should seldom read or hear the word; seldom meditate on God, pray, or sing psalms, lest frequency should beget formality therein. But it is a bad way of arguing, to say, because frequency in prayer, hearing, or communicating, may occasion formality and heart-wanderings, therefore I will seldom pray, &c. No; the inference should rather be, therefore I will watch over my heart more carefully; I will look for the renewed influences of the Spirit, and strive to be more sincere and fervent in duty.

*4thly.* Though frequency in partaking should have a bad effect on some, yet it hath and will have a good effect upon others who make conscience of preparing for the duty. Instead of breeding formality, it doth beget the greater liveliness and spirituality in them, and raise their appetite the more after the heavenly manna. It is certain, the oftener we carefully and believingly communicate, the better disposed we shall be for new approaches.

*Objec.* III. The Jews did partake of the passover only once in the year.

*Ans.* God fixed the passover to a certain day of the year, to mind them of their temporal deliverance from Egypt, as well as of their future redemption by the Messiah's death at that time; and therefore, it was annual. But, besides that, they had their daily sacrifices of slain beasts in the temple, which were lively types of Christ, and remembrances to them of his death; so that the Jews did not need such a frequent celebration of the passover for that end. But, in the New Testament church, Christ hath settled only his supper as the great ordinance of commemoration of his death and sufferings; and therefore we ought not to confine ourselves to the Jews' annual

custom ; nay, on the contrary, christians now, to whom Christ hath made such bright discoveries of his love, in sacrificing himself upon the cross for their salvation, should far exceed the Jews—who lived in such dark times—in expressing love to their Saviour, and in celebrating the memorials of his love to them. The love of the primitive christians was so warm this way, that they thought themselves bound to celebrate their gospel-passover in remembrance of a crucified Christ once a-week, which the Jews did but once a-year.

*Objec. IV.* But, saith one, my business and calling in the world is such, that I have not liberty for frequent communicating, neither have I occasions near me for doing it.

*Ans. 1st.* I grant that all men cannot communicate alike often, seeing the worldly calling and affairs of one man do administer more distractions than those of another ; and some cannot command their time so much as others.

*2dly.* People should do what lies in them to order their affairs so before-hand, that they may have freedom for frequent communicating. But if persons have business brought on them, not by themselves, but by the providence of God, they are excusable for their omission at one occasion, but then they should be careful to lay hold upon the next. In keeping of the passover, there was a dispensation allowed to those that were under ceremonial uncleanness, or engaged in business on a journey ; Numb. ix., yet it was allowed not for a year, but for a month's omission. For, when they could not keep it upon the fourteenth day of the first month, they were ordered to keep it the fourteenth day of the next month, and not to stay until the next annual revolution ; Numb. ix. 10, 11. As it would be agreeable to this injunction, so it would be a desirable attainment in the church, and an advantage to the members of it, if matters were so ordered among us, that when persons are necessarily hindered from partaking of the Lord's supper in their own congregation, they might be sure of an occasion to do it next month, if not in their own, at least in a neighbouring congregation.

*Objec. V.* The last time I was at the Lord's table, I got no benefit by it, nay, I fear I communicated unworthily ; now, for me to come frequently in this manner, I fear to contract greater guilt, and do myself more hurt than good. Therefore, I will not soon adventure upon another approach.

*Ans. 1st.* There are some good things implied in this objection, such as a review of former actions, some sense of sin, and trouble for it, and a loathness to offend God, which are some desirable tokens of repentance, and may yield some comfort to an exercised soul.

*2dly.* In this case, long deferring will do you more hurt than frequent communicating; for as, by too much fasting, we often lose our stomachs, so, by long withdrawing from the Lord's table, you may come to lose your desire after the food of your souls, and to have a low esteem of Christ, and of his solemn ordinance.

*3dly.* There is no communicant but, upon a review, may spy many defects in his frame and preparation, for which he could not answer, if God did enter into judgment with him, but he must not therefore abandon his duty, but flee to Christ's fountain for washing, and to the covert of his righteousness to screen all his imperfections. We read of several in Hezekiah's time, 2 Chron. xxx., that were not so suitably prepared for the passover as they should have been, and ate it otherwise than it was written, and yet, upon Hezekiah's praying for them, God pardoned their sin and healed them.

*4thly.* It may yield comfort to a troubled soul, if, upon a review, he can say, it was his earnest desire to communicate humbly, with a lively frame, and the exercise of all the sacramental graces; and whatever shortcomings he was chargeable with, they were not wilful and allowed, but matter of grief and mourning to him. If this be your case, then your defects are sins of infirmity, which your gracious God will pardon for Christ's sake.

*5thly.* Whatever your shortcomings formerly have been, you ought to be humbled for them, flee to the blood of Christ for pardon, and resolve, in his strength, to come more reverently, humbly, and believingly to his table for the future, and in that order to renew your covenant with God, and receive a seal of the pardon of all your former sins, and particularly of the sin of unworthy communicating. This you may expect, if you persevere in the road of duty, looking to God in Christ, who is still ready to welcome and pardon the penitent believer; but to absent and withdraw from God's ordinance, is to put yourself out of the road of his mercy, and to aggravate your former sin of unsuitable partaking.

*Objec. VI.* If we did communicate so frequently, we

would not have such time to prepare ourselves for this ordinance as were needful, and as now we have.

*Ans.* If we did partake more frequently, less pains and time about preparation-work might be more successful, and sooner reach the end, than all the pains and time we now bestow that way; for thus we might be helped to keep up a communion-frame habitually, and it would be no such difficulty—as we now find it—to get the tears of repentance poured out, or the fire of divine love blown up, when called to celebrate this ordinance. The believer, when in a right frame, the oftener he comes to the communion, he finds the more nourishment, and hath the greater delight in it; and so he comes to have such a longing for the ordinance as the child hath for the mother's breast.

#### DIRECTION IV.

*Be persuaded of the Necessity of Solemn Preparation before you approach to the Lord's Table.*

IF we be required to take heed to ourselves when we enter the house of the Lord, Eccl. v. 1, much more doth it concern us to look to ourselves when we approach the table of the Lord.—Why? This holy table is, under the gospel, the solemn trysting-place of the great God, where he useth to meet with men, and to entertain converse and communion with them. And have we not, then, ground to call you in the prophet's words; Amos iv. 12, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" Remember who it is that trysts with you; it is God, even thy God. Did an angel tryst to meet you at a certain place, against such an hour, would you not prepare, with all seriousness and solemnity, to keep tryst with him? Oh, but it is the God of angels that trysts with you here! even that God before whom all the angels adore, and the devils tremble; a holy and jealous God, who hath declared that he will be sanctified in them that come nigh to him; Lev. x. 3. And can you come so near him any where in the world, as at his holy table? What Sammel spoke to the elders of Bethlehem, in the case of offering sacrifice, may well be applied to communicants in the case of approaching to the Lord's table; 1 Sam. xvi. 5, "Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." So, well

may your minister say to you, "Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrament." Come here, and behold the sacrifice of the Lamb of God unto divine justice for your sins; for even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; 1 Cor. v. 7. Here he is presented as a lamb slain, to pacify a holy God for our impurity and unholiness. It is most fit, then, that we prepare and sanctify ourselves when we adventure so near this holy God, and take upon us to celebrate the commemoration of this blessed sacrifice in our gospel-passover.

The Jews had their preparation for their passover; John xix. 14. They took the paschal lamb, and set it apart from the rest of the flock on the tenth day of the month, but did not kill it till the fourteenth; Exod. xii. 3—6. And, during the four days the lamb was kept alive, Jewish rabbis tell us, they tied it to their bed-posts, that, hearing the bleating of the lamb, as they came in and went out, lay down and rose up, two things, thereby, might be brought to their remembrance: *1st*, They might look back to Egypt, and remember the sorrows and bondage they endured there, and be thankful for their redemption; and, especially for their deliverance from the destroying angel that night he passed over their houses, which were sprinkled with the blood of the lamb. *2dly*, They were to look forward to the Messiah, and remember the bitter agonies and sufferings he was to endure for their sins. Thus the paschal lamb, for several days, was to be prepared for its sufferings, to teach the people of God solemnly to prepare themselves for eating thereof, and, therein, to celebrate the memorial of the Messiah's sufferings, which were thereby typified. That four days' separation of the lamb was a continual standing sermon, preaching preparation to the Israelites, as if God had said to them, Be ye also sequestered from the world, and take time to think on the bleating of the lamb, the agonies of Christ, and prepare yourselves for this solemn ordinance. Oh! what shall we say of those who, instead of four days, never spent four hours in serious preparation for our great gospel-passover! O worthy communicant, as soon as you hear the Lord's supper intimated, let the lamb be tied to your bed-posts; entertain the lively meditation of your Redeemer's sufferings, and beg preparation of heart from God for celebrating the memorial thereof.

Was our Lord so long a time in preparing for them, and shall we take no time in preparing to behold them, especially when it is so highly for our advantage so to do?

We read that the primitive christians and ancient fathers used to sit up whole nights at prayer before they approached the Lord's table, which they called their *vigiliæ*.

In this ordinance, God makes great preparations for us; he hath provided a feast which hath cost more than ten thousand kingdoms, or a million of worlds; and ought not the guests who are honoured with an invitation to it, to make great and solemn preparation for it? Were we called to dine with an earthly prince, we would dress ourselves, and would see to have every thing about us in good order; but here we are called to feast with a holy and all-seeing God, who will, infallibly, spy out every unprepared communicant, "when he comes in to see the guests."

If the linen on the communion table, or the vessels that contain the elements, were foul, you would be ready to cry out, It is a horrid shame and abomination to see them in such a case; and so, indeed, it would, for there ought to be an outward decency in these things: our Lord would have the very room in good order, where he was to eat the passover. But, O! it is a small crime to have a foul cloth or vessel for receiving the outward elements, in respect of what it is to have a foul heart, an unprepared soul, to receive the body and blood of Christ.

Joseph prepared himself, by shaving himself, and changing his raiment, before he went in unto Pharaoh; and wilt thou not prepare thyself, by putting thy soul in the holiest dress, and humblest posture, when thou art to go in to the King of heaven and earth? O communicant, thou exceedingly wrongest thine own soul if thou do it not! Preparation is the seed-time, receiving is the harvest; "As a man soweth, so shall he reap. He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly: and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully," 2 Cor. ix. 6. It is in the duty of partaking as in the duty of praying—the more prepared the heart is to pray, the greater is a man's return from heaven; Psalm x. 17, "Thou wilt prepare their heart—thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." So, in the case of receiving, it may be said, "Thou wilt prepare their heart—thou wilt cause

thine hand to give." When God gives us a heart prepared for duty, it is a token he hath a hand prepared for mercy.

Hence it is, that the Lord makes that gracious promise; Psalm lxxxix. 10, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." I'll enlarge my hand as you enlarge your hearts. He saith, as Joseph said to his steward; Gen. xlv. 1, "Fill the men's sacks with food as much as they can carry." According as Joseph's brethren prepared sacks in number and largeness, so did they carry corn away; and the fewer and smaller sacks they had, the less carried they away. So, here, if you bring prepared and enlarged hearts to the ordinance, you shall be supplied with as much as you can carry.

#### DIRECTION V.

*Consider, that both habitual and actual preparation is requisite for worthy communicating.*

1. **HABITUAL** preparation is necessary to every communicant; that is, that he be a believer, a man in a gracious state, furnished with the graces of the Spirit, endued with knowledge, faith, repentance, love, and new obedience. No man is fit to approach the Lord's table, till he have these gracious habits planted in his soul. He must be a man that is renewed inwardly by the Spirit of God, and aims at holiness in all manner of conversation. This new wine must not be put into an old vessel, else the wine will be spilt, and the vessel perish. It was an ancient abuse of this sacrament, condemned by the Carthaginian council, to give it to dead men; so it is an abuse condemned by the word of God, to give it to dead souls, and those who have no spiritual life. Under the law God did forbid the offering of sacrifices that either were blind or lame, Mal. i. 8; and they that were ceremonially unclean, could not keep the passover. The ignorant person's sacrifice is blind, for he cannot give account of his own work; the hypocrite's sacrifice is lame, for he halteth on God's way. The profane man is morally unclean, and so cannot entertain communion with a holy God. Holiness becometh God's house, and in a special manner his table. Habitual holiness is requisite for all that would be worthy communicants. You

must be holy universally, holy in the frame of your hearts, and in all the actions of your lives ; holy in your shops, by diligence and justice ; holy at your tables, by sobriety and thankfulness ; holy in the streets, by an innocent, useful conversation ; holy in your closets, by prayer and meditation. Yea, you must account your whole lives nothing but an opportunity of serving a holy God, and of mortifying sin and corruption ; and this habitual holiness would dispose your souls for the acts of immediate worship.

But unholy persons are altogether unprepared for such a near approach to God. Hearts full of rancour and malice are not meet to come to a feast of love ; feet that walk in the ways of sin are not fit to tread in God's holy place ; hands stained with injustice are unfit to handle these holy mysteries ; mouths that are polluted by swearing and evil speaking, are not fit to eat and drink the sacred symbols of Christ's body and blood ; eyes defiled with unchaste looks, and bewitched with the world's vanities, are unfit to look on the holy Jesus ; ears that entertain reproaches of God's people, and hearken not to the counsels of his word, are not fit to hear the joyful sound of pardon intimated at his table. They who expect the King of glory to enter in into their souls at this solemn occasion, must have the doors thereof cleanly and pure. Unhallowed sinners are not fit to receive this hallowed bread and wine. Our Lord's body never saw corruption in the grave ; nor will he lodge in those bodies that are as noisome sepulchres and corrupt sinks of sin. It lay only in a virgin womb and sepulchre, to show that he will only reside in virgin souls, that are devoted and consecrated to his use, and kept pure and chaste for his service, and do not entertain his rivals. I grant, indeed, impure thoughts will sometimes be crowding in to the best hearts ; but if we do not entertain them, but sincerely strive against them, and earnestly wish for better company, it is a token Christ's spirit hath entered, and is about this work of purifying the heart.

If we would be habitually prepared for the Lord's table, we must be daily acquaint with the work of mortification and true repentance. We must always eye sin as our Saviour's deadly enemy, have no pity on it, but severely condemn ourselves for every trespass, instantly grieve for it, look to the blood of sprinkling for pardon,

renew our resolutions to amend, and pray for special strength against every particular sin. We must daily meditate on precious Christ, and upon his first and second coming, and live continually in the view of death. And if we lived thus, it would not be so hard to prepare ourselves for the Lord's table. If we lived in an habitual preparation for the day of death, we would also be habitually prepared for the day of communion. Had we God frequently in our thoughts, and lived constantly under the sense of his all-seeing eye, on the communion-day we should find little else to do but revive our graces by the exercise of prayer and praise.

II. Actual preparation is also necessary before our approach to the Lord's table. Seeing, alas! the most part of christians in this degenerate age are so defective in their habitual preparation for this ordinance, they ought to be the more diligent in actual preparation for it. And this doth consist in a great many particulars; such as, 1. Sequestering ourselves from the world. 2. Self-examination. 3. Humiliation for sin. 4. Renewing our personal covenant with God in Christ. 5. Reformation of what is amiss. 6. Exciting of all the graces to a lively exercise. 7. Meditation on the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ. 8. Earnest prayer to God for preparation and assistance in the work. All these belong to our actual preparation for the Lord's supper, and of them I shall afterwards treat more particularly.

Only I shall here observe, that both habitual and actual preparation must go together, if we would be worthy communicants. We must both have grace in the habit, and grace in the lively exercise. All wise virgins, that wait for the coming of the bridegroom, do take care to have oil still in their vessels, as well as in their lamps; nay, they must see to have their lamps burning every day. But when they hear that the bridegroom is actually coming, then, in order to meet him, they do arise, and fall afresh to the trimming of their lamps; they snuff them, stir up the light, and apply more oil to make them burn the brighter and clearer. And this you ought to do, O communicant, if you would have a joyful meeting with the lovely Bridegroom in the sacrament. Nay, if you come not with the actual, as well as with the habitual, preparation, the sacrament may prove to you as the summer-brooks to the thirsty traveller, of which Job

speaks; Job vi. 19, 20, "The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them. They were confounded because they had hoped; they came thither and were ashamed." Some come to the sacrament with a sort of actual preparation, but have no habitual preparation; no grace in the habit. Some again have habitual, but not actual, preparation; they want grace in exercise. But these will go from the ordinance as the troops of Tema, and companies of Sheba, disappointed of spiritual refreshment. If we would reap spiritual advantage in this ordinance, we must take care to be ready both ways, habitually and actually, for it is only such that the all-seeing Master of the feast will look upon as worthy communicants.

#### DIRECTION VI.

*Be convinced of the greatness of the Sin and Hazard of Unworthy Communicating.*

WE are told both the one and the other in very plain terms, 1 Cor. xi. 27—29, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." And again, "He eateth and drinketh damnation [or judgment] to himself." So that we see the sin and crime is no less than that of murdering Jesus Christ, and of being found accomplices of the Jews and soldiers who imbrued their cruel hands in the innocent blood of the Son of God, which is a most dreadful charge! The hazard which this sin exposes to is both temporal strokes and eternal damnation. Seeing I have spoke of the nature and danger of this sin, Sac. Cat. pp. 107, 108, 110, &c. [*first edit.*] I shall say the less in this place.

Only, to communicate unworthily, is to approach in an unworthy state, or in an unsuitable frame, or with wrong ends. When a person comes to the Lord's table in ignorance, without self-examination, without grief for sin, love to Christ, or faith in his blood, and is unprepared for this solemn ordinance, then he is an unworthy communicant.

Now, this must be a very heinous sin; for it imports your undervaluing the blood of Jesus Christ, as if it were the blood of an impostor or malefactor. For if you look on the sufferings of Christ here represented as

the sufferings of the innocent Son of God, and glorious Saviour of mankind, why do you not come suitably affected therewith, and grieved for your sins that were the cause thereof? But, if you do not really own or regard them as such, then on the matter you charge Jesus Christ as being the greatest impostor and criminal in the world, in declaring himself to be the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners, when, in your esteem, he was not.

If you say, "God forbid we be guilty of this; we own Christ to be the Son of God, and the King of glory;" why then are you guilty of treason, and of offering the greatest indignity to your Prince, by throwing his picture or great seal into a mire, by defacing or defiling a statue erected for his honour and remembrance? For any dishonour done to the image or representation reflects upon the original. What horrid contempt would it be for a subject to come in with nasty clothes and filthy hands, and offer to sit down at his sovereign's table, and dip into the dish with him? Now, all this, and much worse you do, when you sit down unprepared at the Lord's table, and eat and drink unworthily.

Nay, you are guilty hereby of the basest disingenuity, and of solemn mocking of the Lord Jesus Christ; for, by coming to the Lord's table, you pretend to be doing honour to Christ, to be deeply affected with his sufferings, and to declare your abhorrence of sin that was the cause thereof. Now, when there is really no such thing, but, on the contrary, sin is hugged and embraced, what is this but horrid dissimulation with an all-seeing God? Yea, it is an acting of Judas' part over again, a betraying "the Son of man with a kiss."

But, which is worst of all, by this sin you become guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; for, as he is justly reckoned accessory to a murder, who either consents to it, makes light of it, or that abets and entertains the murderers; so unworthy communicants, who look upon the death and sufferings of the Son of God without remorse for their sins that pierced him, nay, love and lodge those traitors in their hearts that betrayed and crucified the Lord of glory, are plainly accessory to the Jews' horrid guilt of shedding the blood of Jesus Christ.

It is a fearful thing to be guilty of any man's blood, even of the blood of a wicked man; but how much more to be guilty of the blood of a righteous person, even of

the Holy One of God? Simple murder is a crying sin; Gen. iv. 10, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the ground." It cries so that it gives God no rest, as it were, till he come and take vengeance on the shedder of it. Nature's light taught the barbarians, that vengeance should not suffer a murderer to live; Acts xxviii. 3. But O what a cry do you think the innocent blood of Christ must have against the guilty communicant? It is terrible to have that blood which pleads for sinners, crying against thee. Christ's blood, applied by faith, speaks "better things than that of Abel;" but, when it is trampled on in the sacrament, it doth speak and cry worse things than that of Abel: it will cry for more terrible vengeance than Abel's blood cried for. Woe to that poor soul for whom Christ's blood speaks not, but ten thousand woes to that soul which this blood speaks against!

It is the worst kind of treason to shed the blood of an earthly king; but what wickedness must it be to shed the blood of the King of kings, one drop whereof is more precious than all the blood which ever ran in the veins of the kings and princes of the world since its first creation! We see what David said concerning the motion for killing king Saul, "Who can stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?" 1 Sam. xxi. 9. But O! who can be guiltless that stretches out his hand against the Son of God? "Had Zimri peace who slew his master?" cried Jezebel to Jehu; 2 Kings ix. 31. And thinkest thou to have peace, O communicant, that goest to slay thy Master and Redeemer too? If God declared, that on him who slew Cain vengeance should be taken sevenfold, Gen. iv. 15, what vengeance shall be taken on him that slayeth Jesus Christ? Hadst thou never harsh thoughts of the Jews for their cruelty to the Son of God, and yet wilt thou be guilty of worse thyself? The Jews crucified him but once, but thou, by continuing to be an unworthy receiver, crucifiest him often—they did it ignorantly, but thou dost it knowingly. And the time when thou committest this sin, makes thy guilt prodigiously great. Would it not be reckoned a piece of the most barbarous wickedness in a poor traveller, that was found starving by the way-side, and out of pity taken in by a person given to hospitality, for him to rise up, without any provocation, and stab his kind friend,

while he was entertaining him at his own table? What a monstrous crime would this be! But how much more is it for you to pierce and stab Jesus Christ, when he is making a rich feast for you, displaying his banner of love, and inviting you to take sanctuary in his wounds!

It was a dreadful curse and imprecation that the Jews wished against themselves; Matt. xxvii. 25, "His blood be on us and on our children;" and now it has accordingly lain upon their heads these 1600 years, which has made them the most miserable people on the face of the earth. And wilt thou venture, by a rash approach to the Lord's table, to bring the Jews' curse upon thyself? Nay, stand in awe of this sin, and the curse following on it, and say with David, when Abishai persuaded him to slay Saul, "The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed." So, when Satan, or thy own heart, would persuade thee to be slight in thy self-examination, formal in thy humiliation for sin, and careless in thy preparation for this ordinance, that thou mightest be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, let conscience then cry out, God forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against Jesus Christ, the Lord's anointed! How can I do this wickedness and sin against God, and wrong my own soul?

O communicant, if thou venture on this horrid crime, God will remember it against thee, and make it bitter to thee another day in another place, if mercy prevent not. As Reuben told his brethren when they were in distress; Gen. xlii. 22, "Spake I not unto you, saying, Sin not against the child, and ye would not hear; therefore, behold, his blood is required." So, if thou approach to the Lord's table in sin, or in a formal way, and without preparation, then look for it, when affliction, sickness, or death comes, or at least in the other world, that conscience will fly in thy face, and say, "Spake I not unto thee, saying, Do not sin against the holy child Jesus, and thou wouldst not hear? Therefore, behold, his blood is required at thy hands. And O what wilt thou do in such an hour!"

If thou wouldst prevent such a challenge, take heed to thy preparation, and notice the frame of thy heart. Remember, God will take exact notice what respect thou hast to the body and blood of his Son, and how thou preparest to receive it; Matt. xxii. 11—13, "And when

the King came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not a wedding-garment." Christ observes all those that come to his table; and if there be but one unprepared, he cannot escape his eye, be the number or crowd ever so great. He observes with what appetite thou goest to this heavenly feast. He observes with what resolution against sin for time to come, thou goest for pardon of sins past! He notices, O communicant, if thou goest to this gospel-ordinance in a gospel-order. And wilt thou dare to trample on the blood of the Son of God, as the blood of the malefactor, and even when he himself stands by and looketh on? Will not the sense of his piercing eye overawe you at such a time? Surely, if in any time of thy life thou wouldst be extraordinarily serious, this ought to be the season. Now, thou oughtest so to prepare for this feast, that the Master of it may see thou art watchful of his eye, tender of his honour, and fearful of his anger. Forget not what was the fate of that man who came to the wedding-feast without a wedding-garment; when the king challenged him, he was speechless; and his sentence was, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into utter darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Remember also what strict orders were given concerning Mount Sinai, when God solemnly appeared on it; if a beast did but touch it, it was to be stricken through with a dart; and wilt thou venture to touch the table of the Lord with a beastly heart, a heart possessed with brutish lusts? Mayest thou not fear to be stricken through with a dart of God's wrath?

We read of some, as the emperor Henry, and Pope Victor II., who were poisoned with the sacrament by the wickedness of the priests, who mingled poison with the bread and wine. Didst thou, O communicant, apprehend that the bread and wine before thee were poisoned, would not the very suspicion make thee tremble to eat and drink of it? Well, if thou art an unworthy receiver, there is poison in it to thy soul, and thou hast ground to cry to the minister, as the sons of the prophets did to Elisha, 2 Kings iv. 40, "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot:" there is poison in the bread, there is wrath in the cup; how shall I partake, till this meal be sanctified to me, and my soul sanctified for it?

Our Lord makes a question, Luke xi. 11, "If a son ask bread of his father, will he give him a stone?" No, he will not deal so with a son that comes to his table sincerely to seek bread for his hungry soul; but with an enemy that comes unpreparedly to him, he will give a stone instead of bread. Unworthy receiving makes a transubstantiation here, it changeth the bread into a stone; so that it will no more nourish thy soul, than a stone would do thy body: nay, like a stone, it will choke and kill thee, if the Physician of souls do not prevent it.

We are told by the apostle, that unworthy receiving brings on temporal judgments, as well as spiritual and eternal. It brings on sickness and mortality on our bodies; 1 Cor. xi. 30, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." And some think it was the pestilence, or some such mortal distemper, that the Corinthians' unworthy receiving did bring on them. Well, let us think on this; surely, if ever the pestilence come into Scotland, we may look on unworthy communicating as a chief cause of this desolating stroke.

What a great risk, then, O sinner, dost thou run, when thou ventur'est to his holy table without due preparation! Thou even runnest upon the bosses of God's buckler, and provokest the vengeance of God against thyself. Thou mayest justly expect that God will turn it into such a feast to thee as Belshazzar's was to him, who in the time thereof saw "a hand upon the wall, writing his condemnation, so that his countenance was changed, his thoughts troubled him, and his knees smote one against another." In this ordinance you make a very near approach to God, that is infinitely holy, and who is terrible from his holy place. The nearer God's altar, the fire of divine jealousy burns the hotter; and a wrong touch or look at such a time is criminal, and may cost you dear. The Lord smote Uzzah dead for one rash touch which he gave the ark; he smote fifty thousand of the men of Bethshemish for an irreverent look into the ark; he devoured with fire from heaven Nadab and Abihu, for offering strange incense at his altar; and what he may do to thee for a rash approach to his holy table, none can tell. God may make thee a monument of wrath where thou sittest, strike thee dead with the bread in thy mouth, or the cup in thy hand; and if it be otherwise, thou wilt be highly indebted to the divine patience for sparing thee.

And indeed we have cause to be astonished at the matchless goodness and long-suffering of God, in suffering so many thousands of vile murderers to live so long in his world, and that he should suffer them to approach his table, and to wound and stab his dear Son over and over again, when he hath flames and vengeance at command, and can more easily crush them all, than we can do a moth; and which is yet more, that he should unto such murderers make and repeat his offers of that blood which they have spilt, to wash them from the guilt of shedding it. And indeed, it is this, and nothing but this, which is able to do it.

But though God be patient and merciful, he will not bear always with such criminals: no, he hath many spiritual and invisible judgments, which he inflicts upon them; he makes fearful breaches upon their souls. He frequently lets loose Satan against them, so that Satan enters in with the sop. And how fearful a thing is it, for the devil to be permitted to enter into a man or woman, and to do it even at the Lord's table, so that the man rises up from this holy table with more eagerness after his lusts, and with more resolution and strength to do the devil's service, than before! And thus the table of the Lord becomes the table of devils, and the cup of the Lord the cup of devils, to such persons. And should God also let loose Satan against their bodies, as upon Judas after the sop, what terrible havoc would he make among unworthy communicants! how fearfully would he revenge the blood of Christ! many communion tables would he turn into Golgothas and Aceldamas, places of skulls and fields of blood.

As the sweetest wine becomes the sharpest vinegar, so communion love, when abused, brings the sorest wrath. The death and sufferings of Jesus Christ are the most serious and awful things that can be represented in the world, and therefore are not to be dallied with. The blood of Christ is the most precious thing in the world, and therefore a drop cannot be spilt without a cry for vengeance. And have not the best of us, alas! ground to fear we have contracted much of this guilt? Were our hearts never hard, our affections dead, our spirits carnal, and our minds wandering, when we have sat down at the Lord's table? Nay, have we not all reason to cry with David, Psal. li., "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness,

O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy loving-kindness?" Ought we not all carefully to guard, and earnestly to pray against this crying sin, and so prepare ourselves for this holy table, that we may not poison our precious souls with that choice cordial which is intended for our health and eternal welfare?

### DIRECTION VII.

*In order to your better preparation for the Lord's Supper, sequestrate yourselves from worldly cares and business some time before.*

WHEN you see the time of this solemn approach drawing near, separate yourselves from the world, and set earthly thoughts aside, that you may the better apply yourselves to the spiritual work you have in hand. Under the law, the Jews were unfit for keeping the passover at the time appointed, in two cases; Numb. ix.; either if they had touched a dead body, or were on a journey. The first made a man unclean, so that he behoved not to meddle with that holy ordinance, till he were cleansed according to the instituted method, which took up some time to do it. The second made him unfit, in regard his mind and thoughts would be so distracted with the business of his journey, that he could not be in a composed frame for keeping the passover; his heart would be unfixed, and disturbed with worldly thoughts.

There are not a few who seem to think, if they be free from a dead body, *i. e.* if they be not defiled with some gross or scandalous sin, they are fit enough for the sacrament; and that they may approach to it, though they have their hearts in journeys, travelling up and down after their worldly affairs. No, be not mistaken: a journey unfits you for the gospel-passover, as well as a dead body; a journeying, earthly heart, as well as a noted defilement by any gross sin. If you would be worthy receivers, you must be abstracted from the cares and vanities of this lower world, and seek after a staid, spiritual, and heavenly frame of heart. Be not as men in a journey when you come to the Lord's table, but lay aside all wandering and earthly thoughts! for if you harbour these about such a time, you will not be in case to answer the apostle's rule,

1 Cor. vii. 35, "Attend upon the Lord without distraction.

We are told, that in the temple of Jerusalem, notwithstanding of the great abundance of flesh sacrificed in it, not one fly was to be seen stirring there. And so it should be with us at the sacrament, not a fly of an earthly, wandering thought should be allowed to buzz or stir there. Now, if these flies be not driven away beforehand, they will surely pester you in the temple, and trouble you when you have most to do; nay, they will mar the duty, and corrupt the sacrifice, as that grievous swarm of flies, mentioned in Exod. viii. 24, did the land of Egypt.

It is a shrewd sign, then, that those who bring earthly and wandering hearts with them to the Lord's table, are Egyptians, not true Israelites; seeing they have the Egyptian plague of flies upon them. In the forecited place we are told, that there came a grievous swarm of flies into the houses of Pharaoh and his servants, and into all the land of Egypt, so that the land was corrupted thereby; but in the land of Goshen, where the Israelites dwelt, there were no swarms of flies. So, if you would be worthy communicants, ye should be at the sacrament, like the Israelites in Goshen, free from that Egyptian plague of flies; ye must not have swarms of earthly thoughts to trouble you there with their buzzing noise and importunity. And the only way to be free of them is, to drive them away timeously before, and purge your hearts of earthly affections.

You ought to do as Abraham, when he was called by God to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah; Gen. xxii. 4, 5, "When he saw the place afar off, he said to his young men, Abide you here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again unto you." Abraham knew, if they had gone alongst with him, they would have so disturbed him with their clamour and noise, that he could not have offered the sacrifice with any freedom and tranquillity of spirit; therefore, when he saw the place afar off, he orders them to stay behind. The same should we be doing with our worldly affairs, when we see the time afar off, and much more when we see the time approaching and at hand. Then we should give strict orders to all our earthly thoughts and business to stand aside, and not only not to go to the mount with us, but not to go to our closets and retiring places with us. Possibly, at such a time, some affair of importance may offer

to thy mind, and require to be considered; but treat all secular avocations as Nehemiah did Sanballat and Geshem, when they sent to him, (Neh. vi. 2,) saying, "Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages," &c. But mark how he answers them; ver. 3,—“And I sent messengers to them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease, whilst I leave it and come down to you?” And though these companions had so round and peremptory an answer, yet they were importuning him still; ver. 4, “Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort.” But he still answered them in the same manner. Thus it will be with a man when he begins to sequestrate himself for actual preparation for the sacrament; this and the other business will be calling upon him, that it may be considered and attended; but let your answer be, “I am doing a great work, I am preparing myself for the sacrament,—I cannot wait upon you; why should the work of preparation cease, whilst I leave it and attend upon you?” And though they haunt and importune you many times after this sort, yet still answer them in the same manner.

Likewise remember how Nehemiah treated those merchants that violated the Sabbath; Neh. xii. 19, “When it began to be dark before the Sabbath, I commanded the gates to be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath; and some of my servants I set at the gate.” Do so with your worldly affairs; shut up the gates of your hearts against them, and let them not be opened till all the duties of the solemn occasion be ended. Perhaps, like these merchants, they will be hovering about the gates for entrance; and therefore set conscience to watch at the gate, testify against them, rebuke and threaten them, as Nehemiah did. Let thy spirit, in a holy indignation, rise against them; check and chase them from you, as coming most unseasonably, to the hurt and prejudice of thy precious soul.

As our Saviour says about prayer, Matt. vi. 6, Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray; so may I say concerning preparation for the sacrament, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut the door, prepare thyself by meditation, self-examination and prayer; and especially sluit the doors of thy heart against secular cares and earthly thoughts about thy business, and then set upon the work. The work is so weighty,

that it requires all thy thoughts to be employed about it ; it concerns you to put your soul in the same order and state as if God were calling you to surrender it to him by death ; and, if you be not ready to die, neither are you to receive the sacrament. All communicants should be in such a posture as our Lord directs ; Luke xii. 21, “ Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning ; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord—that when he cometh and knocketh, you may open to him immediately.” Now, if your hearts be encumbered with worldly things, you cannot be in case to answer this direction : you cannot be in a fit, attentive posture to meet with, and wait upon the Master of the feast. O communicant, wouldst thou have this ordinance comfortable ? Say then some time before it, Farewell my wife and children, friends and secular concerns ; abide you here at the foot of the mount : be hushed and mortified, all irregular passions and affections ; you are a clog to my soul ; I have something else to do than attend you.

It is most lamentable to consider how many come to the sacrament in such an unprepared manner. Many are in their journeys when they sit down at the Lord’s table ; many, Egyptian-like, are environed with a swarm of flies—wandering and earthly thoughts ; many bring their servants and asses to the very mount of sacrifice ; many leave the Lord’s work in the very middle, to meet with their Sanballats and Geshems ; they open the gates on the very sacrament-day to their merchants ; nay, the world is both in their hearts and mouths about this solemn occasion.

If we would ask the question at many communicants which our Lord asked the two disciples he overtook going to Emmaus ; Luke xxiv. 17, “ What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk by the way ?” What manner of conference and communications were those ye had together when ye went home from the preparation-sermons ? Nay, those ye had the very morning as ye walked together to the church to receive the sacrament. How ashamed would many communicants be to tell what passed amongst them ! There are many who could not answer with these two disciples, verse 19, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth. We were talking concerning a crucified Jesus, our lovely Redeemer ; concerning the advantage of meet-

ing with him in the sacrament, and the preparation needful for that end. Nay, it is to be feared, the answer of many would be, if they should be ingenuous, We were talking about our corn, cattle, merchandise, families, relations, &c. These things, alas! many bring in their mouths to the church doors. But should we search more narrowly, and propose another question: "What manner of thoughts were those you entertained that night, or that morning, before the sacrament?" Oh! the world would cry, Fly and shame on the thoughts of many, if they were known. Well, remember it, our all-seeing Lord knows them all, and you may expect he will "answer you according to the idols of your hearts." O purge your hearts from vain thoughts, and sequestrate yourselves from worldly business, if you would rightly prepare for this ordinance and profit in partaking of it.

#### DIRECTION VIII.

*Set some time apart for the work of Self-examination before you approach to the Lord's Table.*

THIS is a duty indispensably necessary unto worthy partaking; 1 Cor. xi. 28, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." The word which the apostle useth here (*dokimazeto*.) signifies "a diligent and narrow search" into the nature and properties of a thing, as a goldsmith proves the goodness of his metal. It lies in a close and free communion with our conscience, and bringing our state and actions to be tried there by the rule of God's word. Self-examination is a reflex act of the mind, whereby we turn our eyes backward, and take a view of our by-past life; and also inward, in order to ransack the state of our hearts, and the principles and scope of our actions, by putting such questions to ourselves as these: What have we been doing? Wherein have we offended? What are we doing now? Where am I, and whither do I design to go? What shall I do to be saved? Wherewithal shall I appear before the Lord? This duty supposes a serious pause of the soul, an arresting of the thoughts, and an awakening of our powers and faculties to be attentive in this work, that we may proceed with all calmness and sincerity, seriousness and de-

liberation, in a matter so important, that we may find out the truth of our state, the sincerity of our performances, the corruptions of our hearts, and enormities of our lives. And this must be an exact and impartial search. A general survey of ourselves will not suffice to discover things as they really are; for Satan and our own hearts are very deceitful, and ready to impose upon us in this matter; therefore, we must be very faithful and particular in our examination before the sacrament, and not sist in generals, or content ourselves with a superficial inquiry. Some, at such an occasion, act like Nebuchaduezzar; Dan. ii. 3, 5, "I have dreamed a dream," says he, "but the thing is gone from me;" so say some, "I have sinned, I have come short;" but scarce can tell wherein, when put to it.

If you would deal faithfully in this work, you must retire from the world, and summon yourselves to the bar of your own consciences; accuse yourselves plainly, and try yourselves impartially by the laws of heaven registered in the holy scriptures. And if ye would have a just sentence pronounced concerning your state and ways, then you must, in the first place, look up to God for light, direction, and assistance; and then you must excite and awaken conscience to do its office, and to speak and judge for God; for though a judge be on the bench, yet if he be deaf, dumb, or asleep, he cannot judge. Conscience, then, must be roused up and charged to act faithfully; and you should pray to God for a lively and tender conscience, that will give just and impartial judgment. A deaf conscience that hears nothing, a dumb conscience that speaks nothing, a sleepy conscience that feels nothing, is the greatest plague in the world. But, O! it is a great mercy to have a waking and tender conscience, that will faithfully do its office in the duty of self-examination, especially before the sacrament.

This duty is absolutely necessary; for, without it, we cannot know how it is with us, we cannot know our plagues and miseries, our defects and necessities; and, till such time as we know these, we will neither value nor apply the remedy provided for us in the sacrament. Nay, we will be ready to mistake our condition, and think we are in a good state, that we have true grace, when we really have it not. There is much counterfeit grace in the world, and many are deceived therewith;

yea, there is no grace but what hath its counterfeit. What did Moses for a time, but the Egyptian sorcerers did the like? Did Moses turn the waters into blood? so did they. Did Moses bring frogs on the land? so did they. And the magicians' blood and frogs seemed as real as those produced by Moses, and yet they were nothing but counterfeits and external appearances. So there is nothing a true christian hath or can do, but hypocrites may have and do the same as to outward appearance. Therefore, it is necessary we bring our graces and duties to be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary.

O communicants! would you know how matters are with you now, and how it is like to fare with you for ever? Would you have your hearts affected with your condition, and made acquaint with Jesus Christ? Would you have a visit from Christ at his table? Would you have grace quickened, and your wants supplied? Would you be worthy receivers, and prevent you eating and drinking your own damnation?—then, examine yourselves before ye approach. Many a christian can declare, that the time of their searching themselves in their younger years, in order to prepare for the Lord's table, was the very time their hearts were first engaged to Jesus Christ and serious godliness. O wherefore is it that there are so many dead and formal communicants? why so many hard-hearted and impenitent sinners, who could never yet be brought to mourn for their sins, or turn from them to God and holiness? The reason is plain from God's word; Jer. viii. 6; Lam. iii. 40; Psalm cxix. 59; they are strangers to the duty of self-examination.

If you neglect to examine yourselves, remember you have to do with an all-seeing and heart-searching God, who will not fail to examine and find out every careless and unworthy communicant, to his utter shame and confusion. Christ, whose eyes are "as a flame of fire," will, certainly, come in and see the guests; and, when he comes, he will look narrowly upon them; and, though the house be full of guests, he will spy out one man that wants a wedding-garment; Matt. xxii. 11. In a great crowd or multitude, one single man might think to skulk, and not be found out; but we see that not one man can escape his piercing eye; far less, then, can forty, fifty, or an hundred unworthy communicants think to escape

in one of our congregations. Again, remember what was the fate of the man that came to the feast without the wedding-garment. In the first place, we see our Lord not only spied and singled him out, but he examined him also. The man had come without examining himself beforehand, whether he had this wedding-garment or no; but God smartly examined him. So that we see, those who will not be at the pains and trouble to examine themselves, God will examine them to purpose, yea, it would be such an examination as the chief captain commanded Paul to be examined with; Acts xxii. 24, viz., that he should be examined by scourging. Every question and interrogatory that God will put to a sinner, or an unworthy communicant, will have a lash or sting amongst with it. What a scourging question did he put to the man; Matt. xxii. 1, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment?" It was so sharp it drew blood of his conscience; nay, it stunned and confounded him, for it is said, "He was speechless." Friend, says he, why, thou professest thyself to be a friend of Christ, and dost associate thyself with his friends; but in thy heart thou art an enemy to Christ, a traitor that cometh to stab him under the fifth rib; "therefore bind him hand and foot, and take him away," &c., verse 13. In the mean time, the man is speechless—Christ-condemned and self-condemned; he had nothing to say against the justice of the sentence. The man that comes without a wedding-garment on his back, shall not go without chains and fetters on his feet, his hands, yea, on his heart, his will, his conscience, and his whole soul. Better for the man to have examined himself, and so to have prevented this terrible examination and sentence.

God's questions to unworthy receivers will be nonplusing and confounding. Consider these stinging interrogatories; Isa. i. 12, "Who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?" Psalm l. 16, "What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth?" Jer. vii. 9, 10, "Will ye steal, murder, commit adultery, and walk after other gods, and come and stand before me in this house?" Those be scourging examinations, that fetch blood at every stroke; and you may look for it, that God will come and examine thee thus, either by an awakened conscience in this life, or at a dying hour, or as soon as thou enterest into eternity; "and who may abide

the day of his coming?" Now, the way to prevent such an examination, is to examine yourselves: for, if we judge ourselves, we should not be judged. David did not fear God's examination, when he had examined himself sincerely beforehand; nay, with a humble confidence he doth appeal to God to search him; Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me," &c. Wouldst thou prevent the terror of God's search? then put searching questions to yourself beforehand, and see how matters are with your soul. It is better to have conscience awakened to search thee now, than to have it awakened in hell, where there is no place for repentance.

This is a duty incumbent, not only on natural and un-renewed men, and upon those who were not at the Lord's table before, but even upon the best of men, and those who have communicated frequently. We can never be too sure about our soul's estate; besides, we daily contract new guilt, are liable to new decays, new wants, new burdens and grievances; and therefore, the best have need to examine themselves every time they repair to this holy feast; but much more they who were never there before.

Now, there are several things you ought to inquire into at such a time. 1. The state and condition of your souls. 2. Your sins and short-comings. 3. Your wants and necessities. 4. Your ends and designs. 5. Your graces and qualifications.

I have discoursed on all these points very fully in my "Sacramental Catechism," from p. 117 to p. 210, [*first edit.*] to which the reader is referred. Some few things more I shall add here.

### 1. *Of the Examination of our State.*

SEEING this holy feast belongs only to the children of God, and those that are strangers have no right to it, it highly concerns all that design to approach the Lord's table, to examine what state they are in. As the Lord cried to Adam in the garden, Adam, where art thou? so do thou cry to thy soul, O my soul, where art thou? Art thou in the broad way or in the narrow? Whether art thou in Satan's or in Christ's camp? Whether under a covenant of works or a covenant of grace? Under a cloud of wrath, or under a banner of love? In a

special manner, there are two important questions that every communicant should much think on: Whose am I? and whom serve I? Happy is the man that can answer both these questions with Paul; Acts xxvii. 23, "It is God, whose 'I am, and whom I serve.'" It is not the devil, it is not the world, it is not my lusts; but God, whose I am, and whom I serve. Surely Paul, in this condition, though a poor, despised prisoner, was happier than Cesar himself, to whose bar he was then going. Alas! it is to be feared that there are many communicants, if they should answer the foresaid questions truly, might say, It is not God, but the devil, or the world, or fleshly lusts, whose I am, and whom I serve. "Oh, Lord, pity such, and open their eyes to see what woful masters and bad service they are engaged into, and deliver them speedily from their bondage."

Look then to yourselves, examine your state, and see if you be among those who have a right to this sacred meal. Have you a right to these characters?

I. Are you priests to God? Under the law, it was not lawful for any to eat of the shew-bread but the priests; Mark ii. 26; so under the gospel, none have right to eat of this consecrated bread, but those who pertain to the spiritual priesthood. Try then if you be priests to God.

1. Are you set apart and dedicated to God by your own consent and voluntary resignation?
2. Are you related to the great High Priest of the church, Jesus Christ? And do you pertain to his family?
3. Are you consecrated to God, by being washed in Christ's blood? Rev. i. 5, 6, "He hath loved us, and washed us in his blood, and hath made us priests unto God."
4. Do you offer up to God the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praises? Heb. xiii. 15.
5. Do you present the sacrifice of Christ's blood and merits, in the hand of faith, to divine justice, whenever you find yourselves accused by the law, or challenged by conscience? Well then, if you have these marks of priests, it is lawful for you to come and eat of this holy shew-bread.

II. Are you members of God's family and household? then you have a right to this precious food: for Christ's flesh and blood in the sacrament is the food that God provides for those of his own household: not for strangers and foreigners, not for dogs or profane persons; Matt. xv. 26, "It is not meet," saith our Lord, "to take the

children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." Are you children of the family? then may you eat of the household provision. But, ah! may some say, how shall we be numbered among the children? Have ye faith in a Redeemer? then are ye among the children; Gal. iii. 26, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Are ye born in his house? Is there a saving change wrought upon you? Have you the natures of children? Are ye friends of Christ, and sincere well-wishers to him, his family, and interest in the world? Then you have right to the children's bread.

III. Observe the characters of those who were admitted to eat of the passover in Ezra's time; Ezra vi. 21, "And the children of Israel, who were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves from the filthiness of the heathen of the land to seek the Lord God of Israel, did eat." Now, there are three characters of these ancient partakers mentioned.

1. They were such of the Israelites as were come out of captivity; for, while they were captives in Babylon, they did not eat the passover. Well, try yourselves if you be among Christ's ransomed captives, delivered from the bondage of Satan, the reigning power of sin, and captivity of your lusts.

2. They were such as had separated themselves from the filthiness of the heathen, viz., swearing, whoring, drunkenness, profanation of the Lord's day, &c.; these things are the filthiness of the heathens. Examine if you be separated from all these abominations, not only from the practice, but even from the love, of them.

3. They were such as designed sincerely to seek the Lord God of Israel. Well, can you say, it is the great aim of your soul, in approaching to the Lord's table, to seek the Lord and Master of the feast. It is not the outward ordinance, but a gracious meeting with the God of ordinances, that your soul thirsts for; then you may come and eat of the gospel-passover.

By these and such like characters, let communicants examine what state they are in, before they adventure to this holy table. This is a feast for Christ's friends to eat of; Cant. v. 1. And if enemies thrust themselves in among them, it is at their highest peril. This ordinance supposes you to be within that covenant which it doth seal; for those who are out of the covenant have nothing

to do with the seals of it. It supposes you to have something of that spiritual life which it doth sustain and nourish; so that those who are dead in sin have no right to meddle with it. Uncircumcised persons were not to eat of the passover; so neither are unrenewed persons to eat of the Lord's supper. You must be born again before you can eat it; you must be united to Christ before you can feed on him; you cannot receive juice or sap from the vine, except you be a branch in it. It very much concerns you, then, at such a time, to inquire narrowly into the state of your soul; and, in order to attain a true discovery thereof, you ought to put plain and particular questions to yourselves, and charge your consciences, as in the presence of God, to give free and ingenuous answers thereto. And, for instance, see what answer you can give to these questions following:—

*Ques. 1.* Have I ever been spiritually enlightened, and got my eyes opened to see the depravity of my nature, and the sinfulness of my heart and life, and that I am all as an unclean thing before God?

*Ques. 2.* Have I been truly convinced and made sensible of the exceeding evil that is in sin? Is my heart touched with a deep remorse for it, and brought to loathe it, and willingly to forsake every known sin? Was I ever brought the length even to be willing to be loosed from this body of flesh, that I may be freed from the body of sin?

*Ques. 3.* Have I been brought to see my absolute need of Christ to save me from sin and wrath, to bring me unto God, and to give me grace and glory? Have I seen such beauty, and tasted such sweetness in Christ, that he is truly precious to me, and altogether lovely in my esteem, so that I would willingly part with all things for him?

*Ques. 4.* Have I a covenant-relation to an interest in God as mine? Have I made choice of him as my God and portion? and have I resigned and given up myself to him? Can I say, I am thine, Lord, and all I have, both body and soul? Are my eyes the Lord's, to behold his wondrous works? Are my ears his, to hear his heavenly word? Are my taste and smell his, to relish his surpassing sweetness in the creatures? Is my tongue his, to proclaim and triumph in his praise? Are my hands his, to work what is good, and to help his people?

Are my feet his, to walk in his ways? Is my understanding his, to know his will, and contemplate his perfections? Is my memory his, to treasure up his counsels and promises? Is my conscience his, for a deputy to accuse or excuse under him? Is my will his, to choose or refuse according to his pleasure? Is my grief his, to mourn for what is offensive to him? Is my hatred his, to abhor and flee from what is hateful to him? Are my desires his, to long and pant for his presence? my love his, to embrace him? my delight his, to acquiesce fully and contentedly in him?

*Ques. 5.* Is sin in some measure mortified in me? Do I find it weaker, or have I more strength to resist it than formerly? Is it now any grief and burden to find it moving and stirring in my heart?

*Ques. 6.* Doth the interest of God, my Creator and Redeemer, prevail in my heart above the interest of the world, or of the flesh? Do I seek chiefly, and above all things, the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Do I prefer Jerusalem above my chief joy?

Now, if you thus examine yourselves, and commune with your own hearts in secret, you may, by the blessing of God, come to find out the truth concerning your spiritual state and condition.

*Objec.* But may we not mistake in examining our state? Do not we see the most part of men presuming that their state is safe and good, and having little doubt of their right to the children's bread?

*Ans. 1st.* There are many, who make no great question anent their state, such as, the grossly ignorant, who know not the misery of a natural state, nor their need of Christ, and the openly profane, who go on in the broad way of swearing, lying, drunkenness, neglect of prayer, &c. He that runs may read their character, that they are Christless and unconverted: whoever they be that are in this state, and go on in it, they are unfit for this ordinance; they are not invited guests; they have no part nor lot in this matter. Ignorant persons cannot examine themselves, nor discern the Lord's body; profane persons mock God when they pretend to seal a covenant with him; and if they thrust themselves upon this table they affront Christ, and seal their own condemnation. We would reckon it a loathsome sight to see some dead corpse, or men full of plague-sores, sit down

beside us at our tables ; and do you think that a living and holy God can look with pleasure upon dead sinners, or those with the running ulcers of swearing, drunkenness, &c., sitting at his holy table ? Let all such stand off : for they will find poison in the bread, and death in the cup, and go away worse than they came. This is not a converting but a confirming ordinance, in its own nature, and therefore doth suppose that they are converted, and in Christ, who come to it.

*2dly.* There are others who come the length of a form and profession of religion, that yet are in a bad state ; and if they would allow themselves the free use of their reason, and compare their case with the word, they might easily perceive the badness of their condition. Upon a small search, they might discover, that though they perform some duties, yet it is not for the glory of God, but to be seen of men, or to satisfy a natural conscience ; they rest upon their duties, and make a saviour of them ; and though they read, hear, or pray, yet they never notice heart-work : they love the world more than God, and “ mind the things of the flesh more than the things of the Spirit ;” they are careless about secret prayer, and allow themselves in known sin : they suffer pride, covetousness, malice, revenge, and other lusts to reign in their hearts, without resisting them, or mourning for them, surely these are black marks of a Christless state. And if ye would set up a tribunal in your own breasts, and hear what God’s word and your own consciences would conclude concerning your condition, you would find yourselves ranked among the unclean, and such as have no right to the children’s bread, while you remain in your present state ; but, alas ! how many such do rush upon this solemn ordinance, without any heart-search, or acquaintance with themselves ! They trust to their outward form, and hence flatter themselves that they are safe enough ; and so, like the foolish virgins, they slumber away their time, still dreaming of heaven and happiness : and nothing that God’s word or ministers can say will undeceive them, till the cry at midnight awaken them ; and behold then when they open their eyes, they meet with an eternal disappointment ; when they thought of nothing but open gates at the first knock, behold, “ Depart from me, I know you not.” O that he “ who searcheth

Jerusalem with candles," and knows the heart, would undeceive you, and awaken you in time!

*3dly.* There are others who are really in a good estate, though the evidences of it are not so clear to them. Satan raises many fogs and mists to obscure the sight of grace, and the saving change that the Spirit of God hath wrought in their soul. Besides what I have formerly said I shall add these few marks or questions more, whereby you may discern it.

1. Have you got new discoveries of things which ye had not before? Though perhaps you cannot tell exactly the time, manner, and steps of the change, yet can ye say with the blind man, John ix. 25, "One thing I know, that whereas once I was blind, now I see,"—"Once I saw a little evil in sin, but now I see it exceeding vile and damnable; once I thought there was some good thing in me, but now I see my heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, and swarming full of base lusts: once I slighted heart-holiness, but now I see it to be most beautiful and necessary; once I saw little need of Christ, but now I see he is more necessary to my soul, than meat and drink to my body: once I saw little beauty in Christ, but now I see him to be the chiefest among ten thousand? nay, among all the thousands in the world." Then, to be sure, there is a change wrought; though ye were once darkness, yet now are ye light in the Lord.

2. What are those things ye are mostly taken up and concerned about? Can you say, Once it was my question, "What shall I eat, what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" but now my great question is, "What shall I do to be saved?" Once my main care was to secure and increase my temporal enjoyments; but now it is to lay up my treasure in heaven, and clear up my evidences for it: once the world and temporal things were my uptaking business! but now my Saviour, my soul, and eternity, are my chief concerns, and lie nearest to my heart.

3. How stands your hearts towards secret and spiritual duties, and towards secret and spiritual sins? 1. As for the first, do ye earnestly desire and study patience under affliction, meekness under injuries, and contentment with your lot and condition? Do you study humility and lowliness of mind, and desire to have pride brought down, that you may still be lower in your own eyes? Are you

delighted with secret mourning for sin? are ye desirous of intimate converse with God, by secret prayer and meditation? Wherever grace is wrought in the heart, it bends towards God, and centres in him. It is the voice and very first cry of the new creature in the soul, Psalm lxxiii. 28, "It is good for me to draw nigh to God." Nearness to God is the mean of its livelihood and subsistence. This is given as a mark of Paul's change, Acts ix. 11, "Behold he prayeth." The spirit of grace is never a dumb spirit; Zech. xii. 10; Gal. iv. 6. But if thou art a stranger to converse with God in secret duties, it is a sad sign of thy estrangement to a saving change upon thy soul. 2. How stand you affected to secret and spiritual sins? Are you grieved for your pride, ambition, envy, unbelief, atheistical thoughts, backwardness to duty? &c. Do ye feel the stirrings of indwelling corruption and heart-lasts, and earnestly strive against them? Doth the eye of God, or the love of Christ, restrain you as much from secret sins as from open transgressions? Do you abhor the temptations to sin, and start at the first appearance thereof, like Joseph; Gen. xxvi., "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

*Objec.* Alas! I am a poor, dark, confused creature; I know not what to make of my case; I would sometimes fain lay claim to some of the foresaid marks, but presently I am beat off, and all is darkened to me; for when I begin to consider narrowly, I cannot say that I have any true love to Christ, or that I ever rightly closed with him by faith; I know little of a work of grace in my heart; I cannot take up the beauty of Christ and of holiness.

*Ans.* I pity those poor trembling and doubting souls who cannot attain to any light or clearness about their condition; who yet are labouring for it and would give all the world to obtain it; and though in the mean time they dare not renounce all hope, yet they can see no solid ground to build upon, and are often tempted to give over all further endeavours.

To such I would say, that you ought to wait on God, and hold on in the way of duty to your life's end, whatever discouragements you meet with therein; God in his own time will let you know that your labour is not in vain. In the mean time, for thy comfort, I would ask thee some few questions.

1. Thou sayest, thou hast no love to Christ, nor hast

thou closed with him by faith. But is love to Christ that which thou wouldst fainest have of any thing in the world? Is it thy greatest grief, so that sometimes it forceth tears from thine eyes, that thou canst not get thy wretched heart to love him? Then, to be sure, thou art not destitute of love of him. Hast thou not so much love to him, as makes every thing that bears his image amiable in thine eyes? You fear you love him not; but can you say there is nothing in all the world would please you so much as one ray or love-blenk of his countenance? And though he should never own you, yet you resolve to lie all your days at his feet, and look up to him, and to none other for salvation? Then be of good cheer, poor soul, for these are comfortable degrees of faith and love.

2. What is the object in all the world that thy restless heart is most pointing out after? Canst thou say, if thy heart deceive thee not, it is an interest in Christ, communion with God, and love to his ways; and the obtaining of these would yield thee more content than all the gold of Ophir? Then, to be sure, there is true grace wrought in thee. There are many true diamonds that are but like sparks in respect of bigger stones, yet these are as true as the other. Every degree of peace is grace; and sincere desires after grace are certainly true grace.

3. Upon what is it that you spend the strength of your prayers, and what are you most earnest for? Is it, O doubting soul! for the death of sin, the removal of heart-plagues, the curing of heart-wanderings, heart-deadness, and backwardness to duty? Again, dost thou spend another great part of thy prayers for the increase and lively exercise of grace, and for the actings of faith and love? Then it is a sure mark of the Spirit's work in thy soul; for, if thou sawest not the evil of sin and beauty of grace, thou wouldst not spend the strength of thy prayers for killing sin, and quickening grace in thy soul.

But, *lastly*, O doubting soul, if thou canst not win to clearness, by poring on the marks of grace and faith—as indeed sometimes doubting believers cannot, since there is no mark that can be given but a scrupulous conscience will find a back door—then try another way; endeavour to act faith in a direct manner upon Jesus Christ; for many times a believer will sooner come to a clearness of his interest by the direct acts of faith, than by the reflex

acts. Therefore, if thou canst not see faith in thy soul, then presently flee to Christ, and lay hold upon the offer and promise of life, as if thou hadst never done it before; run as a malefactor to the city of refuge for protection, as if you had never fled thither before; go as a wounded man to the physician for a plaster to thy wounds, as if you had never got one applied before. Go, transact and covenant with God in Christ, as if you had never essayed any thing like it before: for, whatever you have been, Christ still tenders himself to you to be your Saviour, and you cannot possibly be so willing to accept of him, as he is to accept of you. Try this method, and there is good ground to hope that light will break up, and fears vanish; and so you may with comfort come to this sealing ordinance.

## II. *Of the Examination of our Sins.*

EXAMINE yourselves of your sins and shortcomings; take an account of your debts, and see how great they are; put the question to yourselves, which the unjust steward put to his lord's debtors, "How much owest thou to my lord?" And see that ye tell the truth, and do not for a hundred write down fifty, as many false consciences do; but deal truly and ingenuously, for an all-seeing God is looking on. Do as the Jews, who, before the celebration of the passover, searched their houses for leaven very narrowly; they lighted candles, and sought every corner and hole therein; and, when they found it, they threw it away with detestation. Some think it is with allusion to this custom that the Lord is said to "search Jerusalem with candles;" Zeph. i. 12. In like manner, you must narrowly search every corner of your hearts, for the leaven of pride, avarice, malice, and hypocrisy; 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. The iniquities of wicked men will find them out, but good men will find out their iniquities. Now, if ye will find them out, ye must set time apart, and convene your souls before God and conscience, and compare your hearts and lives with God's word and the rule of his commandments. Look back upon your actions, recal the passages of your lives, and remember your faults before the Lord. If you would have your repentance full, ye must endeavour to take a full and particular view of your sins, both original and actual, of omission and commission,

of youth and riper age, of purpose and of practice, of heart and of life. View your sins, both secret and open, against first and second table; consider how ye have wronged God, your neighbour, and yourselves; how ye have transgressed every commandment, either in thoughts, words, or deeds; think upon the lusts of your hearts, the sins of your tongues, and outbreakings of your lives. Particularly, search out your predominant and beloved sins, and also the heinous circumstances and aggravations of your sins; and forget not to examine yourselves concerning the breach of former vows and the guilt contracted since the last sacrament. Let no wound or sore be concealed or skinned over, but search them all to the bottom, if you would have them perfectly cured. Let it not satisfy you to ask conscience in an overly way concerning the foresaid sins, but wait for an answer, nay, urge it to give it, and put it hard to it.

### III. *Of the Examination of our Wants.*

EXAMINE your wants and necessities, and come sensible of them to this ordinance, where ye may find all needful supplies treasured up in Christ's fulness, which is here exhibited; search out your defects and needs, and come to Christ with them. Are you polluted, heavy loaden, and under bonds and terrors? Do you see yourselves blind, naked, lame, sick, or wounded? Come sensible of thy miseries, O sinner, to Christ, who has a broad plaster for every sore. Dost thou find thy graces weak? Doth thy faith shake, thy hope stagger, thy love decline, thy holy desires abate? Dost thou want wisdom, sincerity, self-denial, meekness, humility, or brokenness of heart? Then come sensible of these defects to Christ for new supplies and reinforcements. Do you want a sight of your interest in Christ, a seal of your pardon, clear and unclouded evidences of grace, a view of the King's face, or strength to vanquish your lusts? Nay, are you trysted with bodily wants and infirmities, crosses, and losses, and many outward pressures and afflictions? Then come, with a due sense of all these wants and burdens upon your spirits, to Jesus Christ, and cast them all upon him. In this ordinance, Christ sets himself upon a throne of grace, with a sceptre of mercy in his hand, and waits to hear his people's complaints and petitions. A feasting

time is a time of granting requests ; see then that ye be ready to present yours at his feast. Christ here saith to thee, as the king did to Esther at the banquet of wine ; Esth. v. 3, “ What is thy petition ? and what is thy request ? and it shall be granted to thee.” Or, as he said to the blind man ; Matt. xv. 23, “ What will ye that I should do unto you ?” Be ready with them to answer, “ Lord, that our eyes may be opened ;” or, Lord, that our hearts may be softened ; Lord, that such a weak grace may be cherished, that such a strong lust may be vanquished, that such a plague may be removed, &c.

#### IV. *Of the Examination of our Ends.*

EXAMINE your ends and designs in approaching to the Lord’s table. Christ examined the people’s ends in going to hear John ; Matt. xi. 8, “ What went ye out for to see ?” Much more ought we to examine our ends in going to the Lord’s table. See that it be not to observe the fashion of the country where you live, or to get a name, and be the better thought of by ministers, friends, or neighbours, or to make an atonement for your sins, as some ignorant persons among us do apprehend, who rest upon the bare ordinance, and outward signs and elements, for pardon and justification, without looking to Christ for it. Thus, alas ! many content themselves with Elijah’s mantle, without asking for the God of Elijah ; give them the shell, they ask not for the kernel ; let them have their communion, as they call it, though it really be nothing but a bit of bread and a sip of wine, they think all is well ; their sins are pardoned, they are sure of heaven, they are ready to die, the devil can have no power over them ; and so they use this sacrament as a charm, being ignorant of the true ends and uses of it.

*Ques.* What are those ends and designs we ought to have in our approaches to this sacred table ?

*Ans.* It is of great consequence to be well instructed hereof, and to try ourselves diligently concerning them. Examine then,

(1.) If it be your design sincerely to give obedience to our Lord and Saviour’s call, can ye say that his authority hath a powerful influence upon you in this matter, and ye dare not slight it ? and that ye cannot think of neglecting Christ’s dying charge, and the command he

bath left behind him to his disciples, to solemnize and celebrate the memorial of his dying love ?

(2.) Is it your design to show forth Christ's death ? This should be your great business in this ordinance ; 1 Cor. xi. 25, 26. You are to show forth and announce Christ's death three ways :

1. With respect to yourselves, you are by this sacrament to give a lively representation to your mind of Christ's death, and keep up a fresh remembrance of his sufferings and dying love, and of the great propitiatory sacrifice he offered for you upon the cross, and the great things he hath thereby purchased for you ; and hereby you are to raise your faith and hope in a crucified Saviour.

2. With respect to the world, you are hereby to testify your respect to a crucified Christ, and that ye publicly own yourselves to be his disciples, and are not ashamed of a crucified Jesus, or his ignominious death, but glory in it as the wisdom of God, and power of God ; and count it your honour to be his followers. As also, ye declare, that ye look to his death and merits as the only hope of your salvation, and reject all other saviours besides him.

3. With respect to God, and that two ways : 1. Show forth Christ's death to a just and sin-revenging God, in a way of faith and prayer ; present and plead this sacrifice, as a screen and defence against the sword of justice, the wrath of God, and curse of the law ; plead it as the ground of all your hopes and desires. Show it forth to a good God, in a way of thanksgiving and praise. Praise God for such a glorious Redeemer and such an excellent sacrifice ; bless him that sent him, and bless him that came. Thanksgiving to God is a special design of this ordinance, and upon this account it is called the Eucharist or Thanksgiving. Here it is we should celebrate the praises of our Redeemer, who came from a throne to a dunghill, yea, from the height of glory to the depth of misery, to save us from perishing eternally.

(3.) Is it your design to renew and seal a covenant with God in Christ, ratify your baptismal vows, and solemnly bind yourselves to be the Lord's people ? As believers here come to God's seal of his covenant, for confirming their right to the benefits of it ; so also they are to seal their covenant engagements, to take God for their God, accept of Christ for their Prince and Saviour, give up

themselves to him, renounce sin, and walk in the ways of gospel-obedience. Now, because many profess to covenant with God in this ordinance, who yet deal falsely with him, ye ought to be at great pains to try the sincerity of your hearts in this matter. And, for trial of it, see if you can say, that your wicked hearts are a greater burden to you than all the crosses and troubles you meet with in the world ; and that ye are more desirous to be rid of sin and heart-plagues, than of any affliction whatsoever. Or, can ye say, that you desire heart-holiness, and further degrees of grace, faith, love, and brokenness of heart for sin, more than any honours, profits, or pleasures this world can afford ? Or, can ye say, that the world's best things are in your eyes as dung or nothing, in comparison of Christ and his righteousness, and an interest secured therein ? And, can ye say, that ye are sensible of your insufficiency and weakness to make or keep any covenant with God ; and therefore ye are made to renounce all confidence in yourselves, and to say, In the Lord only I have righteousness and strength ? Then these are good signs that you are honest and sincere in the making of this bargain, and are likely to be found steadfast in God's covenant.

(4.) Is it your design to draw near to God, and hold intimate communion and fellowship with Christ in this ordinance ? And do ye earnestly desire that ye may sup with him, and he with you ? This table is instituted for the kind correspondence of Christ and his people, and their mutual feasting one with another : for, as Christ here sets before you the dainties and comforts of heaven, and invites you to feast thereon ; so you are to set your graces and affections before him, and invite him to come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits. You are to come here, not only to receive the tokens of Christ's love to you, but also to give the expressions of your love to him ; here there is a mutual communication of secrets betwixt Christ and his people.

(5.) Is it your design to get your manifold wants supplied out of Christ's fulness ? Is it your earnest desire that this ordinance may be an effectual mean, through the blessing of God, for the weakening and killing of your sins and lusts, the nourishing and strengthening of your souls, the curing of your diseases and plagues, the increase and exercise of your graces ; particularly for strengthen-

ing your faith, inflaming your love, kindling your desires, quickening your hope, and renewing your repentance and resolutions against sin?

Again. Is it your design to get clearer evidences of your interest in Christ, the smiles of his face, and comforts of his Spirit? Would ye have a seal of his pardon, a display of the riches of free grace, a sight of the Sun of righteousness, the love of God shed abroad in your hearts, and all your fears removed? Would ye have at this feast furniture for your spiritual journey, support under affliction, strength against temptations, and preparation for suffering? Would ye have a pledge and foretaste of heaven, and the eternal communion that is above? Then these are good designs; and, if you be sincere in them, you may expect welcome from the Master of the feast.

#### V. *Of the Examination of our Graces.*

A FIFTH thing you must examine yourselves of, in order to prepare you for this holy table, is your graces and qualifications. Search diligently if you have those sacramental graces requisite in worthy communicants: such as knowledge, faith, love, repentance, hungering desires, and new obedience.

1. We must examine our knowledge, and see if we have a competent understanding of the principles and grounds of christianity, and of the nature, signification, and use of the Lord's supper. Without this we cannot know God, nor ourselves; we can neither know God's infinite justice and purity, our own natural corruption and misery, nor Jesus Christ, our great help and remedy; the knowledge whereof is absolutely necessary to worthy communicating. In some churches in ancient times, infants and children were admitted to the Lord's supper; and the Greek and Arminian churches do the same at this day; but we justly dissent from them in this practice, because it is necessary, in order to our being fit and worthy partakers, that we examine ourselves, and discern the Lord's body in the sacrament, according to 1 Cor. xi. 28, 29; neither of which can be done by those that are not come to the years of understanding and discerning.

A man without knowledge is not in covenant with God,

and therefore hath no right to partake of the seals of the covenant; Heb. viii. 10, 11, "This is the covenant I will make, &c. All shall know me, from the least to the greatest." So that those who know not God have no interest in his covenant, and consequently can have no title to its benefits, nor any gracious communion with God. Observe how the promise runs; Jer. xxiv. 7, "I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God."

It is threatened as a heavy judgment, for persons to die without knowledge; Job xxxvi. 12, "They shall die without knowledge:" it is as much as if it were threatened, They shall die in their sins, and perish for ever. Now, if it be a sad case to die without knowledge, so is it to come to the sacrament without knowledge; for that which makes a man unfit to die, makes him also unfit to communicate: no man is safe to partake in that case which he is not in safety to die in.

Neither children nor fools are fit to receive the Lord's supper, because they are not capable to examine themselves, and discern the Lord's body. Now, ignorant persons, in God's account, are both children and fools; so he reckons them; Jer. iv. 22, "For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, they have no understanding."

Under the law, it was reckoned an abomination to offer that which was blind unto the Lord; Lev. xxii. 22. Now, a blind offerer, that hath the eyes of his understanding darkened, is more abominable than a blind offering.

Error or ignorance makes a man morally unclean before God. When the leprosy affected the head, then the priest was ordered to pronounce the man utterly unclean, and exclude him from the camp of Israel; why? because the plague was in his head; Lev. xiii. 44. Every ignorant man has a plague in his head, a plague of spiritual blindness and darkness, besides many woful plagues in his heart; for without knowledge the mind is not good;—whatever ignorant folk speak of their good hearts and good meanings;—it is full of earthliness, enmity, and backwardness to what is good; Prov. xix. 2; 1 Pet. i. 14. Surely, then, such unclean persons are not fit to come to the holy table of the Lord. It concerns us, then, to examine our knowledge before we approach. As for the objects, properties, and usefulness of this knowledge,

I refer the reader to *Sacr. Cat. first edit.* p. 165, &c.

2. Examine your faith, before you approach to the Lord's table; for faith is absolutely necessary here. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God," in any duty; and far less is this, where faith is so highly needful, and so much to be employed. He that would receive Jesus Christ in the sacrament, must have an eye to see Christ and his worth, a foot to come to Christ, a hand to lay hold on Christ, and a mouth to feed on him. All these are necessary, in order to partake of Christ at the Lord's supper. Now, faith is all these to the believing communicant. 1. It is the eye of the soul, by which it sees Christ; Isaiah xlv. 22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." 2. It is the foot whereby we come unto Christ; John vi. 25, "He that cometh unto me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." 3. It is the hand whereby we receive and lay hold on Christ; John i. 12, "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." 4. It is the mouth whereby we feed on Christ; John vi. 53, "Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God, ye have no life in you;" *i. e.* except ye believe on Christ. Now, what can ye do at the Lord's table without faith? Can a man see without an eye, come without a foot, receive without a hand, and feed without a mouth?

Moreover, without faith you can have no right to this holy table, for it is children's bread; and it is by faith you become children. Without it you cannot enter into covenant with God; for faith is the very assent and consent of the soul unto the marriage-covenant, which is transacted and sealed in the Lord's supper.

Without faith you can have no communion with God in this or any ordinance; God will surely hide his face from them that come without it; Deut. xxxii. 20, "And he said, I will hide my face from them;" and the reason he gives for it is, "for they are children in whom is no faith." So that without faith you cannot see God in the sacrament; for how can a man see a veiled or hidden face? Unbelief cuts a man off from God; Rom. xi. 20, "Because of unbelief they were broken off." And how can a man cut off from God have any communion with God?

Without faith you can derive no virtue from Christ, nor benefit from this ordinance: for as a rich jewel can do you no good unless it be accepted, nor a sovereign medicine unless it be applied, nor a deep well without a bucket to draw with; so neither will Christ's shed blood, or purchased salvation, avail you, unless you bring faith to apply it to your souls. "The well is deep," said the woman to Christ, "and thou hast nothing to draw with." So I may say to thee, if faith be wanting. Moses saith of God's kindness to Israel, Dent. xxxii. 13, "He made him suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock." Now, Christ is a rock that yields all manner of necessaries to believers, honey and oil, sweetness and fatness, quickening and comfort. But how do they come by it from this rock? It is said, "he made him suck honey out of the rock." There is no honey or oil to be had without sucking, and there is no sucking without the mouth of faith. He that hath faith can suck this honey and oil from Christ in the sacrament; but he that wants it can suck nothing. Unbelievers, then, must have a dry sacrament of it; for they cannot suck though the breasts be full. Nay, which is worse, unbelief lays restraints on the virtue and healing power of Christ in the sacrament; for we are told, Mark vi. 5, 6, "He could there (*i. e.* in his own country) do no mighty work, because of their unbelief." Why? could any thing bind our Redeemer's hands, or limit his mighty power? No; but he lays down this order of working, which he will not alter, "to put forth his mighty power in and unto those that believe;" Eph. i. 19. So that unbelief doth enervate the force and operation of the sacrament.

Without faith you can neither prepare for this ordinance, nor partake of its virtue. Without faith you cannot put on the wedding-garment, you cannot discern Christ through the elements, you cannot feel the print of the nails, you cannot flee to the city of refuge, you cannot take hold of the horns of the altar, nor gripe to the plank of mercy to save thy perishing soul. And what good can you get at the sacrament, if you do none of these? Precious faith is the wing whereby the poor, trembling dove doth fly to the window opened in the side of the ark; it is by this that it doth take shelter in the clefts of the rock. In a word, faith is the grace that puts life and vigour in a dead soul; it is the spring and first mover of all other

graces ; it doth set repentance, love, desire, and all the rest, on work ; so that a man can do nothing at the Lord's table without faith, except it be to wound Christ, and bring wrath on himself.

You see, then, what need you have of faith at this ordinance, and to examine if it be true, and not counterfeit. As Philip examined the eunuch of his faith before he admitted him to the sacrament of baptism ; Acts viii. 36, "Believest thou with all thine heart?" so should every man examine himself before the Lord's supper. Do I believe with all mine heart? Do I esteem Christ most precious? Doth my heart bleed for piercing him? Do I embrace him in all his offices, and say, he is all my salvation, and all my desire? Well, if thou canst truly say so, thy faith will make thee whole, and thou mayest expect a kind welcome at thy Saviour's table. The Lord has furnished you with abundance of marks in his word for the trial of your faith. See *Sacr. Cat. first edit.* p. 172, &c. Try your faith now, for you know not but your faith may come to a fiery trial, as did the martyrs' faith of old ; and how will you be able to abide such a trial as that, if you never put it to a previous private trial? "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, how wilt thou contend with horses?" How wilt thou abide a fiery trial, that canst not endure a closet trial? Men will not buy oxen for ploughing, but they are desirous to put them to trial ; Luke xiv. 19, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them;" and will communicants pretend to such precious jewels as faith, love, &c., and yet not desire to prove them, and especially at a time when it is so highly requisite, and so very much depends on the doing of it?

3. Try your repentance before you partake, for without a broken heart you cannot expect to meet with a broken Christ in the sacrament ; but a broken and a contrite heart is a sacrifice he will not despise. You must sow in tears, if you would reap in joy ; for a wet seed-time doth here prognosticate a sun-shiny and plentiful harvest. It was of water that Christ made the choicest wine at the marriage-feast in Cana in Galilee ; so the water of true repentance will produce the choicest wine of consolation in the sacrament. When Joseph's brethren came to be sensible of their sin in selling him, then it was, and not till then, that he made them a feast and

kindly entertained them at his table ; so, till such time as we be sensible of our sins, and repent for piercing our Redeemer, he will not feast us, nor smile upon us at his table.

Now, because there is so much counterfeit repentance in the word, go, retire in secret, and put questions to yourselves concerning your repentance:—say, Am I a penitent in heart, and a secret mourner for sin when no eyes see me but God's? Do I mourn for inward and secret sin as well as for outward and open sins? Do I mourn for the dishonours done to God by the sins of others, as well as by my own? Am I troubled more for the evil of sin, than for the evil of affliction? Am I more grieved for abusing the mercy and goodness of God, than for exposing myself to the sword of his justice? Do I cry with the penitent prodigal in my confessions, as in Luke xv. 18, “ Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee!” Alas! I have wronged a kind and loving Father, whose goodness towards me has been as the dropping dew; ah! I have pierced my compassionate Redeemer, and crucified him over again by my sins; and what do I deserve at his hands?”

Again. What are the effects and fruits of your repentance? Doth it beget in you a vehement hatred and indignation against sin, and a watchfulness to prevent it? Wherever there is true repentance, there will be a hearty aversion to sin. As a burnt child will dread the fire, so a christian who hath truly repented of sin is so sensible of the weight of sin and the wrath of God, that he is resolved never more to touch these burning coals. David, who, before his repentance, had his conscience so hardened, that he could even drink the blood of Uriah; yet, after his repentance, his conscience was so tender, that he refused so much as to drink of that water which had been but the occasion of hazarding men's lives.

And, *lastly*. Doth thy repentance work in thee a holy revenge against sin? Dost thou look upon it as the enemy of God, the murderer of Christ, and destroyer of thy soul, and upon that account, that it doth not deserve to live? It was Esau's expression; Gen. xxvii. 41, “ The days of mourning for my father are at hand; and then will I slay my brother Jacob.” But say thou, O communicant, The days of mourning for the death of my dear Saviour and everlasting Father are come, and now will I slay my most beloved lusts, now will I be revenged

on them for seeking to rob me of my spiritual birth-right, and wrong me of my eternal blessing, and, which is worse, for actual crucifying of my glorious Redeemer. Shall sin be suffered to live in my soul, that would not suffer my Saviour to live in the world? Away with it, away with it; crucify it, crucify it. By such marks as these try the sincerity of your repentance.

As for the trial of your love, desires, spiritual appetites, new obedience, and other graces, seeing I have no new thing here to add, I refer you to *Sacr. Cat. first edit.* p. 193, &c.

*Some Objections of doubting Christians, relative to the former doctrine, Answered.*

*Objec. I.* By what I have heard, may some say, I fear I am not fit nor prepared for this solemn ordinance: and, it being a thing so dangerous to come to it unpreparedly, I tremble and fear to go forward to that holy table.

*Ans. Ist.* Did you always keep the fear of God in your souls, preparation-work would be less painful, and an approach to God less frightful, than it now is: for then you might go to the Lord's table, with holy fear and reverence, and slavish fear would not so much haunt you. Did you keep more at a distance from sin, and fear to do what God has forbidden, you would not so much fear to do what he hath commanded.

*2dly.* Though you be not so prepared for this ordinance as you desire, yet if you sincerely make conscience of preparation-work, and do your utmost to get yourself ready, you ought to go forward, in obedience to God's command, "Do this in remembrance of me." I know there are not a few exercised christians brought to great straits betwixt a sense of their own unfitness and the obligation of God's command, so that they know not what to do; their fears and discouragements are so great that they are like to be overwhelmed with them. But let such mind the word of the Lord to the children of Israel, when they were in great perplexity at the Red Sea, and their hearts sinking for fear; *Exod. xiv. 15,* "And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." Forward, might they say, and the deep sea before us! as good go backward to the Egyptians, or stand still, and let them come up and put

us to the sword, as go forward into the sea, and be drowned; surely the deep sea will have no mercy on us more than the Egyptians. But for all this, "Speak to the children of Israel, (saith the Lord,) that they go forward;" let them obey my commandment, and trust me with their lives. Here is encouragement to the doubting believer, that in all sincerity makes preparation for this ordinance, though he hath many doubts about his right to it, and great fear about the event of the duty: the Lord bids us speak to such a man, that he go forward: let him obey God's commandment, and trust God for his through-bearing and success.

*Objec.* II. But, saith another, none should come to this table but they who are in a state of grace; and I apprehend I have no grace, I cannot lay claim to any of the marks of grace before-mentioned, and particularly, I want faith in Jesus Christ: and how shall I go to the Lord's table?

*Ans.* There may be true grace and true faith in a soul sincere and acceptable before God, though yet the degrees of it may be so small, and the operations of it so weak, that it can hardly be discerned by us. Now, though you cannot lay claim to the foregoing marks, yet see if you can at least answer to the following questions:—

1. Do you not see yourself undone and lost for ever without Christ, and that none but Christ can save you, and you never resolve to look to any other?

2. Are you not grieved for the sins that have undone you, and would as willingly be free of them, as ever a sick man would be free of his sickness, or a prisouer of his chains?

3. Do you not conscientiously practise whatever you are convinced to be your duty, and dare not omit it when you know it? Do ye not sincerely aim at prayer, searching the scriptures, mourning, meditation, and other duties?

4. As you dare not omit these duties, can you say also, that you dare not rest in them, nor rely on them, because you see your prayers for pardon have need of pardon, and your tears for sin have need themselves of being washed in the blood of Christ?

5. Do thou unfeignedly desire Christ, and hunger and thirst for him, and for his righteousness, as that which only can be sufficient to cover the nakedness of your souls?

Are you willing to accept of him on any terms, willing that he should sanctify as well as save, bring you to obedience as well as to glory? Doth your judgment value Christ above all? and doth your will choose him before all things? If you doubt whether you love him, yet tell me whether you would love him if ye could? If you doubt whether you have already received him, yet tell me whether you are unfeignedly willing to receive him? Then these are some degrees of grace, some workings of faith, well-pleasing in God's sight: and if you cherish and improve them, in the use of God's appointed means, they will increase.

*Objec. III.* But, saith one, we are required to draw near to God with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; and how can I be accepted who have a heart full of fears and doubts?

*Ans. 1st.* The assurance of faith is indeed to be sought and endeavoured by all in their approaches to God, but yet it is not the attainment of every believer in his approaches to God; for there are some who have come to him with much fear, and yet have gone away with much comfort; Mark v. 32. The woman that had the bloody issue came fearing and trembling, and fell down before Christ; and yet Christ said to her, verse 34, "Daughter, go in peace:" she came to Christ in fear, and yet went away in peace.

*2dly.* The best course we can take, under a burden of fears and perplexities, is to go with them to Jesus Christ for relief. David, when he was overwhelmed therewith, gets to the Rock that was higher than he; Psalm lxi. 2; and on this Rock he lays all his burdens, and founds all his hopes. O believer, your Rock, Christ, is higher than you, higher than all your enemies, higher than all your fears and temptations: he is sufficiently able to overmatch them all: get yourselves to this strong Rock, and shelter your souls in the clefts thereof.

*Objec. IV.* But, saith another, I have little hope of meeting with Christ at his table: and what should such a hopeless creature do there?

*Ans. 1st.* It is indeed the duty of all believers to come to this ordinance with raised hopes and expectations of meeting with Christ; for ordinarily his mercy is upon us, and according as we hope in him; Psalm xxxiii. 22. Yet,

*2dly.* A believer may sometimes meet with Christ

when he has least hopes to find him ; for Mary, when she met with Christ, (John xx. 15,) and supposed he had been the gardener, and had inquired of him as such, for Christ, she had little hope ; for before he answered her, she turned herself from him, as thinking it wholly needless to stand talking with him about finding Christ ; and this appears by her turning herself to him, as we are told she did, when he spake the word that gave her comfort. Christ called her by her name, Mary, and made himself known to her just then, when she had turned from him as hopeless of finding him. It is good then, O discouraged communicant, to be, in the use of means, searching and trying yourself, and making preparation for this ordinance, however small your hopes may be of success : for a poor soul may sometimes find Christ, when he hath least hopes of doing so : “ Or ever I was aware,” saith the spouse, “ my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadab ;” Cant. vi. 12.

#### DIRECTION IX.

*Set some time apart for deep Humiliation and Mourning for your Sins, before you approach to the Lord's Table.*

HAVING found out your sins by self-examination, as before directed, you ought to be deeply humbled for them, and ingenuously confess them before the Lord in secret ; and that you may speed the better in this work, join fasting with your humiliation, for we are commanded to turn to the Lord, (Joel ii. 12,) “ with fasting, with weeping, and mourning.”

Fasting, so far as the state of the body and health will allow, is one of God's appointed means for removing that drowsiness and heaviness, that dulness and deadness of spirit which we are otherwise liable to ; and also for bringing the body more in subjection to the soul, and fitting both for the better performance of holy duties, as meditation, prayer, reading, hearing, examining, judging, and reforming ourselves. It tends to promote spiritual mindedness, kindle zeal, quicken prayer, and to wean the heart from the world ; and the soul being hereby for a time taken off from the thoughts, cares, and pleasures of this life, is the more disposed to be wholly intent and taken up in the work and special duties of the day. Fast-

ing likewise carries in it somewhat of a holy revenge upon the flesh of its former excesses, which in a sincere penitent is acceptable to God, though it cannot make satisfaction to divine justice for the least sin. It doth also imply a deep sense of our guiltiness and ill-deservings before God, and is a plain acknowledgment of our unworthiness of the least mercy, or even of the common necessities of life, and far less of the heavenly manna that God provides for his children in the sacrament. Now, it is the humbled and self-condemning sinner that God is pleased to lift up and comfort. But it is not enough that the head "be bowed down as a bulrush for a day," that the outward man may be humbled, or the body chastened: this is not the fast that God hath chosen: the soul must be afflicted before the Lord, and the man inwardly troubled and cast down for offending God.

O communicant! believe it, and be firmly persuaded of it, that repentance and humiliation for sin is a most important and necessary work for thee before the sacrament. Antinomians do vilify this doctrine of repentance, and say it is no part of the gospel; that it is a legal duty, and not necessary to the obtaining of pardon. But, to show you a little of the excellency and necessity of this duty, consider that our Saviour, the great Prophet of the church, doth teach it as one of the first and chief lessons of the gospel. When he sent John the Baptist as the harbinger of the gospel, the first text he preached on was repentance, and his doctrine was, Matt. iii. 2, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." When Christ, the author of the gospel, appeared himself, the first sermon he preached was a sermon of repentance also; Matt. iv. 17, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Yea, our Saviour tells us, that it was for this very end and purpose he came down from heaven, and was made man, that he might preach repentance unto the world; Luke v. 23, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." And accordingly, the first and chief thing that Christ commanded his apostles to preach was repentance; Mark vi. 12; Luke xxiv. 47. And, in obedience to these orders, the first thing that Peter preached to the Jews was repentance; Acts ii. 38. Nay, further, our Saviour tells us, that repentance is a chief part of his purchase for sinners, and one of the chiefest gifts which

he bestows on them. He not only came down from heaven to preach repentance, but also shed his blood to purchase repentance to us; and therefore he instructs his disciples, Luke xxiv. 57, "to teach repentance to the world in his name," *i. e.* as his purchase. And his apostles assure us, that he rose and ascended for this very end, that he might bestow the gift of repentance on his people; Acts x. 31. Now, certainly, if repentance had not been so excellent a work, and such a necessary gospel-duty, Christ and his apostles had not insisted so much upon it, our Saviour had not begun his public ministry with it, nor had he told us so peremptorily, and so often, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Tertullian says of himself, that he "was born to nothing else but to repentance;" a saying well worthy of our most serious observation. Likewise it was the saying of a godly minister, "That if he were to die in the pulpit he would wish to die preaching repentance; and, if out of the pulpit, he would wish to die practising repentance." This is a duty always in season, and never more seasonable than when we go to seal a covenant with God, or go to receive the seal of God's Spirit in the sacrament. We know hard wax will not receive the impression of the seal; wherefore we must first melt or soften the wax before we apply the seal: so the heart must first be softened and melted by repentance and humiliation for sin before any impression be made thereon by the heavenly seal of God's Spirit in the sacrament.

What Bathsheba saith, Prov. xxxi. 6, 7, is very applicable here—"Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that be of heavy hearts," or bitter in soul. "Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." So the wine in the sacrament is not for the secure and impenitent, but for those who, by repentance and humiliation for sin, are in poverty of spirit, bitterness of soul, and heaviness of heart for grieving and offending God. The Lord is graciously pleased to appoint this wine for them, to refresh and comfort their hearts against the sense of their poverty and misery. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted:" their sorrow shall be turned into joy.

But, if you come with impenitent, insensible, and hard hearts to the Lord's table, you will kindle the Lord's wrath against you for crucifying his beloved Son. As

king Ahasuerus' wrath was kindled against Haman for his bloody plot against his beloved Esther and her people, even while he was at the banquet of wine, and presently gave sentence against him; so may the King of heaven's wrath be kindled against thee, while at this spiritual banquet, and pass sentence on thee presently, and say, "Let Satan enter in with the sop, and seal him up under his hardness and impenitency, and carry him on to all ungodliness, till he be ripe for hell."

What Christ said of the Pharisees' proselyte, Matt. xiii. 15, He was made twofold more the child of hell than themselves, may well be said of impenitent receivers. By their communicating in this case, they may make themselves twofold more the children of hell and the devil than they were before; for, thereby, they fall more under the power of Satan; they increase their hardness, strengthen their lusts; and to all their former sins they add the guilt of profaning God's ordinance, crucifying the Son of God afresh, and trampling his precious blood under foot.

Impenitent partaking is a crime so offensive to a holy God, that it will bring all your other sins fresh into God's remembrance, and excite him to visit you for them, according to that word; Hos. viii. 13, "They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the Lord accepteth them not." This is sad enough, but worse follows; "Now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins." Now will he do it, even while they are offering their sacrifice. O impenitent sinners! God remembers your sins at all times, but especially when you come to the sacrament in a hardened case; then will he remember how you have formerly abused his mercies, wounded his Son, grieved his Spirit, misspent your time, neglected his worship, dealt hypocritically with him, been unjust to your neighbours, hated his people, &c. So that he will, at the very time you are receiving, come and visit your sins, smite you with his wrath, and give Satan power over you. O, then, were it not far better for you, before you come to the Lord's table, to be remembering your sins, and humbling yourselves for them before the Lord, than to have God remembering them in wrath against you when you are at the table!

Now, for your help in this matter, set time apart be-

fore the sacrament, read over our Larger Catechism upon the ten commandments; and, as you read, carefully observe and mark the duties you have omitted, and the sins you have committed against every one of these commands; and from this you may form a black catalogue of your sins, which you ought to spread, as Hezekiah did Sennacherib's letter, before the Lord, and, likewise, before the face of your own consciences. Had we but our eyes enlightened by God's Spirit, to take a view of ourselves and our manifold spots in the glass of God's holy and extensive law, then would we go humbly to God, with ropes about our necks, sorrow in our hearts, tears in our eyes, and confessions in our mouths, cast ourselves down at the footstool of his mercy, and make full and particular acknowledgments of our guiltiness before him.

And, to give some instances, when we view the first commandment, let us be humbled for our sins against it, and confess them; "Ah, have I not been guilty of much heart atheism? Have I not doubted of the being or providence of God? Have I not much ignorance, and many wrong thoughts and misapprehensions of God? Have I not been forgetful of God, my maker and preserver? Have I not put the creature, the world, self, and other things in his room? Have I not ascribed my mercies to others—to fortune, to my own wisdom and industry, rather than to God? Alas! for my self-love, self-seeking, unbelief, distrust, hatred of God, grieving his Spirit, dislike of his image in his ordinances, his children, &c.

"*2dly.* How have I sinned against the second command, by devising or approving other ways of worship than God hath appointed, by not prizing pure ordinances, by making representations of God in my mind, and entertaining wrong conceptions of him?

"*3dly.* Against the third command, by abusing God's name, his scriptures, his ordinances; by irreverent approaches to God, hypocrisy, careless hearing and communicating; by perjury, swearing rashly, breach of oaths and vows; by having a hand in the perjury or false swearing of others; by wresting the word, misapplying providences, unthankfulness for mercies, insensibleness and incorrigibleness under judgments and afflictions.

"*4thly.* Against the fourth command, by forgetfulness

of the Sabbath before it came, not preparing for it, not labouring to prevent what might distract us in the duties of the Sabbath; by profaning the Sabbath when it came, by idleness, needless visits, unsuitable thoughts, words, and actions; by worldly cares and business on the Sabbath; by needless recreations, seeking our own pleasures, not performing or careless performing, of the duties of the Sabbath, both in public and private. Alas! I have been so far from calling the Sabbath a delight, that, oftentimes, my heart hath said, What a weariness is it! Ah! the strict observation of thy Sabbath hath been tedious to me; I have wished it over, and said, When will the Sabbath be gone? &c.

“*5thly.* Against the fifth command, by not behaving myself answerably to my several relations; not having due respect to my natural, ecclesiastical, and political parents; not loving them, praying for them, and covering their infirmities; by not behaving suitably towards my inferiors, not admonishing and encouraging them in well-doing, not correcting children, or doing it unduly, provoking them to wrath; and also carrying unsuitably towards my equals, envying their gifts, prosperity, or grieving at their advancement.

“*6thly.* Against the sixth command, by sinful anger, hatred, malice, desire of revenge, immoderate use of meat and drink; by quarrelling, fighting, striking, wounding, and doing several things that tend to take away the lives of others, as occasioning quarrels, sowing strife and discord among friends, &c.; by not being duly concerned for the preservation of the lives of others, whether of their souls or bodies.

“*7thly.* Against the seventh command, by unchaste thoughts, words, and actions; by unclean imaginations, obscene speeches, wanton gestures, immodest apparel; not watching over my senses, heart, words, and actions; by going into bad company, occasions of uncleanness; by drunkenness, gluttony, and other temptations thereunto.

“*8thly.* Against the eighth command, by stealing, defrauding, oppression, extortion, unfaithfulness in bargains and contracts, idleness, prodigality, inordinate prizing of worldly goods.

“*9thly.* Against the ninth command, by slandering, backbiting, reviling, lying in jest or in earnest, concealing the truth I should have spoken, speaking the truth un-

seasonably, and to a wrong end, suborning false witnesses, pleading for an evil cause, rash censuring, aggravating smaller faults, countenancing evil reports, extenuating gross sins.

“*10thly.* Against the tenth command, by discontent with my own condition, envying and grieving at my neighbour’s good and welfare, impatient under affliction. Alas! for my innumerable breaches of God’s holy commandments!”

In the next place, take a view of the particular aggravations of your sins, and be deeply humbled for them, and lay them before God in their blackest and bloodiest colours:—“Ah! I have sinned against more light and knowledge than others, against many checks of conscience, warnings, admonitions, and reproofs. I have sinned against more mercies and experiences of God’s kindness than others. I have had many gracious offers of peace and pardon; nay, God has given me sweet intimations of his love and goodwill to my soul; he hath sometimes smiled on me in duty; given me enlargements, breakings and meltings of heart in prayer, hearing, and communicating; but I have been most unthankful to him: alas! for my ingratitude for mercies; I have sinned against more resolutions, vows, covenants, and engagements to the contrary, than others have done. Ah! I have sinned with deliberation, and fallen into the same sins over again. I have sinned against my confessions, my lamentations, and prayers; I have sinned against God’s rods and chastisements upon myself, and against terrifying instances of God’s judgments upon others. I have sinned against the patience and long-suffering of God, that hath waited upon me for many years. Alas! I have sinned against reason, conscience, interest, and a thousand other obligations. I have dishonoured God, hardened the wicked, and opened their mouths against religion. I have gratified Satan, and brought up an ill report on the ways of God by my sins, more than many others.

“Moreover, how grievously have I sinned against the gospel, by slighting, not sufficiently esteeming, admiring, and being thankful for the infinite love of God displayed in man’s redemption; by not loving and rejoicing in Jesus Christ, and him crucified; by resting on my duties, and not improving Christ, and relying on him in all his

offices, not accounting all things loss and dung for him ; by not dying daily to sin, nor sorrowing for it ; but often making light of that which nothing but the blood of Christ could expiate. Ah ! I have not sought the things of Christ as my own, I have not preferred Jerusalem to my chief joy. My heart hath not, like Eli's, trembled for the ark of God ; nor hath my soul, like Lot's, been vexed from day to day with the unlawful deeds of those among whom I live. I have not mourned for the afflictions of God's people, for the signs of God's anger, or for the sins of the times. Alas ! for the infirmities, imperfections, and iniquities of my holy things ! Oh ! the heart-hardness, formality, earthly-mindedness, deadness, indisposition, wanderings, weariness, unpreparedness, and want of relish, that have attended my attendance on holy ordinances, and particularly this of the Lord's supper ! I have rested in the mere outside of duties. I have had little appetite after this refreshing ordinance of the Lord's supper. I have not approached to it with such solemn preparation, examination, humiliation, renewing of covenant, as I ought to have done. I have walked unanswerably after the communion, and have not minded my resolutions and engagements, as become a worthy communicant."

Having thus accused yourselves, and confessed your sins before God, as far as you can remember, proceed also to judge and condemn yourselves for them, saying, " O what a wretched rebel against God have I been, yea, even a den of filthiness, a sty of uncleanness, and a sink of misery ! I have been a heaven-daring, God-provoking, Christ-crucifying, Spirit-quencher, law-breaking, gospel-despising, and soul-murdering sinner ! Lord, can thy arms of mercy open to receive such a monster of wickedness as I have been ? Surely I deserve rather to be trampled under the feet of thy justice, than to be embraced in the arms of thy mercy ; for, alas ! I have trampled under my feet all thy glorious attributes. I have abused thy mercy and patience, and contemned thy wisdom and power. I have despised thy goodness, that hath been unto me as the dropping dew. I have incensed the infinite power of my dread Sovereign against me, who by a word can un-hinge the world, and tear up its foundations as easily as he laid them. I have exasperated the justice of that mighty One, who by his breath can crumble me to dust,

and consume me to powder. Lord, I have sinned against the clearest light and dearest love; nay, I have repeated and reiterated my heinous sins; I have gone from committing sin to confessing sin, and from confessing sin to committing sin again. Ah! I have lived as carelessly and irreligiously, as if there had been no God to punish, nor devil to torment; no sweetness in heaven, nor bitterness in hell. O what indignities and affronts hast thou borne with from me, a poor, undeserving, ill-deserving, yea, hell-deserving wretch! Never were the wages more due to the labourer, than damnation is due to me. If every sin brings down a curse, and deserves hell, how many thousand hells, how many millions of curses, do I deserve? O how miserable should I be for ever, if thou, Lord, shouldst deal with me according to my deservings! I have forfeited all interest in thy favour, and all claim to thy mercy; I deserve not to live in thy world, or to breathe in thy air; but to have my name blotted out from under heaven, yea, to have all the curses of thy book, and all the vials of thy wrath poured out on me, even a deluge of fire and brimstone rained upon me without intermission. I deserve to be hung up in chains of everlasting darkness, to be a monument of justice, and a derision of devils for evermore. I cast down my soul, O Lord, at thy feet: though thou shouldst take it up, and fling it into hell, I behaved to say, 'Thou art righteous;' for the hottest place in hell is too good for me.

"Oh! shall such a wretch as I think of approaching to thy table? what may I expect there but frowns from the Master of the feast? While the Sun of righteousness ariseth with healing in his wings to those that fear thy name, thy wrath may burn against me as fire, and devour me as stubble. The day of feasting and rejoicing, sacrifice and atonement, to thy sincere servants, may be a day of wrath and trouble, darkness and gloominess, unto me. While they are saying, 'Come, let us go into the house of the Lord; our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Zion, within thy courts, O God!' I may justly be saying, 'The great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?' And when thy children, Lord, shall go with confidence and present themselves before thee, arrayed in the righteousness of thy Son, lifting up their heads with joy, knowing the time of their redemption draws nigh, I may be hiding myself in the dens and rocks

of the mountains, saying, ‘ Fall on me, and hide me from the face of him that sits on the throne.’ I may see them taken in and set down at the table above with the King, and myself eternally thrust out. And while they are feasting and rejoicing at thy table, I may justly be lying under the wrath of the Lamb.

“ O Lord, how have I made light of the gospel-feast, and preferred the things of the world before it; so that thou mayest justly say to me, that I shall never taste of thy supper, or, if I go to it, that it shall not be for the better, but for the worse. I shall meet with a frown instead of a smile, a curse instead of a welcome, a breach instead of a blessing. Lord, thou mayest instead of bread give me a stone, and for the cup of the New Testament give me a cup of wrath and trembling. Thou mayest justly turn my hard heart into a stone, instead of turning my stony heart into a heart of flesh.”

When thou hast in this manner aggravated thy crimes, and condemned thyself, yet do not despair; but, as the poor, condemned criminal may cry for mercy, so let a poor, humbled, self-condemned sinner cry to a merciful God for pity. Say, “ Lord, I am ashamed and confounded at my former madness and folly; I have nothing to plead for myself, except, with the poor publican standing afar off, to smite upon my breast, and lift mine eyes to heaven, and say, God be merciful to me a sinner. All my refuge, all my hope, is in the free mercy of God through Jesus Christ. Lord, make me a monument of free grace to all the ages of eternity. But, alas! I am ashamed to speak of mercy and grace, who have already abused so much thereof, yea, trampled on the blood that should save me. But, Lord, what can I do, or whither shall I go? Should I despair with Cain, or make away myself with Judas? Oh no! This, Lord, were to affront thy mercy yet more, and utterly to reject the gospel-remedy, which thou valuest so highly. This thing I will not do; but, seeing I have heard so glorious a report of the mercy of the King of Israel, I will even venture to his throne of grace, where free mercy reigns to pardon abounding sins, and where Jesus Christ sits to save the chief of sinners. Lord Jesus, reach from heaven thy merciful hand to save me, a poor sinner, who, like Peter, am ready to sink in the sea of my sins and miseries; that so the blessing of a heavy laden sinner, that is ready to perish, may come on thy head for

ever. Lord, save me or else I perish; wash away the guilt of my many heinous sins, with the merit of that blood which ran down from thy wounds on the cross, that I am to see represented in the sacrament, or I am undone. Lord, I am told of the efficacy of this blood, that it hath a mighty current, and the highest mountains of guilt cannot stop its course. O let the blessed experiment be tried on me, as it hath been on thousands before me. I am also told, that thou hast sought after many sinners, while running from thee; nay, followed them to the gates of hell with a pardon in thy hand; and, when Satan has been ready to tumble them in, thou hast caught them, and brought them back again. And wilt thou now refuse me, who am seeking after thee? Lord, thou heardst and helped; nay, died for thine enemies, before they cried to thee for help; and wilt thou reject me, who am come to lay down mine arms, and cry to thee for mercy? Hast thou not said, that he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy? Thy word was never yet known to fail; Lord, be it to me according to thy word."

And, having betaken thyself to Christ thy Surety's merit, humbly plead it with God for thy pardon and acceptance; say, "Lord, I have indeed broken all thy commands: but hath not my Surety fulfilled them all? I have, alas! affronted thy justice; but, hath not my Surety satisfied it? I have deserved thy wrath, but he hath endured it. The chastisement of my peace was upon him; O let the merit of his righteousness be upon me! Lord, remember not what I have done against thee, but remember what he hath done and suffered for me. Oh! when I consider thy greatness, and my own unworthiness; thy purity, and my uncleanness; thy glory, and my vileness; I am confounded and discouraged to draw near to thy table; but when I consider thy bounty and goodness, my Saviour's merit, and thy mercy and readiness to forgive, I am encouraged to come. And, O that I could come with a broken and contrite heart, which is a pleasant sacrifice to God!"

*Objec.* But, saith some poor discouraged soul, I would fain set about the work of humiliation, in order to prepare me for the sacrament; but O, my hard heart will not break; alas! it is so hardened and bound up, that I cannot get one tear for sin.

*Ans.* Remember that it is Christ who hath purchased,

who hath promised, and who freely bestoweth repentance on poor sinners ; therefore go to him and seek it ; and, that it may be wrought in you, plead for the blessed Spirit, which he hath also promised, to be sent to take off the scales of blindness from your eyes, which Satan hath put on, that so you may see sin in its blackness and deformity. Cry, with Job, “ What I know not teach thou me ; O make me to know my transgression and my sin.” God hath set before you several looking-glasses to represent the evil of sin to you—O make use of them. You have the glass of God’s holy nature, the glass of his holy law, the glass of the damned’s torments, and the glass of Christ’s sufferings—look frequently into these. View the infinite purity and spotlessness of God’s nature ; consider his holy law in its spiritual meaning, and large extent ; meditate on the eternal shrieks and howlings of damned souls ; and, in a special manner, behold Christ’s bloody agonies for sin. A right look of him whom ye have pierced will cause you to mourn ; Zech. xii. 10.

Come, then, O hard-hearted sinner, and behold how thy sins pierced Christ’s head with thorns, his hands and feet with nails, his side with a spear, and his heart with sorrows ; behold how they pressed him down in the garden, till he sweat blood ; behold how they bound a heavy cross on his back, till he fainted with the load ; behold how they nailed him to the cursed tree, and made God frown upon him, so that he was forced to cry out, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?” O canst thou look on Golgotha or Gethsemane with dry eyes, or an unconcerned heart ? Canst thou see Christ’s eyes weep, and his heart melted like wax within him, and yet thy heart continue hard, and thine eyes dry ? Come, hearken to his dying groans, and look to his bleeding wounds ; think you hear him saying to you, “ Behold what your sins have done ! is there any sorrow like my sorrow ?” O wilt thou not say to my hard heart, “ What is this that thou hast done ! Is not this the Son of God, and the King of glory, that thou hast murdered by thy sins ; and wilt thou not be grieved for them ? Shall the hard rocks rend, the dead earth shake, the temple’s veil rend, the sun veil its bright face, the heavens put on a mourning habit, and the whole creation look sad, when Christ is suffering for thy sins, and thou, the guilty criminal, that shouldst have eternally howled in hell’s flames,

stand only unconcerned?" Be astonished, O heavens, at this! and let thy hard heart blush and be ashamed for it. Ah! shall the history of Joseph in the pit move your hearts more than that of Christ upon the cross? Shall the news of the tragical death or sufferings of one of your friends and countrymen among the Turks, move your hearts sooner than the death and sufferings of the innocent Son of God? O then, go to God, and complain of thy hard heart! take it and lay it before God's promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, and plead that he would take it away, according to his word. "Lord, thou curedst all manner of plagues and diseases which were brought to thee while thou wast on earth; and hast thou not the same bowels of mercy now in heaven? Surely thy goodness is still the same, thy hands are not shortened that they cannot save; nay, there are holes now in thy hands, to let blessings drop through them the more freely to us. Thou art my only Physician, and to thee will I look for the cure; Lord, nothing will do it but the plaster of thy blood."

Mourning is absolutely necessary for thee, O communicant, if thou wouldst have the wine of consolation in the sacrament. When did Jacob find God in Bethel, but when "he wept and made supplication to God?" Hos. xii. 3. When did Mary meet with Christ, but when she "sought him weeping and sorrowing?" John xx. 11. If you cast out a flood of tears in Christ's way, he will not be able, for his compassionate heart, to pass over it, but will turn in and lodge with you.

*Objec.* Alas! I cannot win to tears for sin. Are tears absolutely necessary?

*Ans.* They are very desirable where they are; the penitent's tears are the joy of angels, and the delight of God; he keeps a bottle for them; but yet all constitutions are not alike moist; a tender heart may be matched with a dry brain that cannot easily command tears; and some, perhaps, may lay more stress on tears than on the frame of the heart that produces them, not minding that God looks more to the inward frame than to the outward expressions. But the truth is, if thou be one that can get tears for other things, for worldly losses and crosses, and yet can find none for sin, it is a sign thy heart is not right. How many, alas! can weep abundantly for the loss of a child, yea, for a horse or cow, and yet have not one

tear for the loss of their soul, or of Christ's favour or presence.

### DIRECTION X.

*Flee to Jesus Christ by faith, and embrace him as he is offered to you in the Gospel, before you come to his table.*

NONE have right to Christ's table, but those who come first to him in the way of faith ; for it is a feast designed only for believers.

What hath been said above, concerneth the multitude and heinousness of your sins, for which you ought to be humbled and mourn, may serve to show your great need of Christ to deliver you from them. Think not that your repentance, confessions, or tears for sin, can anywise satisfy the justice of God for it, or merit acceptance or pardon for you. This were to put these things in Christ's room, that are only means to lead you to him ; and to take up with a righteousness of your own, instead of his that allenarly can atone the justice of God for sinners. O then, see that you look beyond all to Christ alone for atonement, righteousness, pardon, and salvation, and count all things but dung and loss in respect of him.

Now, since the gospel offers Christ to all that hear it, and the call and command to receive and embrace Christ as a Saviour is given to all and every one, even to the vilest of sinners, you have a full warrant to lay hold on him for pardon, and flee to him for mercy ; and you heinously sin against God and your own soul, if you neglect to do it. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation, and slight so great a Saviour ?

I shall therefore make use of some motives to press poor perishing sinners to flee from sin and wrath to Jesus Christ the only Saviour, and to receive and rest upon him for life and salvation ; and come to the sacrament, to get their right and title to Christ, and all his purchase, sealed and confirmed.

I. Take a view of the misery of a natural and Christless condition ; and O that God would open your eyes to let you see it, and convince you, that while thou art in this state, thou art a rebel to thy God, a prodigal to thy father, a slave to thy lusts, and an alien to the commonwealth of Israel : if thou comest not to Christ with

thy burdens, the whole burden of unpardoned sin lies upon thy back ; and this is a burden that will sink thee lower than the grave ; nay, it will press thee to the lowest hell, and keep thee eternally sinking there. Consider also, how vile and loathsome thou and all thy actions, whether natural, civil, or religious, are in the sight of a holy God, while thou art out of Christ : thy soul is naked, and swarms with the vermin of filthy lusts ; and thou hast neither a garment to cover thee, nor a fountain to wash thee : the leprosy of sin spreads over all ; so that, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, there is nothing but bruises and putrefying sores : so that there is no mire so unclean, no vomit so loathsome, no carrion so offensive, no pestilence so noisome, as thou art in thy Christless state, in the eyes of a holy God, who cannot look upon iniquity but with abhorrence. Again, consider thou art a slave to Satan, the worst of tyrants ; he rules and works in your hearts, as a workman doth in his shop ; Eph. ii. 2. He uses your powers, faculties, senses, and members according to his pleasure ; he says, Go, and you go ; Do this, and you do it. Your bondage is worse than the Israelites under Pharaoh ; for they groaned under theirs, but you, alas ! are not sensible of yours, neither will you believe it. The devil knows that if you perceived your slavery, you would seek to make your escape from him ; therefore, to make sure work, he deals with you as the Philistines did with Samson, puts out your eyes, that you may not see your chains, nor look to Christ for liberty. O that God would open them, and cause you groan under your fetters, and to look to Christ for relief !

Moreover, while thou art in thy Christless state, God's wrath is still burning against thee, the flaming sword of justice is always over thy neck ; Psalm vii. 11, " God is angry with the wicked every day ;" every day of the week, and every hour of the day ; and when thou goest out, and comest in, risest up or liest down, God is still angry with thee : yea, " he hath bent his bow, and made ready his arrows," which are steeled with wrath, and headed with vengeance ;" nay, " his bow is drawn, and his arrows are at the flight ;" and, O Christless soul, thou art the very butt thereof ; and, if he let them fly, they will pierce thee to the very soul, and who will heal that wound ? What a dangerous state is this !

And further, all the curses of the law are levelled against thee, and a just God is engaged by his oath to ruin thee, if thou abidest in this state; Heb. iii. 18, "To whom swear he, that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believe not?" Should not the thoughts of this make thee tremble? Were it but the oath of a man, or company of men, to procure thy death, as of those forty men that bound themselves, under an oath, they would neither eat nor drink till they killed Paul, it would bereave thee of thy night's rest and quiet till they were made friends with thee; and will the oath of the great God have no effect upon thee, nor move thee to flee to Christ for protection and reconciliation? Who can help thee, or deal for thee, if Christ be neglected? With what face canst thou look to him, or cry for mercy from him, when he comes to judge thee at the last day? If thou remainest Christless now, thou wilt be speechless, helpless, and hopeless then. O think, what pale faces, quivering lips, fainting hearts, and trembling consciences will be among Christless sinners then? How will their heads hang down, and knees knock together, and cry, Alas for the day! They can look nowhere for comfort; for the Judge frowns on them, the saints deride them, their own friends upbraid them, the angels mock them, the devils scoff at them, the heavens thunder against them, the earth flames about them, and hell groans for them, and down they will go roaring and howling for ever.

O Christless soul, how canst thou think to lie in that dark dungeon for ever, where there is nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth to be heard, and utter darkness to be seen, but never a blink of the light of God's favour to all eternity? How wilt thou live in that pit where there is no water? Not a drop of comfort or refreshment to the thirsty, scorched prisoners; no, not so much as one drop to cool their tongue;—the torments there are both endless and easeless. O poor Christless soul, thou art, as it were, apprehended by justice for thy debt, and brought the length of this prison door, and there are hundreds of diseases and devils waiting for a warrant to open the door to let you in; and wilt thou not employ a surety, nor seek for a ransom, when justice is waiting a while to see if thou wilt do it, and Christ is earnestly offering himself to be thy cautioner, and his blood to ransom thee

from this pit? then, to be sure, no other thing will do it. See Zech. ix. 11.

II. As it is God's command that you should receive and believe on his Son Jesus Christ, so he declares that it is a work above all others most pleasing to him; John vi. 29. It is emphatically called *his commandment*, John iii. 24, being a command he values more than all the other commands in the bible; and so, upon the other hand, there is no sin so provoking to God as unbelief and rejecting of Christ; yea, he is more offended with it, than with the breaking of all his other commands. See Heb. x. 28, 29. Put all your other sins in one scale, and unbelief in another, and you will find that unbelief weighs down all the rest; for it is a slighting of the whole work of redemption, which is the masterpiece of all God's works, being that which his heart is most set upon, and he hath been at most pains about; 1 John iv. 8. O be persuaded then to do the work that is most acceptable to God, and obey his great command of believing upon the name of his Son! The whole creation obeys his commands; he commands the sun to run its daily course, and it obeys him; he commands the sea to ebb and flow twice a day, and it obeys to a minute; he commands the angels and all the host of heaven, and they punctually obey him; and will you only be disobedient to him, and that to his beloved command, when yet he hath done more for you than for the whole creation?

III. Consider what an unspeakable mercy and happiness it is to you, to enjoy the free offers of Jesus Christ, and to have God commanding you to receive him. How would the fallen angels value such a mercy, if they had it? They would not be loath to leave their dungeon, and accept of a Saviour, as you are; but their state is eternally hopeless and desperate, there is no remedy for their misery. O do not put yourselves in the same case with them, by slighting the offered remedy. How would damned souls prize such an offer? The least news and remotest hopes of it would make them leap in their chains, and sing in the flames. O how glad would they be to lift up their flaming hands to grip to the cords of love and mercy, if they could be let down to them in that dark dungeon! Why then should you wilfully put yourselves into the same hopeless condition with them by your unbelief? Nay, your neglecting so many offers will sink

you far deeper in that scalding lake of fire and brimstone, and increase your flames to more vehemency, than those of others who have not been so privileged. O how will devils, Turks, Jews, and Pagans upbraid you there, for your inexcusable folly in slighting your mercy and destroying your souls! Be wise then in time, prize your privilege; and consider "the things that belong to your peace, before they be hid from your eyes."

IV. Consider what an excellent and suitable help Christ is for fallen sinners: he is well furnished and qualified for your case; he hath gold for your poverty, eye-salve for your blindness, balm for your wounds, physic for your diseases, bread for your hunger, white raiment for your nakedness, a fountain for your pollution, and a ransom for your debt and bondage. In a word, he hath a broad plaster for your broad sore, a deep fountain for your deep guilt; he is the chief of Saviours for the chief of sinners. Behold how one deep calls to another, the depth of thy misery for the depth of his mercy! Are your sins and miseries very extensive? then view the large dimensions of his mercy. Who can fathom the height, the depth, the breadth, or length of it? As for its height, it is high as heaven, and surmounts the highest mountains of guilt; it is so deep, that it can bury the greatest of your sins; it is as broad as the east is from the west: and for its length, it is from everlasting to everlasting; so that it fully answers all your wants and miseries. In Christ there is all you need, or can desire; there is both food and physic, clothing, strength, and cordials. O sinner! here is blood to justify thee, and water to cleanse thee; here the water of life, O believer! that will restore thy soul again, renew thy youth as the eagle's, cure all thy diseases, and heal all thy pains. In a word, you have in Christ all that can make you good, all that can make you great, and all that can make you happy.

V. Consider how near you are to Christ and mercy. The remedy is prepared, and salvation is brought to your very door: so that you need not say, "Who will ascend to heaven, and bring me down the water of life?" For it is brought to earth to thy hand; you need not say, "Who will roll me away the stone from the well's mouth?" for Christ hath done it for thee; and it is now a fountain opened, and running by your door. O why

will you be so mad as perish for thirst beside this fountain? or starve for hunger beside a full feast? or die of your wounds beside a physician; And all for want of a heart to accept of the offer. O it would be sad to be so near Christ, and yet eternally miss him; to perish, like the thief on the cross, with a Saviour at your side; to be within a step of him, and yet never touch him; yea, to sink into hell betwixt the outstretched arms of his mercy, and with his sweet calls sounding in your ears. What a heart-stinging consideration will this be to you in that place of torment for ever! O then stir up yourselves to take hold of Christ, when he is so near, and in your offer: strive earnestly, while there is an ark prepared, and a window opened in the side of it, and the hand of mercy put forth to pull in shelterless doves, that can find no rest elsewhere; I say, strive to come near by the wings of faith, make your nest, at least, beside the hole's mouth; be not found hovering without, lest the flood wash you off from the sides of the ark, and ye perish miserably. If you be foolish, you will wish eternally that ye had never heard of Christ, or that ye had been born among the wild Indians or Mahometans, that never heard a sermon or witnessed a communion.

VI. Consider how importunate Christ is in his offers, and how much he presseth you to receive him. "Wisdom crieth in the streets;" Prov. i. 20. Christ makes loud and open proclamations of himself, and oft repeats his call; Isaiah lv. 2, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come," &c. Behold, so earnest is he with sinners, that he bids them come to him three times in one verse, "Come, come, come!" What alluring methods he hath taken to gain your hearts! How tenderly and affectionately doth he call and court backward souls! Isaiah li. 4, "Hearken unto me, my people; give ear unto me, O my nation." What melting expressions are these! "My people, my nation!"

But if calls do not prevail, he comes himself to "seek and to save that which was lost." He came personally in the days of his flesh, and now he comes by his Spirit, in his word and ordinances. The three wise men came from the east a long journey to seek Christ; but now Christ hath come from heaven to earth, a long journey; yea, come to every one of your congregations to seek you; and are ye not willing to be found of him?

Nay, he is content to follow you when you run away from him, and pursue you with his gracious offers. As the rock followed the Israelites in the wilderness with its running streams of water, so Christ, our spiritual Rock, follows you now with the streams of his mercy and blood, to wash and save you. O sinner! if you will not hear the words of his mouth, hearken to the call of his wounds, which are opened as so many mouths to plead with you. He hath suffered his blessed side to be opened, that ye might look into his bleeding heart, and see it panting with love, and also hear the sounding of his bowels towards you; will not this prevail? Then behold him by faith, with a heavy cross on his back, weighed down with your sins, and the curses of a broken law, following you, and calling after you. Hear him knock. Open to me, poor perishing sinner! give me harbour in thy heart; behold what I have suffered from heaven, earth, and hell, for thee: look what justice hath done; look what the devil, the Romans, the Jews, and my own disciples, have done. View my head, my side, my hands, and my feet, my wounded body, and my bruised soul. O, canst thou find in thy heart to keep Christ at the door, when thus wounded, bleeding and mangled for thee? Wilt thou let him stand all the day long, when he hath put on his dyed garments, and red apparel, to court thy backward heart, and when he is saying, O sinner, if thou wilt not believe, "reach hither thy hand, and feel the print of the nails, yea, thrust it into my pierced side, and feel my warm, bleeding heart, and see if I love you not?" Wilt thou deny my access, who has done so much for thee?

Will not this prevail? Then behold him displaying his glorious beauty and excellency before thine eyes in a preached gospel, to win thy heart. Will not ministers' commendations of him move thee? Then hear how he commends himself: "I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys; I am the true vine; I am the good shepherd," &c. And will you not believe his own report, who cannot lie? Surely he is in good earnest with you when he takes this course.

Will not this do? Then hearken how mournfully he complains when he wants success, and passionately regrets your folly in rejecting him. He sighs when he mentions it; Psalm lxxxix. 13, "O that my people had hearkened unto me!" He bitterly laments it; Matt. xxii. 37, "O

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, and ye would not!" He doubles the name, to show his tender affection; as David, when he regrets his son Absalom, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son!" &c. "How often would I have gathered you under my wings!" How many an affectionate sermon, call, and invitation, have I given you, but to no purpose! Shall I go through a sea of wrath and blood to save you, and will you not accept of me when I have done it? Shall I shed my blood in vain? Shall I bear the wrath of God, the scorns of men, the terrors of death, and curse of the law, to no effect? Will ye still prefer your sins before me, and hear Satan's knocks sooner than mine?

Hear that compassionate complaint, John v. 40, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." As if he had said, Why run ye so fast from your Saviour? Why come ye not to me, who am come from heaven to seek and save you? It is not an enemy, but a friend, ye run from: the worst turn I would do you, is to save your lives; ye will go without much pressing to the devil, to get death and eternal damnation; but ye will not come to me to get life and eternal salvation. O what inexpressible madness are ye guilty of!

Behold how he weeps for self-destroying Jerusalem rejecting his offers; Luke xix. 41. When he sat down to consider their case, his bowels yearned with pity, his tongue broke forth in lamentation, and his eyes gushed out with tears; so that his weeping even interrupted his voice, and made him utter short and abrupt expressions; "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day," &c.—where he seems to pause at every other word, and drop first a word and then a tear. What a moving sight was this, to see the Son of God in such a pang of grief, and flood of tears, for lost sinners! Had he been inquired at, as he did Mary, (John xx. 15,) "Blessed Lord, what seekest thou? why weepest thou?" his answer readily would have been, "I seek not myself, I weep not for myself; for I shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, though sinners be not gathered; but I weep to see sinners so mad as to reject the Saviour and salvation, rather than part with their lusts, that have damnation following them at their heels; it is my grief to see them content rather to cast themselves headlong into the devil's

arms, than throw themselves into my arms of mercy, or embrace me in the arms of their faith." O! did Christ weep for you, poor sinners! and will ye not weep for yourselves? Did his heart melt with pity for you; and will not yours melt with desires towards him?

Can he do no more to win your hearts than this? Yea, if this do not, he is pleased to expostulate the matter with you, and lay your danger before you: "Turn ye, turn ye," saith he, "for why will ye die?" Yea, he condescends to reason the matter with you in a familiar way: "Come," says he, "let us reason together," Isaiah i. "O my people, what have I done unto thee?" Mic. vi. 3, "What iniquity have ye found in me?" What want or unsuitableness have ye seen in me? "Have I been a barren wilderness to you? Are not my ways equal?" Thus he seeks to draw you "with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love;" Hos. xi. 4. And if there arise objections in your heart against coming to Christ, and receiving him for your Saviour, see how carefully he lays out himself in his word to answer them all; for he well foresaw every one of them; "Produce your cause," saith the Lord, "bring forth your strong reason;" I am ready to hear and answer all your scruples.

O! saith some poor, humbled soul, I have no right to come to Christ, for I am a great sinner. O, saith Christ, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

*Objec.* But I am the chief of sinners, my sins are red as crimson. O, saith Christ, I can make them white as wool: nay, it was my errand into the world, to save such as thou art; 1 Tim. i. 15.

*Objec.* But I am sick and wounded; what hath Christ to do with me? O, saith Christ, it is my proper employment to be taken up with you; for "the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick;" Matt. ix. 12. Am not I the good Samaritan, who am come to pour oil into thy sores, and "tenderly bind up thy wounds?" Psalm cxlvii. 3.

*Objec.* But I have no ground to hope, for I am a lost wretch. O, saith Christ, I came for this very errand, "to seek and save that which was lost," Luke xix. 10; and many a lost sheep have I sought and found.

*Objec.* But I am past cure, for I am quite dead, and rotten in the grave of sin. O, saith Christ, I am the resurrection and the life: "he that believes in me, though

he were dead, yet shall he live ;” John xi. 25. And again he saith, Eph. v. 44, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

*Objec.* But I am a slave to sin and Satan, and a prisoner to justice. O, saith Christ, I am come to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; Isa. lxi. 1. “Yea, I have the key of David, that opens, and none can shut ! I have the blood of the covenant, that brings prisoners out of the pit. Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope ;” Zech. ix. 11, 12.

*Objec.* But I have heavy burdens that weigh me down. O, saith Christ, “Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

*Objec.* But my hand is withered, and I cannot receive Christ, or anything from him. Then do as the man who had the withered hand, make a mint upon Christ’s call, and he will enable thee to stretch out thy hand.

*Objec.* But I am lame, and cannot walk in Christ’s ways. O, saith Christ, “I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes ;” Ezek. xxxvi. 27. “Then shall the lame man leap as an hart ;” Isa. xxxv. 6.

*Objec.* But what if Christ withdraw his Spirit and grace from me again ? No, saith Christ, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee ;” Heb. xiii. 5.

*Objec.* But may not I, notwithstanding, leave him, and make apostasy ? No, saith Christ, the covenant runs otherwise ; Jer. iii. 19, “Thou shalt call me, My Father, and shalt not turn away from me.” Christ is surety for thy perseverance.

*Objec.* But I will be overcome by strong temptations. No, saith Christ, “My grace shall be sufficient for thee.”

*Objec.* But, saith some poor, sensible sinner, alas ! my case is not yet touched, for it is singular ; my sins are heinous and peculiar ; they are against light, love, conscience, vows, and a thousand obligations ; there is none that knows what a sinner I have been, but God and my own conscience. Will Christ ever accept of such a wretch as me ?

*Ans.* Art thou worse than a devilish Manasseh, or a persecuting Paul, whom Christ pitied and saved ? Art thou worse than Mary Magdalen, who was a most notorious, vile wretch ? yet seven devils and an army of lusts could not keep Christ out of her heart. Nay, though

thy heart were as foul and black as hell, and thy life did swarm with the most abominable sins, yet Christ is both able and willing to save thee, if thou come to him. Are you worse than those in that black catalogue! 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Read and see what a sad roll is there; and yet the apostle saith to the believing Corinthians, verse 11, "Such were some of you, yet ye are washed," &c. The blood of Christ is a powerful fountain, and is able to wash away the greatest sins that ever were committed, be they ever so black or bloody. God gave full proof of this by the first sin we read of, that was cleansed by this blood after it was shed, even the murder of the Son of God; Acts ii. 38, 39. This was the most prodigious wickedness that ever the sun saw; yet the sun fainted at the sight, as afraid to look on it; for, suppose a man were able to pull heaven and earth to pieces, destroy the angels, and murder all mankind, he would not contract so monstrous a guilt as those did in crucifying the Son of God, whose person was infinitely superior to the whole creation; yet thousands that were actors in this black tragedy were washed by this blood, to give us a convincing experiment of its infinite value and virtue, and that no sin or guilt whatsoever was too strong for it: "The blood of Christ," saith John, (1 John i. 7,) "cleanseth us from all sin."

*Objec.* But though Christ's blood be sufficient, yet I have no right to it.

*Ans.* Be what you will, you have a full and sufficient warrant from the gospel-call to flee to it. See what Christ enjoins his apostles to do; Mark xvi. 15, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" *q. d.*, "Make offer of my blood to all without distinction, even to the worst of sinners, every creature, be they ever so wicked; yea, though they have sinned themselves into the likeness of beasts or devils, yet, if they be creatures of Adam's race, offer my blood, my mercy, and merits to them; invite and press them to come unto me, 'and him that cometh I will in no ways cast out.'" O sinner! accept of the gospel-offer; and whatever you have been, you shall find there is mercy enough in God's bowels to pity you, merit enough in Christ's blood to purchase a pardon for you, and prevalency enough in his intercession to procure and apply it to you.

*Objec.* But I have often slighted the gospel-offer, and

trampled on this precious blood ; with what confidence can I lay claim to it ?

*Ans.* Since Christ doth not exclude you, you ought not to exclude yourself ; but should reckon that you have greater need to hasten to this blood, the more heinous that your sins be ; yea, you have a peculiar ground to plead upon for pardon on this account. See how David pleads it ; Psalm xxv. 11, " Pardon mine iniquity ; " Why ? " For it is great. " This would be a strange argument with men, pardon my crime for it is great ; but it is a strong argument with God. Lord, it is great, and so I have the more need of pardon. It is great, and so thou wilt have the greater honour in pardoning me, even as a physician hath in curing a desperate disease. The sinning against Christ's blood, or slighting it, is indeed a very heinous sin ; but the more it is so, ye have the more need to hasten to this blood, as the only fountain that can wash away the guilt of trampling it ; and this, indeed, can do it effectually ; nay, though you had actually shed this blood, as the Jews did, yet, if you be humbled for it you are welcome to come to it for mercy. Observe that commission which Christ gave to his apostles, Luke xxiv. 46, 47, where he orders them to preach repentance and remission in his name to all nations ; and begin, saith he, at Jerusalem. O ! might they say, why at Jerusalem ? to be sure it is not our part to begin there, where they mocked, pierced, and crucified thee the Lord of glory. Nay, says he, begin there, for these miserable wretches have most need of my blood to wash them. If any thing could alienate Christ's heart from sinners, the consideration of their crucifying of him, and using him so despitefully, might have done it ; yet, says he, go make offer of my blood and mercy to these my murderers ; and accordingly it was done by Peter, Acts ii., and many of them got this blood applied to them.

*Objec.* But as my sins are grievous in their nature, so they are vast in their number ; they are even like the sand by the sea-shore, both weighty and without number.

*Ans.* Remember, the merit of Christ's blood is infinite, but the number of thy sins is not so ; nay, though they were ten thousand times more than they are, they could not stop the current of this everflowing and overflowing fountain. Though the sands be many and large, yet the sea would overflow them all ; so, though thy sins be very

numerous and extensive, yet the sea of Christ's blood can cover them all, and hide them from the sight of God, so as they shall never again appear, or rise up against you in judgment.

*Objec.* But my sins are not only grievous in their nature, and vast in their number, but they are of very long continuance; I am an old, rotten sinner, long have I lain in the grave of sin; surely Christ will never accept of me.

*Ans.* Your sins may be old, yet they are not so old as Christ's mercies which are from everlasting. It is not the first old distemper that Christ hath cured; he raised Lazarus with a word, that had lain four days in the grave; he stopped a bloody issue with the hem of his garment, that had run twelve years; he loosed a poor woman that Satan had bound eighteen years; he cured an impotent man, that had an infirmity thirty-eight years; and can he not as easily cure all your old soul-distempers? He received those that came in at the eleventh hour, yea, saved some at the last hour; particularly the thief on the cross, whom the devil thought he was sure of, having drawn him the length of the mouth of hell, and just ready to cast him in; yet even then, upon his looking to Christ, did the arms of mercy catch hold of him.

What more canst thou object, O sinner? Hath not Christ provided answers to all thou canst say, either against thyself or him? Hath he not given unanswerable demonstrations of his ability, fulness, fitness, and willingness to be thy Saviour? Hath he not given full proof of his earnest desire to save thee, by the many methods he takes to prevail with sinners to accept of him? Will not all the pains he hath hitherto taken prevail with thy obstinate heart? What more would you have Christ to do with unwilling sinners? There is yet one step further he makes, and that is a very low one; he even, as it were, turns a humble supplicant to thee, and upon his bare knees beseeches thee to be reconciled to him. Read 2 Cor. v. 20, "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." O wonderful condescension! Behold divine mercy kneeling down to a sinner in the humblest posture, with wringed hands and watery cheeks importuning the sinner to receive his Saviour, accept of his pardon, save his soul, and be reconciled to God in Christ. Be astonished, O heavens.

shall the sovereign Creator turn supplicant to the vile traitor, and follow him with his remission? or the loving father to the prodigal child, and follow him with entreaties? And O sinner! will thy stubborn heart be able to refuse peace, or slight the blessed peace-maker Jesus Christ, after all this pains? If all his arguments prevail nothing, yet one would think that the humble entreaties of the great God will certainly do it; how can you resist these.

*Objec.* I have no strength to come to Christ, I cannot believe of myself: I have a dead and bound-up heart, and I cannot help it.

*Ans.* 1. Canst thou say in earnest, that thou art willing and desirous to embrace a Saviour, if thou wast able? Alas! it is here that it sticks: whatever you pretend, you are not truly willing. It is our unwillingness that ruins us: it is not so much for want of power—though indeed we want it—as want of will, that sinners want Christ: were you once willing, strength would not be wanting. O to get the will conquered, and made to surrender to Christ! then the day were won. O for one pull more from the omnipotent grace, to make you “a willing people in the day of his power!”

*2dly.* Labour for a deep sense of thy own impotency; take your dead heart and lay it before God, and lie groaning in Christ’s way, and plead for pity. It is true, God is not bound, in strict justice, to hear an unbeliever’s prayer, but, if you be earnest with him, you may expect he will do it, out of his great goodness and mercy. He hears the ravens when they cry: O then cry to him with your utmost ability, in a deep sense: be as earnest seeking faith, as your daily bread; cry as fervently for the life of your souls, as ye would do for the life of your bodies, if ready to be execute: if you would do so, God would not deny you. More particularly plead these things:—

1. Take your bible, kneel down, and cast up that gracious free promise; Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27; read it, and plead it, put thy finger to it, and put the Maker of it to his word; lay thy dead heart before it, and look up and cry, “Lord, make good this word to me, is it not a free promise? There is no condition required of me for getting it fulfilled, but to inquire at thee for doing it; verse 37. Now, Lord, I am come to inquire, and request thee to do it.”

2. Humbly plead thy own impotency, and the insufficiency of all others to help thee in this state. This was the impotent man's plea with Christ at the pool of Bethesda; John v. 6, 7. It had good success with him, and so it may have with you. Say, Lord, I have lain many years with this dead plagued heart beside the open fountain of thy blood, that has saved many in my condition; I am impotent, and unable to move to it of myself, and have none to put me in; I have tried others, but I find it altogether in vain; ordinances cannot do it, sacraments cannot do it, ministers cannot do it, the loudest knock or call will not do it: thou, Lord, must put to thy helping hand, or it cannot be done, for it is a work peculiar to thy mighty arm. I have been looking to all airts for help, but, Lord, there is none in heaven or earth but thee alone: every one of the creatures, means, and ordinances, say, It is not in me; every one of the saints and angels say, as the king of Israel did to that poor, starving woman, 2 Kings vi. 27, "If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee?" So if thou, Lord, help me not, I must perish.

3. In a deep sense of your own impotency, flee to God's power, and plead it. Do you feel the Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, of your own corruptions, swelling within you? Say with Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 12, "We have no might against this great company, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee." If you could win this length, then were there good ground of hope; for when we see that we are wholly helpless and shiftless in ourselves, then God's help is nearest; "When I am weak," saith the apostle, 2 Cor. xii. 10, "then am I strong." Renounce, then, all help in the creature, and look to the Creator; say, Lord, though it be impossible with man, yet thou hast told me, Mark x. 17, that with thee, "all things are possible." Though I may despair of all help in myself and others, yet thou hast forbid me to despair of help in thee; therefore I flee to thee alone. "Lord, give what thou commandest, and then command what thou wilt."

4. Plead thy extreme need of Christ, and of faith to give thee an interest in him. The world cannot tell thee, O sinner! how great thy need is; there is not a starving man that needs meat, a wounded man that needs a physician, a shipwrecked man that needs a plank, a dying man

with the dive rattling in his throat, that needs breath, so much as thou needest Christ. What wilt thou do on a death-bed, or at a tribunal, without an interest in him? And what will become of thee to all eternity? Go to him, then, and seek faith in Christ, as a malefactor going to die would do his life; fall down at his feet, and cry, "Give me faith and strength to carry me to Christ's blood, or else I die; I may live without friends, wealth, honours, and pleasures; but I cannot live without faith: I am lost, undone, a dead man, and I perish for ever without it. Lord, deny me what thou wilt, but deny me not faith. It had been better for me never to have been born, than to live without Christ, and an interest in him: if I win not to the fountain of Christ's blood, I will sink eternally in that scalding lake of fire and brimstone; if I go to Christ's table without faith, I will shed his blood, and eat and drink my own damnation."

5. Plead with God, how easy it is for him to help thee; cry with the psalmist, Psalm lxxx. 1, "O thou that dwellest between the cherubim, shine forth!" "It will cost thee no more pains to work faith in me, and do all that I desire, than it doth the sun to shine forth; yea, thou canst more easily put forth thy power and grace, than the sun can dart out its beams. It is no trouble or loss to the sun to shine forth; so neither will it be to thee to show thy power and mercy: a look or touch from thee would do it; a little thing will save a drowning man: Lord, suffer me not to perish, when it is so easy for thee to prevent it." Were it any loss or trouble for God to help us, we might well doubt of it; but since it is none, we may cry with hope, "Lord, grant such an hungry beggar an alms out of the ocean of thy bounty; for thou wilt never miss it. As the sun, the more it shines, displays its glory the more; so thou wilt gain glory, by putting forth thy power to help such a helpless creature as I am."

*Objec.* But I have often looked and cried to him for help; but, alas! I am such a grievous sinner, he doth not answer me, unless it be with a frown.

*Ans.* 1st. It may be, there is some idol or sin still harboured, that thou art not willing to part with. This may be the Achan in the camp, that causeth the Lord to hide his face; search for it, and cast out "the accursed thing; let not thine eye pity it, neither do thou spare it."

If thou canst not find it out, go humbly to God and cry, Show me, Lord, wherefore thou contendest with me.

*2dly.* It may be, thou art not fervent enough; God keeps the door bolted, that you may be provoked to knock the harder; Matt. vii. 7, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." In which one verse, Christ gives you three calls to fervency and importunity in prayer, each stronger than another,—ask, seek, knock. The woman of Canaan readily took up the meaning of Christ's refusing to answer her; she turns the more fervent and importunate, and so gets all her will.

*3dly.* Resolve, whatever discouragements you meet with, you will never quit the throne of grace, but you will always lay yourself in Christ's way, and never look to another for help: yea, that you will die waiting on him. Remember the psalmist's experience; Psalm xl. 1, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and at length he inclined his ear, and heard my cry." There was never any yet that waited on him had cause to be ashamed. You may meet with many discouragements and temptations, and be put to very sad thoughts: but you must be resolute in looking to Christ for help, come what will: and, in imitation of the four lepers at the siege of Samaria, reason with yourself, If I live at a distance from Christ, I'll infallibly perish, there is no hope for me; if Christ pity me not when I am waiting on him, I shall but perish: but yet there is hope, he will have pity at length; therefore if I perish, I will perish at Christ's footstool, looking up to him, where never one yet perished, and I hope he will not let me be the first.

*4thly.* Make use of arguments in pleading with him.

1. Plead the freeness of his mercy; it needs no motive, and expects no worth, but "whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." It runs freely, so that mountains cannot stop the current of it, more than rocks can stop the ebbing and flowing of the sea. Indeed, Lord, if sin and unworthiness could stop mercy, I might despair, for I am as unworthy a creature as ever the sun shined upon; but blessed be God, grace is free.

2. Plead Christ's commission; Isa. lxi. 1. He was sent "to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison-doors to them that are bound." Lord,

here a poor prisoner, a frozen, locked, bound up heart : here is employment for thee : loose me, knock off my fetters, and bring my soul out of prison. Thou hast all fulness dwelling in thee, and thou hast it given thee to bestow on such miserable objects as I am ; Lord, here a naked back for thee to cover, an empty stomach for thee to fill, a wounded soul for thee to cure. Lord, thou camest to seek and to save that which was lost ; and wilt thou not be found of a lost sinner that is seeking thee ?

3. Plead the communicativeness of his mercy to others. He had compassion upon men's bodies when he was on earth, even the bodies of wicked men, such as the unthankful lepers ; he let none of them go without healing that came to him. Say, Lord, didst thou show so much compassion to diseased bodies, and wilt thou not have some pity on my dying soul, that is far more precious than carcasses of clay ? Plead his compassion that he hath showed to the worst of sinners, such as Manasseh, Mary Magdalen, Paul, and those who murdered him. Plead his compassion towards the finally obstinate and impenitent, such as Jerusalem, over which he wept ; Luke xix. Lord, did thy heart melt with pity to such ; and wilt thou not pity an humbled sinner, that confesseth sin, and would fain be reconciled to God ? Is not mercy the work thou delightest in ? Micah vii. 18.

*Lastly.* Labour for a sense of the misery of a Christless state, of your great need of Christ, and of the happiness of being found in him ; and, in a sense thereof, look to Christ, and make a mint to take hold of him. Stir up yourself to it, and rest your soul on him as you can ; and God will help you, and communicate strength. He will not fail to notice and encourage an honest mint ; Jer. xxx. 21, " Who is this that engageth his heart to approach me ? " He will pity and help such. Try, O poor soul ! if you can get a grip of Christ, especially upon a sacramental occasion, when you are nearer him than at other times : if you cannot apply Christ to yourselves, and say, He is mine ; yet apply yourself to Christ, and say, I would fain be thine, yea, I am resolved to be thine. Go forth to Christ with all the faith you can win at ; say with the poor man, " Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief. " You must not sit still and do nothing, but use all means in your power, for it is in the use of these that God works faith : hoise up the sails, and wait for the gales.

## DIRECTION XI.

*Come and join yourselves unto the Lord in a perpetual and personal Covenant, before you go to his Table.*

UNLESS you be within the covenant of grace, you have no right to the seal of the covenant; now, if you would be found within the covenant, you must by faith take hold of the covenant, and heartily go in with the gracious terms and contrivance of it. And this is what we commonly call personal covenanting with God. And the more express and distinct we are in this matter, we will have the more comfort.

As for the nature, necessity, and manner of personal covenanting, I refer my reader to my *Sacr. Cat.*, from p. 118 to p. 136, [*first edit.*,] where this subject is largely handled.

Personal covenanting is the communicant's best token; and without it you cannot warrantably come to the Lord's table. You will mock God, and deceive your own souls, if you take the great seal of heaven, and append it to a blank or a sheet of clean paper; and this you do, when you communicate without previous covenanting with God. O beware of appending heaven's seal to a blank! lest the King of heaven be wroth, and fill up the blank with a curse.

O communicants! come then, take hold of the covenant of grace, and give a hearty and fiducial consent to its gracious offers and terms. You are miserable while under a covenant of works; be convinced of it, and speedily betake yourselves to the new covenant, and the gracious method of salvation through Jesus Christ and his righteousness. Cordially accept of Jesus Christ in all his offices, and in him make choice of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as your God and portion; and give up yourselves, soul and body, and all you have, to be the Lord's, to be for him, and not for another; and in Christ's strength engage to live for God, serve him, and walk with him in newness of life. Do all this in the most solemn and express manner, with sincerity, humility, and self-denial; and if this you be helped to do, God will accept of you at his table, and deal with you as his covenanted people.

*Objec.* But, saith one, I know it is my duty to come and transact with God in this manner, and renew covenant with him conform to my baptismal vows; and sometimes I think I am willing to do it, but I much suspect my sincerity in this matter; and it is highly dangerous to deal falsely with God, in pretending to covenant with him, when the heart is not right with God,

*Ans.* You have just cause to suspect your own hearts, and therefore should be at all pains to search and try yourselves; and, for your help, I shall give some characters of those who aim sincerely to transact and renew covenant with God.

1. They are such who are thoroughly convinced of their misery under the first covenant, as being wholly unable to fulfil its condition, or pay its penalty; and therefore see they cannot abide in this case without being undone to all eternity.

2. They are heartily grieved for their natural estrangement, and long living at a distance from God; and are made to say, "Oh! how long have I lived in Mesech, far from the fountain of my happiness!"

3. They are troubled for their long slighting of Christ's gracious calls and offers of mercy in the gospel, and for the backwardness of their hearts to leave sin and Satan, and come and enter into covenant with God. "Oh! how long have I preferred Satan's drudgery and service to God's friendship and favour, lived in league with my soul's enemy, and at war with my best friend!"

4. They have sometimes a soul-affecting view of the new covenant and the new way and method of salvation contained therein. They see there is no righteousness of man or angel that can justify them; none but the righteousness of Christ alone, nothing but an infinite satisfaction can do their turn; and it is their cry, "None but Christ."

5. They are fully resolved on a rupture and breach with all the enemies of God, and to break all leagues and covenants with sin, Satan, and the world; and that they will never be slaves to them as formerly: they heartily join with the psalmist; Psalm cxix. 115, "Depart from me, ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God."

6. They are sensible of, and humbled for the former treachery and false dealing of their hearts with God. Are there not many who have formerly entered into cove-

nant with God, have sworn allegiance to him as their Sovereign, and that not only at baptism, but have renewed this deed at the Lord's supper; but may not the Lord take up the same complaint against them as against Israel? Psalm lxxviii. 36, 37, "They lied to him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." Well, if you be deeply affected on this account, the Lord will not reject you.

7. They sincerely accept of Christ as their surety and cautioner before God; they esteem him "altogether lovely," and infinitely precious. They renounce their own righteousness in justification, and their own strength in sanctification, and look to Christ for both, saying as those, Isa. xiv. 24, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" I have not sufficiency of myself either to make or keep covenant with God, but my confidence is entirely in Christ, my all-sufficient Surety.

8. They are content to give themselves to the Lord, and all they are and have. Faith hath two hands; by the one it receives Jesus Christ, and by the other it gives the soul to him. Now, if your faith want either of these, it is lame.

9. They feel indwelling sin as a grievous clog; they desire heart-holiness more than any earthly thing, and resolve, through grace, upon more care and watchfulness against sin than formerly.

Now, try your sincerity in covenanting with God by these marks; and if you can lay claim to one or more of them, then you are not hypocrites, nor of the number of those who give God the hand without the heart; who pretend to make a covenant with God, and yet keep a secret league with the devil, the world, and the flesh; who profess a great outward respect to God and his ways, and yet keep a secret antipathy to godliness, as, alas! many do who come to the Lord's table.

And if you would manage this weighty transaction aright, you must be very deliberate in it; take many a view of the nature and frame of the covenant of grace, and consider what God offers and promises therein, and what he doth require of us; and endeavour to get your hearts wrought up to a cheerful compliance therewith. Your souls are at the stake, and a mistake here ruins you eternally; but if once it be well done, it is done for ever. This bargain is not for a short term, but for life, nay, for

eternity; and therefore you should count the cost of it, and consider it duly; and be resolved, whatever trouble or persecution shall arise, or whatever temptation you may meet with to leave Christ, to say to them, like Ruth to Naomi, when she was steadfastly resolved to go with her; Ruth i. 16; Entreat me not to leave Christ; for where he goes, I will follow him, though it were into banishment: where he lodges, I will lodge, though it were in a prison; for neither death nor life shall part Christ and me.

And, again, beware of delays in making, or entering into covenant with God. It is a work for eternity, and therefore requires present despatch. The time of youth is a rare season for this work, and ought carefully to be improv'd, and no time lost. And here I shall address myself to the young.

O, young people, and ye that never communicated before, set about this work of personal covenanting before ye approach to the Lord's table. Do not delay or put off to another year, or till old age or sickness come on; for what do you know but God may be provok'd to harden your hearts so in old age, (though you should live till that time,) that ye shall have no liking to religion and the ways of God! Must it not be highly displeasing to God, to reserve for him the refuse and dregs of your strength and time? Will you give your Creator and Redeemer only so much of your time and strength as the devil and the world hath left? O, what is this, but to offer the blind and lame of the flock in sacrifice to God (Mal. i. 7) which is an abomination!

O, young folk, can you dispose of yourselves better in the days of your youth, than give up yourselves to the Lord? When you are ready to choose callings and settlements in the world, can you take a wiser course, than first choose a settlement in Christ's family, which would make all other conditions and circumstances of life the more comfortable to you? Now, the way to be made a member of this family is, by covenanting with God; without this, you have no right to the children's bread, nor the seals of the covenant. It is not enough that ye were baptized, and are christians by your parents' dedication, unless you be christians by your own free choice and consent. Remember, you are now to enter into the state of adult-church-membership, and to be admitted to

share of the children's privileges, sealed to you in baptism; and now, therefore, you must act as rational men and women, and make a choice for yourselves. You ought, personally and explicitly, to renew your baptismal covenant, and ratify your parents' deed, now when you are of age; otherwise your baptism and parents' dedication will not profit you. I call you to engage to no more here than what you are already obliged to by your baptism; for it is just the same covenant you are to enter into now, that you have already consented to by your baptism; only by your personal resignation, voluntary consent, and taking the second seal of the covenant, you are to bind yourselves the faster to it; the which if you neglect to do, your baptism will be so far from profiting you, that it will be a witness against you, and cry for vengeance on you, and you will be in no better condition than the heathen that never were baptized.

O, young communicants, take heed to your first communicating, for very much doth depend upon it. You are now, as it were, to lay the foundation-stone of your salvation-work; and this ought to be done with much spiritual skill and knowledge, if you would have a sure building. O, then, dig deep, and found your house, your salvation, your hopes of heaven, upon the rock Christ, by personal covenanting and express closing with him upon the terms of grace; for if you do it not, but approach to the Lord's table in ignorance, unbelief, or hardness of heart, you may provoke God to smite you with judicial blindness and obduration, and give you up to such heart-hardness and formality in duty, as may cleave to you all your lives long, and so you are ruined for ever. The time of your first communicating is a most critical juncture for your souls; for, according to the state, frame, and disposition of people's souls at their first communicating, so it very often fares with them, in some measure, at all the rest of the communions they partake of. Many have found this; some to their sweet, others to their sad experience. Some, by their careless approach at first, and neglecting expressly to covenant with God, have drawn down the plagues of heart-hardness and formality upon themselves, and provoked God to leave them to wander in the dark all their days, without any solid assurance, or comfortable view of their in-

terest in Christ and the covenant of grace. But others, by means of their sincere preparation and covenanting with God at this time, have got a seal of their conversion, and a view of their interest in Christ, which hath proved very useful and comfortable to them all the rest of their lives, and especially in the time of distress, and when on a death-bed. Then they have remembered, how that at such a time and place they joined themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, and then and there God spake with them, intimated their pardon, and owned them as his covenanted children. As their souls were helped to say to the Lord, "Thou art my God;" so God said to them, "I am your salvation." And, hereby, many have been strengthened, when ready to faint under doubts and discouragements. Therefore, O young communicants! as ye regard the well-being of your precious and immortal souls for ever, look well to yourselves at this time; if matters be right with you now, they will never be altogether wrong afterwards. Labour to get some distinct uptakings of the covenant of grace, and of the nature, ends, and uses of this solemn ordinance, which is the compend and seal of it, before your first partaking. Pray fervently for knowledge and spiritual illumination; apply to Jesus Christ, our great Prophet, for this, and see to improve the means and helps which he is pleased to afford you for it. Retire for meditation and reading of the bible; read and meditate much on the sufferings of Christ; read our "Confession of Faith," "Vincent's Catechism," "Guthrie's Trial of a Saving Interest in Christ," Doolittle, and other good books on the sacrament, that ye may attain to some right impressions of the covenant and the Lord's supper; and, particularly, of the obligations you already lie under by the first seal of baptism. And then, under an humble sense of guilt, and with a hopeful view of the gospel-offer, go, with all seriousness and solemnity, and renew these engagements; enter into covenant with God, and next come to his table, to get the transaction sealed and ratified, by getting the other seal of heaven appended to it.

And now, young people, I put it to your choice, as Joshua did to the Israelites; Josh. xxiv. 15; "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." Make choice at this time whom ye will be saved by, and whom ye will obey. Whom will ye have for your master, whether Christ or

the devil? Both are courting your hearts: which of them will you yield to? Lay your hands on your hearts, and see whether you will grant Christ's or the devil's desire? Whether shall the devil have you, soul and body, to all eternity, or shall Christ have you? Oh! will any be so foolish as to halt betwixt two opinions in this case, any so mad as to stand in doubt whether to be saved or damned, whether to live with Christ or the devil for ever? Now Michael and his angels, and the dragon and his angels, are fighting about your hearts; the devil is holding, and a dying Saviour is drawing. O, will you not be on Christ's side, and wish Michael may prevail; that the red dragon's head may be broken, that the devil may get a total defeat, and that Christ may get your hearts for ever? Remember, Christ will have none but willing servants, Psalm cx. 3, none but those who freely offer themselves unto the Lord. Amaziah, the son of Zichri, is recorded with great honour, 2 Chron. xvii. 15, because he "willingly offered himself unto the Lord." O for many Amaziahs, many such free-will offerings among young communicants! It would be a most pleasant sight to God and ministers, to saints and angels, whose eyes are upon you. The first fruits, under the law, were to be offered to the Lord. "The kindness of youth is much remembered by him;" Jer. ii. Young folk's praying, repenting, and covenanting, are most melodious music in his ears. O give Christ the first and best of your days, for he well deserves this. Make earnest of covenanting work in secret, that the communion day may be a day of your espousals to the Lord Jesus, and the marriage-knot may be cast so sure at his table, that death nor hell may never be able to loose it.

Need I use any motives to press you to make this bargain, which is so advantageous for your souls? God invites you to treat with him; nay, he summons you to do it; 2 Chron. xxx. 8, "Yield yourselves to the Lord;" strike hands with God, submit to his mercy, accept of the terms of grace. O that God himself would sound an alarm in your ears, and show you the misery of an unconverted state!

1. While you are in this state, you have no interest in Christ, no share in his blood or purchase; you have neither art nor part in the God of Israel; Eph. ii. 12.

2. You are under a covenant of works, and the power,

terror, threatening, and curses of a broken law. The sentence of death is pronounced against you, and you may look for execution of it every moment.

3. While you are out of the covenant, you have no right to any mercy, and all the mercies you receive are cursed to you, and you know not how soon God may strip you of all you have.

4. Consider what a sad stroke death gives to an uncovenanted soul; it deprives him of all mercies, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, at one blow, and sets him a-going for ever. And whither can ye flee in the day of visitation, when nothing but grim horror and despair do stare you in the face? When the body is on the brink of the grave, and the soul is on the brink of hell, how will you have confidence to cry to an uncovenanted God, to whom you have been strangers all your days? Must it not be terrible for an uncovenanted soul to think, "I am going to appear before that God I do not know, have no interest in, nor acquaintance with? Can I look for friendship from him now, since I never sought after it before?" But, on the contrary, how pleasant then will it be for a covenanted soul to look death in the face, who can say, "I know whom I have believed, and I know whither I am going; the place I know, the way I know, and the God of that land I know! Why should I be backward to go to my covenanted friend, with whom I have oft conversed, been long acquainted, and in whose presence I have placed my happiness?"

5. Consider how lamentable your case will be for evermore, if you slight the present opportunity; the treaty will not always last with you; nay, the day is not far off, when it shall end, and God shall treat with you no longer; the door will be eternally shut, and God will become inaccessible, inexorable, and irreconcilable for evermore; Christ, the blessed Mediator, will become thy implacable Judge; and how will ye look him in the face, when on the throne, whom you so basely slighted at the communion-table? What wilt thou do when thou findest thyself shut up under the flaming wrath, without hope? The remembrance of lost opportunities will be as oil to thy flames: "Time was when God treated, and would have made a bargain with me, but I would not;" this will be the burden of thy eternal lamentation. O how will you be able to bear the wrath of an uncovenanted God!

“Who can dwell with devouring fire?” A small shower of fire and brimstone lighting on our heads now, would be terrible; but O, it would be infinitely more so, when it shall be poured down in whole streams, and that not for a time, but for ever and ever. Will not ten thousand years’ suffering do the turn? No, no; it will be eternal. Well, if you be able to dwell with everlasting burnings, ye need not treat with God; but O, it is fearful to fall into the hands of a living God; one that lives, and will for ever live, to revenge himself upon you!

Hard must your hearts be, if they be not moved by these threatenings; but harder still must they be, if they be not melted by God’s condescending entreaties. Hear him; Isa. lv. 1—3, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come, &c. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you.” Is God so willing to make a covenant with his creature, a slave, a worm? and are you not willing to cast down the weapons of rebellion, and enter into a league with him? Is it not a bargain most suitable for you, and all your circumstances and necessities? Is it not most glorious and honourable for you to be betrothed to so great a prince? Hos. ii. 19. Is it not rich and advantageous for you to be infest in so great an inheritance, and to have a sealed right to such blessed privileges as a free pardon, gracious access, fatherly love, covenant-presence, covenant-support, covenant-provision, covenant-protection, and covenant-comforts?

*Objec.* Alas! I have made a personal covenant before, but have broke it.

*Ans. 1st.* You have cause to be humbled for it before God; and, if you be not, it is a bad sign indeed.

*2dly.* All sensible and mourning backsliders are invited to return to him, and renew their covenant; Jer. iii. Endeavour to make the bargain surer than you did before.

*Objec.* I am afraid of breaking it over again; and is it not better not to engage?

*Ans. 1st.* It is good to be jealous of yourselves, and feared for breaking; for the more you distrust your own strength, the stronger you are.

*2dly.* If you covenant honestly, you will get covenant-grace and strength, which shall be sufficient for you; you will get the dominion of sin broke, and power to wrestle

against it ; and, above all, you will get Christ engaged for you as your Surety ; and, to be sure, though you be weak, he is able enough.

## DIRECTION XII.

*Labour for a thorough cleansing of both heart and life from sin, and turn unto the Lord, in the ways of new obedience, before you come to the Lord's Table.*

ALL that would attend a holy God, and expect communion with him in this holy ordinance, must see to have pure hearts and clean hands ; Psalm xxiv. 3, 4 ; James iv. 8. What was David's pious resolution, Psalm xxvi. 6, ought to be yours on this occasion, " I will wash my hands in innocency, and so will I compass thine altar, O Lord." He alludes to the ceremony of the priests washing at the brazen laver, before they ministered at the altar ; to let us see, that though this ceremony belonged only to the priests, yet the morality belongs to all ; and that there is a washing which concerns all before they meddle with holy services, and especially such as the sacrament of the Lord's supper. There is a double washing required of all communicants :—1. A washing of yourselves in Christ's blood, by the actings of faith. 2. A washing of yourselves, by the exercise of true repentance and reformation, which is in an effect of the former. By the one, the guilt of sin is taken away ; and by the other, the filth of sin is removed.

Now, this cleansing must be both external and internal ; more than the outside of the cup and the platter must be washed, for God looks principally to the heart. Observe these parts of the sacrifice, that in a special manner behoved to be washed under the law ; Lev. i. 9, " But the inwards and his legs shall he wash in water." Now, why should the inwards and legs of the sacrifice be washed above all the rest ? Because the entrails contained the excrements of the beast, and the legs and feet did tread in the mire and puddle, and so these parts were more defiled than any part of the body. And all this to teach us, that, when we draw near to God in solemn worship, we should wash there where most filth is likely to be contracted.

I. Our inwards, our hearts and consciences, must be

washed. O what filth and excrements, even a dunghill of filthy lusts, lie there! Jer. iv. 14, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness; how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" O communicants! you must look well to the inwards at this time, and see to get all inward and secret lusts washed out by repentance, and strong resolutions in Christ's strength against them.

II. Our legs and feet must be washed also. The steps of our daily conversation are defiled by walking and treading in foul ways; O how much pollution do even believers gather by the steps of their daily walk! And hence it is, that he who has already washed, needs daily, and upon every new occasion, to have his feet washed; John xii. 10. We should, then, be in earnest, before we come to the Lord's table, to have all the defilement of our outward actions washed away by true repentance and reformation of life. Alas! that we should come to this holy table with such inwards, and with such feet, as many times we have; "Lord, purge us with hyssop, and we shall be clean; wash us, and we shall be whiter than the snow." Our own washing will not do it, if Christ put not to his hand; yet we must be sincerely using the means, and waiting for the help of his Spirit.

If you would be suitably prepared for this solemn ordinance, and have a gracious meeting with Christ at his table, you must not only search out your sins, be deeply humbled for them, make confession of them before the Lord, and by faith lay hold on Christ for pardon, as before directed; but you must also be washed and cleansed from sin, forsake sin in your life, and cast it out of your heart; for if you come to Christ's table with any of his enemies and traitors lodged in your bosoms, with any of your old lusts unmortified, and sins not put away, he will look upon you as his murderers, and smite you with his judgments; yea, you may expect that the wrath of God will come upon you whilst the bread is in your mouths, as it did upon Israel for the same reason; Psalm lxxviii. 30, 31, "They were not estranged from their lusts; but whilst the meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel." Perhaps, O sinner! thou mayst not feel this wrath at the time, but it may be inflicted insensibly on thy soul; and every sacrament thou receivest in this condition, thou dost heap and

treasure up wrath against the day of wrath: every time thou bringest a new fagot to the heap, which will make a terrible fire at last, when it is thoroughly kindled against thy soul.

O! then, you who design to approach to the Lord's table, be persuaded to put a bill of divorce into the hands of all your lusts and idols; cast away all your former transgressions, and begin a new life; resolutely turn your backs on sin, Satan, and hell, and come, take on with a new Master; and engage, in God's strength, to be good servants and faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ for the time to come. If you do this, God promiseth you mercy and pardon, and that your former sins shall not be so much as mentioned to you; Isa. lv. 7; Ezek. xviii. 21, 22. But if you do it not, severe wrath is threatened; Psalm lxviii. 21.

The sacrament doth work and produce effects according to the state and disposition of the receivers thereof; as the "water of jealousy" did to the woman under suspicion of uncleanness; Numb. v. 27, 28. If the woman was clean, then the water did her no hurt; nay, it did her good, made her conceive, and become fruitful; but if she was defiled and unclean, it did her great mischief; "her belly did swell, her thigh did rot, and she became a curse." It is so in receiving the sacrament; if a man be in a gracious state, and made clean by faith, repentance, and reformation, then the sacrament brings a blessing, it makes a man spiritually healthful and fruitful; but, if he be defiled and impenitent, it doth poison and rot his soul, and he proves a more rotten and wretched sinner than before. O! then, let none venture to harbour sin, and deal falsely with God, when he comes to drink this water of jealousy.

The Pharisees quarrelled with Christ; Matt. xv. 2, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." But on better grounds may we quarrel many communicants, Why do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? for ye wash neither hands nor heart when ye eat bread at the Lord's table; nay, ye presume to dip your filthy hands into the dish with a holy Jesus. Do you think he will bear with such an affront from vile worms, when it is more easy for him to crush you, than for you to trample a worm under your feet? Remember,

he is a "God of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity."

Would ye have God to draw near to you in this holy ordinance, then cleanse your hands, and purify your hearts: "Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before his eyes; cease to do evil, and learn to do well." And if ye would be accepted by God, your turning from sin must have these properties:

1. It must be a cordial turning with all the heart and soul. You must not forsake sin with reluctancy, and by constraint—as Phaltiel left Michael—but willingly and readily.

2. You must turn from your sins presently, and without delay. Do not adventure to lie down and sleep with them another night, lest your waking next day be in hell, or under a sentence of final hardness and impenitency; you are not sure the day of grace will last, or the door of mercy stand open till to-morrow.

3. You must turn from sin finally and everlastingly; your quarrel with sin must be irreconcilable; for, if now ye declare war against your sins as the traitors and murderers of your Lord and Master, ye must draw the sword against them, and throw away the scabbard, and vow never to be satisfied till you revenge Christ's death upon them, and get them utterly destroyed. O never entertain a favourable thought of, nor give a kindly look to, the bloody knife that killed your dearest friend. Be not like many, who only part with their sins about the time of a communion, or when conscience is awakened; but when that is over, they return with the dog to the vomit. Many say to their sins as Abraham to his servants, "Stay at the foot of the mount till I go up and worship, and I will return to you again." You ought to say so indeed to your necessary worldly affairs at this time; but, for your sins, you should pass an act of eternal banishment upon them, and say with Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

4. You must turn from sin universally. You must not, like Herod, part with many, and reserve some, but readily give up with all; with inward heart sins, as well as outward and gross sins; with sins of omission as well as of commission; with secret sins, as well as open sins. And particularly, turn from your predominant sins, whatever they be; and from those sins that are common in the age and place wherein you live; reserve no sin, nor

darling lust, but hew thy beloved Agag in pieces before the Lord : leave no grip of thy heart to the devil, lest he pull thee to hell by it.

Turn from all tongue-sins, rotten discourse, and corrupt communication. You would reckon it a sad disease to have your excrements come out at your mouth ; and yet, alas ! this is the disease of many. O swearer ! turn from your swearing ; what mean you to study the language of hell, unless you would have the world believe that you design to travel thither ? For those who are to go to a strange country to live, desire to learn something of the language of the country ere they go. What profit or pleasure have you in this sin ? Why will you dare heaven and defy God's law without any temptation ? what would you say, if men should baffle or abuse your name or your father's name, as you do the Lord's name.

*Objec.* O ! say some, it is only the devil's name that we baffle.

*Ans.* There is nothing pleases the devil more than to have his name so frequently used ; for thus you make him a god, whom you worship and pray to, by bidding the devil take this or that.

*Objec.* I do not ban or swear, but when I am in passion, and provoked to it.

*Ans. 1st.* This is an aggravation of your sin, first to be in passion, and then to swear. Do you think that one sin will excuse another ? 2. It is just to flee in the face of your Creator, because you are affronted by your fellow-creature. Will you stab your father, because your enemy strikes you ? If a man wrong you, will you put forth your anger on God who never wronged you ?

*Objec.* I swear but little oaths, by faith, conscience, &c.

*Ans. 1st.* The devil would have you think these but little sins now ; but, stay till a death-bed or a judgment-seat, and you will find him alter his note. 2. Do you think it a light matter to make a common baffle of faith, the precious instrument of our justification ; or of conscience, that is the deputy of the great God ; or of your precious soul, that cost the blood of Christ to redeem it ? 3. These are but creatures, and to swear by them is plain idolatry ; for it is a giving worship, and ascribing divine attributes to the creature.

O cursers and swearers ! be persuaded to forsake these

sins and turn to God in Christ for mercy. What will God say to you in the great day, if you do not? You wished for damnation in your ordinary discourse; you are now holden at your word, and damned you shall be; you swore in your ordinary discourse, therefore God will swear in his wrath, "you shall not enter into his rest;" you could not speak without cursing, therefore you shall be banished out of God's presence with a curse; those tongues that were so liberal of oaths and blasphemies shall fry in endless and easeless flames, without one drop of water to cool them.

Again, O liar! forsake your lying and come to Christ. Though this sin be common, yet consider it is most abominable in the sight of God; the devil is the patron of this sin, and the father of liars; it was with a lie he ruined all mankind: "Ye shall be as gods," said he to our first parents. There is never a lie thou makest, but the devil is at thine ear, and whispers it to thee. Remember what God did to Ananias and Sapphira for lying, Acts v., he struck them dead with a lie in their mouth; and it will be a wonder of his patience, if he do not so to thee. Do you know, O liar! whose children you are? Not God's children, for they are children that will not lie; and therefore you must be Satan's children, "for he is a liar from the beginning, and the father of liars." Knowest thou, O liar! whither thou art going? Even to thy father: should not children be with their father? You cannot look upward, and say, "Our Father which art in heaven;" but thou mayest look downward, and say, Our father which art in hell; and there it is—if you repent it not—that thy tongue shall be tormented in flames for ever. Tremble at this, O liar! and be assured it is no lie that I tell you: "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?"

Moreover, O drunkard! turn from your drunkenness, and come to Christ. While you live in this sin, you lie under many woes and curses; Isa. v. 11, 12; xxviii. 2; 1 Cor. vi. 10. God's curses are not light, therefore make not light of them; for if you do, O drunkard! remember what is abiding you hereafter, even a cup of red vengeance, filled up with the dregs of God's wrath, which shall be poured down your throats for ever; and yet you shall eternally cry out, I thirst! I thirst! and for all the drink you have had on earth, you cannot get there a drop of cold water to cool your tongue.

In the next place, O covetous man, cheater, and defrauder! turn from your covetousness, your injustice, and unrighteous gain, and come to Christ. If you do not, you shall pay dear in another world for all your unjust gain; God is the avenger of all such as you defraud; 1 Thess. iv. 5. You think yourself very cunning when you can cheat your neighbour of a little money; but, know you not that the devil in the meantime is more cunning in cheating you of your precious soul, which is infinitely more valuable?

O, Sabbath breaker, secure and prayerless sinner! turn from your sins unto God and holiness; flee to Christ for shelter from them, and the wrath due to them; righteousness and redemption are only to be found in him. Would you not count him mad, who, being condemned to a cruel death, for base crimes, and might escape it, if he would accept of a pardon ready provided for him, and leave off such vile facts for the future, would yet obstinately refuse to do it? And are you not yet madder, that slight your Saviour, and hug your lusts, when your danger is a thousand times greater? What madness is it to dishonour God and damn your soul, to gratify the devil, or please a vile carcass that shortly will be so loathsome, that men cannot endure it above ground.

O, sinners! I beseech you, in the name of the great and glorious Jehovah, and in the name of our glorious Redeemer, be reconciled to God, accept of a pardon through Christ's blood, and engage to quit those sins that would destroy you. Will you please God, and show kindness to your poor soul by doing it? However much you have abused God's patience, trampled his love, slighted his calls, despised his threatenings, and undervalued his promises, yet he is still standing and beseeching you to be reconciled to him. O! will not all this goodness melt your heart, and cause you, with Ephraim, Jer. xxxi. 18, "bemoan yourself," and cry, "Turn thou me, O Lord, and I shall be turned?" Without this turning, see that you venture not to this sacred ordinance; let none with the running ulcers of sin upon them offer to sit down at his holy table, for God's pure eyes cannot look upon them. And, if you would turn aright, see that ye turn believingly to God in Christ; for there is no access to the King of heaven without

bringing the Prince of Peace, the King's Son, in your arms; no atonement without Christ, no acceptance but in the Beloved.

*Lastly.* If you would turn to God aright, you must not only turn from sin, but also turn to the ways of holiness and new obedience. It is not enough to "cease to do evil," but you must also "learn to do well." Some do part with their sins of commission, but continue still in sins of omission; they leave their gross outbreaking, but still neglect commanded duties. But not only the tree that bears evil fruit is adjudged to the fire, but also the tree that bears no fruit; so that the neglect of duty will damn us as surely as the commission of sin. Communicants that God would smile upon, are such as not only forsake all known sin, but do sincerely endeavour, through grace, to yield obedience to the whole revealed will of God, and, in Christ's strength, do set about the performance of every commanded duty.

But as for those communicants that do not study new obedience, and to make conscience of performing every known duty, God will say to such, as he saith to the wicked; Psalm l. 16, 17, "What hast thou to do, that thou shouldst take my covenant [or the seal of my covenant] in thy mouth, seeing thou castest my words behind thee?" They can expect no communion or fellowship with him at his table.

But, on the other hand, he makes very gracious and comfortable promises to those that study obedience; Jer. vii. 25, "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people." As the prophet Isaiah speaks to the Jews of the good things of the land of Canaan, so may we say to you concerning the good things of the sacrament; Isa. i. 19, "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." As the land of Canaan produced very precious fruits, so doth the Lord's supper; and these far more excellent than those. It is here that the marrow and fatness of God's house is distributed to his children. Well, if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat of the good things of the sacrament.

But see that your obedience spring from right principles, from love and gratitude to God, from a true hatred to sin, and a high esteem of holiness. It was an excellent saying of one, "Were there neither heaven

nor hell, yet sin should be my hell, and holiness my heaven." The spiritually-enlightened soul doth see an unspeakable deformity in sin, which causeth him to abhor it; and he sees such a charming beauty in holiness, that he cannot but love and desire it.

### DIRECTION XIII.

*Meditate much upon the Death and Sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, before you approach to his Table.*

WOULD you have your hearts put in a suitable communion-frame, then read and think much of the sufferings of Christ, and, in a special manner, take a close view of them on the Saturday's night before the communion. Think on them till your hearts melt and affections warm; yea, resolve you will not give over till then, and beg God's blessing on your meditations for this end.

Think and wonder at the greatness of the humiliation of the Son of God. Admire the low stoop and condescension of the Son of God, and the King of Glory, that he should be content, for us, to become a creature, and such a mean creature as man; that he who was equal with God, should become less than God; John xiv. 28; yea, less than angels; Heb. ii. 7; yea, to be depressed below the ordinary condition of man; Psalm xxii. 6, "I am a worm," &c. Think how he denuded himself of all his riches and glory; that though he was the heir of all things, yet, for our sakes, he became so poor, that he had not a cradle of his own to lie in when born, a house to lay his head in while he lived, nor a grave to be buried in when he died. He left his throne of state, to lodge in the virgin's womb; he is born, not in his mother's house, but in a common inn, and the basest place of the inn, a stable, the inn being probably taken up by persons of richer quality; he is cradled in a manger, having no better place allowed him on earth, though the highest heavens were too mean for him.

Think how he was carried to a wilderness, to fast and watch, and live forty days among the wild beasts, haunted and tempted by the devil, and sadly buffeted by his own slave; and all this for us.

View him going about on foot, hungry, thirsty, and

weary, yet always doing good ; and the more good he did to souls and bodies, the more was he hunted and persecuted, reproached, and blasphemed ; and all for our sakes.

View him entering into the gates of Gethsemane, beginning to fear, turn heavy, and cry out, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." What made him heavy, but the dead weight of our sins, and the curses of the law annexed to them ? Behold him complaining to his poor disciples, that could make no help to him : neither they nor the angels in heaven durst touch his load, nor taste his cup ; he could have helped them, but they could not help him. Yea, he got not so much as sympathy from them ; they fell asleep when he was at the worst, and left him to tread out the wine-press alone ; and all for our sakes.

View him in his fearful agony and bloody sweat, falling sometimes on his knees, and sometimes on his face, praying once, praying again, and praying the third time, "that the cup might pass from him," till he is overwhelmed and covered with his own blood. Behold the great drops of blood bursting through and standing above his garments, and falling and lying upon the ground round about him, being at this time pressed betwixt the millstone of God's justice and our sins. Behold him sweating without heat, and bleeding without a wound : the fire and the wounds were inward, even in the soul. How freely did the fountain of his precious blood open and run to wash us ! Every vein and pore pours out a stream, not waiting for the tormentors ; and all for our sakes.

Behold him betrayed, and sold for thirty pieces of silver, taken and bound with cords like a thief ; yea, bound fast, as Judas bade ; and so fast, as some say, that the blood did burst out of his tender hands. Can your hearts or eyes hold, to see those hands that made heaven and earth, wrung together and bruised with hard cords ; to see him bound that came to set the prisoners free, and loose us who were Satan's bond slaves ? Blessed Jesus ! had not the cords of thine own love tied thee faster than the cords of thine enemies, though they had been the strongest cables or iron chains, they could not have held thee ; but thou wast a willing prisoner for our sakes.

Behold him struck upon the face, spit upon, buffeted,

blindfolded, mocked, and cruelly affronted by rude soldiers, a whole night; though he could have breathed them into hell, yet meekly holds his peace; and patiently suffers all for our sakes.

Behold his lovely countenance all disfigured by their plucking the hair from his cheeks with pincers; Isa. l. 6. The sweetest face that ever the sun saw was all besmeared with blood and spitting; yet he hid not his face from shame.

Behold him led up and down from place to place, with a ridiculous garb put upon him, and yet never resists; he is abused and disgraced; a Barabbas, a murderer, the vilest malefactor in all Jerusalem, is preferred before him; and yet he complains not. View him as he was used by his own family, his chosen disciples; one of them betrays him, another of them denies him, and all the rest forsake him, and leave him alone among his bloody enemies' hands.

Behold him that clothes the lilies of the field, stripped naked; behold him scourged, back and side; yea, scourged above measure,—Pilate thinking thereby to save his life,—till all the pavement of Pilate's judgment-hall about him is bedewed with his precious blood; yet he willingly gave his back to the smiters, that we might be freed from the everlasting lashes of God's wrath in hell.

Behold him with a plaited crown of thorns upon his head, with the sharp points turned inward, and driven into his head, till they pierced his head and skull in an hundred places; and so he is content to be as the ram caught in the thicket, to be sacrificed in your room. Behold a new shower of blood running down his neck and whole body: Oh! it was my sins that plaited the thorns, and they were the reeds that drove them in.

Behold him, after all these sufferings, put to bear his heavy cross, upon his sore and bleeding shoulders. With what patience and humility did he bear his cursed tree, that was weighed down with our sins, and the law's curses fastened to it! Yea, he bears without complaint, till his strength is spent, he is breathless and ready to faint under the burden, till another must help. It was not the cross that made him faint; he had a greater burden to bear than ten thousand worlds, even the infinite wrath of God due to our sins.

Behold him stretched forth naked, and laid upon the

ground, that they may take the measure of his body, and the holes for the nails; yea, they make them longer than they need, that they might both crucify him and rack him at once. Behold the four large nails driven in through the most sinewy and sensitive parts of his body, and the cross lift up, with the Lord of glory nailed to it; and when it fell into the hole digged for the foot of it, how did the fall rend and tear his whole body! His own weight was his torture; and the longer he lived, his wounds grew the wider. His hands and feet are fixed, he cannot turn any way for ease: the blood streamed down for several hours, till he expired amidst these tortures.

Behold him hanging on a cross betwixt heaven and earth, as if he had been unworthy of a place in either of them; betwixt two thieves; as if he had been the greatest malefactor of the three. His sufferings were universal, and did extend over all the parts and powers of his soul and body; no part free but his tongue, which was at liberty to pray for his enemies. He suffered in all his senses; his sight was tormented with the scornful gestures of those that passed by, wagging their heads; his hearing, with taunts and mocks; his smell, with the noisome savour of dead mens' skulls; his taste, with gall and vinegar; his feeling, with the nails and thorns that pierced his head, hands, and feet.

Behold him on a cross, suffering till his strength is dried up like a potsherd; his tongue cleaves to his jaws till he cries out, I thirst. And no wonder he thirsted; for, besides all the loss of his blood, he was scorched with the fire of God's wrath: yea, "the arrows of the Almighty were within him, the poison whereof did drink up his spirit."

Behold him at the worst, crying out for relief, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But yet no relief appears, there is none to answer: yea, his own sun, his own heaven, his own Father, his own Godhead, hid their faces and consolation from him. He is left alone, in midst of devils and enemies insulting over him: he falls a sacrifice to incensed justice for our heinous guilt and provocations.

Behold the Sun of righteousness under a fearful eclipse. For a candle to be put out is no great matter, but for the sun to be darkened is marvellous and strange.

In the next place, take a view of his willingness to suffer all these things for us. He quickens Judas to do his work, and he goes out to meet his persecutors, and boldly tells them, that he was the man they sought; he will not suffer Peter or the angels to do any thing for his rescue, because of his desire to drink the cup which the Father hath given him; John xviii. 11. And, God knows, a full and bitter cup it was, being all mingled with guilt, wrath, and curses, heaped up and running over; a cup which, if men or angels had tasted, they had all staggered and fallen back headlong into hell; yet how cheerfully did he drink it for us! He was not, like the legal sacrifices, dragged to the altar; no, he went willingly to it, and tied himself with the cords of love to the horns of it.

O what affections should the consideration of these things stir up in the souls of communicants! Are you going up to mount Calvary, to see Christ crucified? and will not ye think on his sufferings, and be affected with them, ere ye go?

You may here, as in a looking-glass, behold what you deserved at the hands of a just God, if Christ had not interposed for you. You may see the wondrous love of Christ that passeth knowledge, which ought to kindle a flame of love in your hearts. You may see the cursed nature and demerit of sin, that exposed Christ to so much sorrow and suffering. Can you look on him you have pierced, and not mourn bitterly for sin that did it, and hate it as the most ugly thing in the world? Would not your hearts rise against the man; yea, against the knife, that killed your father, brother, husband, or friend? and will not your hearts rise against sin, that has killed him that is instead of all relations, and should be far dearer to us than a thousand fathers or brothers? Can we look on Christ's sufferings, and not make solemn vows against sin, and part with lying, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, &c., that crucified him? When the king of Moab was pressed hard by Israel, he took his eldest son, that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him up for a burnt-sacrifice upon the wall; 2 Kings iii. 27: whereupon they raised the siege, and went home. Well, the great God hath taken his only Son, and sacrificed him to justice, that we might thereby be persuaded to leave off fighting against heaven.

O! let this strange act, which is both an act of justice

and of goodness, so overawe your hearts with fear, and overcome them with love, that you may leave off to offend God any more.

#### DIRECTION XIV.

*Be frequent and fervent in Prayer before you approach the Lord's Table.*

THEY that forget God in their closets and families, are not fit to come and remember him at his table; therefore let no prayerless soul venture thither. You ought to double your prayers and messages to heaven that week, and especially that night, before you approach to this ordinance; if ever you prayed and wrestled with God, now should be the time of it. As the heathen shipmaster said to Jonah, so say I to thee, O communicant! Jonah i. 6, "Arise, O sleeper! and call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon thee, that thou perish not." O sleep not now, when you are in hazard of eating and drinking eternal damnation; but be praying when others are sleeping. This course will surely redound to thy advantage, and be the means of procuring special blessings to thy soul. When was it that God gave commission to open Paul's eyes, and fill him with the Holy Ghost, but then, when he was earnest in prayer to God? Acts ix. 11—17, "Behold he prayeth.—The Lord hath sent me," said Ananias, "that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." So, if you were in earnest before the sacrament, God would notice you, as he did Paul, and give charge to his ordinance to be the means of enlightening thy soul, and filling thee with the Holy Ghost. It was at the sacrament of baptism, that Christ's prayers opened heaven, and brought down the Holy Ghost upon him; so, at the sacrament of the Lord's supper, the fervent prayers of a believing communicant will open heaven, and bring down the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit upon him. Your work at this time is very great, and much need have you to look to God in Christ, and plead with him for his special assistance; you have very great encouragement to do it; for God never calls any to do his work, but he helps them in it. It is said, 1 Chron. xv. 26, that "God helped the Levites that bare the ark." One would think that the work of bearing

the ark needed no more help from God than the general concourse of his providence; and yet God helped them with special assistance, and helped the Levites to bear the ark, because it was his work: will he not help us to receive the sacrament, which he hath instituted for displaying his glory, if we sincerely seek his help? You have many errands at this time to the throne of grace, for you have many things to pray for.

1. You ought in general to pray for preparation for this solemn feast; for the "preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord," Prov. xvi. 1. Lay out the case of your heart and soul before the Lord, and say, Lord, thou callest me to a very solemn ordinance, and who is sufficient for these things? I have neither a meet sacrifice to offer, nor a meet temple to receive thee in. I know not how to pray, or to prepare myself; how to receive Christ, or behave myself at his table. Behold the Bridegroom cometh, but I am not ready; I want the wedding-garment; Oh! what shall I do for clothing to my naked soul? "My beloved hath spoke, saying, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." I have heard his voice; but, Oh! I am not stirring for it; my heart still saith, Yet a little sleep, yet a little slumber. Lord, awaken my heart, stir up my graces, and prepare me for a meeting with my Saviour. Lord, thou art the giver of grace as well as of glory, thou must give the frame as well as the feast; for without thee we have nothing, we can do nothing. Thou preparest a table for me in this wilderness; but, shall the time of receiving come, before thou comest into my soul to stir up thy graces in me? What commerce can a dead heart have with a living God? Lord, thou knowest my sins, and the unpreparedness of my heart; and if thou wilt mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? My very preparations and best performances carry in them matter of indictment against my soul. But, Lord, though my sins be many and great, yet doth not the blood of Christ cry louder for pardon than my sins do for punishment? O that the cry of that blood may wholly drown the cry of my sins at this time, and answer for the defects of my preparation. O, let not my soul, whose only hope is to be saved by Christ's blood, be sent away from his table with the guilt, instead of the comfort, of this blood upon me."

2. And, more particularly, you ought to pray for saving

knowledge:—say, Lord, I am naturally alienated and estranged from thee, through the ignorance that is in me: O give me understanding, that I may know thee and the mystery of saving grace! Hast thou not said, that the covenant thou wilt make with thy people is this, “They shall all know thee, from the least even to the greatest.” O give me right uptakings of thy covenant, which is well ordered in all things, and sure! Give grace to know the nature, necessity, use, and ends of this ordinance, which is the compend and seal of it, that so I may receive it with understanding, and rightly discern the Lord’s body.

3. Pray for holy reverence and humility of spirit: Lord, affect my heart with awful reverence of the greatness and holiness of thy majesty, to whom I am to make so near an approach, and with whom I am to renew covenant. Oh! how durst I, who am sinful dust and ashes, presume to come so near thee, unless thou hadst invited and commanded me? O for deep self-abasement and humility of soul, when I go to receive the unspeakable gift of God! O what a wonderful gift is Jesus Christ to such an unworthy and ill-deserving creature as I am! Lord, give me grace whereby I may “serve thee acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.”

4. Pray for godly sorrow and contrition for sin: Lord take away my “heart of stone, and give me an heart of flesh,” that I may loathe myself in my own sight for all my iniquities and abominations. May I abhor them as the scourge, thorns, nails, and spear, that afflicted my Lord and Saviour; and may I be weary and heavy laden with the burden of my sins, so that Christ may give me rest. Lord, help me so to accuse myself, that thou mayest absolve me: and so to exercise a holy revenge upon myself, that thou mayest spare me. The days of mourning for my Redeemer’s death are at hand: O that then I may slay my most beloved lusts, and be revenged on them for it, and for their endeavours to rob me of my spiritual birthright, my eternal blessedness! O that I may come to thy holy table, and receive a bleeding Saviour with a broken heart!

5. Pray for faith, both for the being and the increase of faith: Lord, faith is thy own gift, as well as Christ: “I believe, Lord, help thou mine unbelief.” O for faith’s eye to look upon Christ, faith’s wings to flee to

Christ, faith's arms to embrace Christ, faith's mouth to feed on Christ, faith's hand to apply Christ! When I see the bread and wine on the table, O let me see a bleeding, crucified Jesus. Let me not only eat the bread of the Lord, but the bread which is the Lord. May this ordinance be a lively resemblance, remembrance, and application of Christ's sufferings to me; and may I be helped so to put my finger into the print of the nails, and my hand into his side, that I may be persuaded of his suffering and dying for me; and that I may not be "faithless, but believing," and may say with Thomas "My Lord, and my God;" and with Paul, "He loved me, and gave himself for me;" and with the sponse, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." O that I may so touch him, that I may feel strength, peace, and virtue come from him, and be healed of all my plagues and uncleannesses! Let me so feed by faith on his blessed body, and bathe my soul in his precious blood, that I may be filled with peace and joy in believing: yea, "my soul may magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoice in God my Saviour."

6. Pray for love to God and Christ: Lord, circumsise my heart to love the Lord with all my soul, with all my strength. Lord, shed abroad thy love into my cold and frozen heart, and inflame it with fervent affection and desires towards thee, that I may be a disciple whom Jesus loveth, and that leans on his breast. O that Christ may dwell in my heart by faith, and that, being rooted and grounded in love, I may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, the depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge! O that the remembrance of Christ's love may transport me with love, captivate my will, and engage all my affections to him. Lord, though I cannot say, I am sick of love to thee, yet I desire to be sick that I cannot love thee more. O for grace, that I may be numbered among them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity!

7. Pray for love to all the people of God: Lord, make all those lovely in mine eyes to whom Christ is precious; that I may know I am passed from death to life, because I love the brethren. O for a warm love to all those who are Christ's friends, on whom he has set his heart, and to whom he has given his Spirit, that so my heavenly Father may look down upon his children,

feasting together with mutual love and delight, in remembrance of that great love which he hath already shown to us, and with joyful expectations of those great things he hath further promised us. And, Lord, seeing thou hast so loved me, let me be perfectly reconciled to every man, that I may love my very enemies, and do good to them that hate me. May every spark of anger, malice, and envy, be utterly extinguished in me.

8. Pray for new obedience: Lord, since thou givest this heavenly feast only to thy disciples, O make me one of them, and let me obtain this mark of a disciple, obedience to my Master. Lord, I cannot eat the passover, and stay in Egypt still in the service of Satan, and in bondage to my lusts: O bring my soul out of prison, and let me eat the passover, with my loins girt, and ready to march towards the promised land. O help me to wash my hands in innocence, that so I may encompass thy altar. O make me willing and obedient, that I may eat the good of this ordinance. And may the love of Christ constrain me to a course of sincere, universal obedience, that I may run in the ways of thy commandments. Seeing Christ offers himself to me by way of surety, Lord, help me to give up myself to him by way of surrender, to receive him as a Saviour, and submit to him as a Prince. And, on that solemn feast of dedication, let me come and dedicate myself to thee, set myself apart for thee, that all my days I may live to thy praise.

9. Pray for heart-purity, fixedness, and spirituality, that you may be fit to entertain converse with a holy God: Lord, help me to lay aside and leave behind me all vain, earthly, and unseasonable thoughts and imaginations, that I may attend upon thee without distraction. O let no worldly or wandering thoughts come in, to stir up or disturb the beloved of my soul; let them not come near to displease him, nor call me away from entertaining and enjoying of him. Lord, bid them begone. Alas! my heart is naturally in great disorder, and wholly indisposed for such solemn and spiritual work; but, O thou who callest me to it, do thou dispose my heart for it!

10. Pray for spiritual hunger and thirst: Lord, thou art ready to give bread to the hungry, and the water of life to him that is athirst; but both the appetite and food, the feeling of want, and the relief, are from thee. O for enlarged affection and desires after this ordinance, answer-

able to my need of it! Lord, create and stir up in me earnest longings, and a spiritual appetite after this heavenly food, that so with desire I may desire to eat this passover. As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so let me pant after thee, O God. Lord, enlarge my heart, and open my mouth wide, that thou mayst fill it.

11. Pray for spiritual thankfulness, and holy joy in partaking of this feast: O make me to relish this heavenly food, and receive it with a thankful heart. Let me not sit sad and dejected, as if I liked not the provision, or thought myself not welcome; but take me into the banqueting-house, and let "my soul be satisfied as with marrow and with fatness, that my mouth may praise thee with joyful lips." I am to feed on angel's food, O let me be employed in angel's work, praise. Let my soul rejoice in Jesus Christ as my portion, and triumph in his mighty acts, in his victories and purchase.

12. Pray for the assistance of God's Spirit in this work: Lord, cast me not away from thy presence, take not thy Holy Spirit from me; for without thee I have nothing, I can do nothing. Lord, thou hast promised, and declared thyself more willing to give the Spirit to them that ask it, than parents to give their children. Our love to our children is but hatred, our compassion hardness, in comparison of thine to thy children; O do not then deny me when my need is so great. "Thou never saidst to any of the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain." Lord, send thy Holy Spirit to breathe on my dry bones and decayed graces, and to be the harbinger to provide entertainment for thy Son in my soul, that he may find it swept of all sin, and garnished with all sacramental graces. O for the Spirit of God to adorn my naked soul, and put on me the wedding-garment, viz., the glorious outer garment of the righteousness of thy Son, and the beautiful inner garment of the holiness of thy Spirit, and the fine linen of the saints; that all my nakedness may be covered, and my great deformities hid from thine eyes.

13. Pray for the cure of all thy diseases at this healing ordinance: Lord, my plagues are great, my wounds deep, and my distempers many; but I have heard of the balsam of the new covenant, my Redeemer's blood, that heals all diseases: "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there not a physician there?" Oh! then, let not my

pains be perpetual, nor my wounds incurable. Lord, I come to thee to get my dead soul quickened, my strong corruptions subdued, my faint purposes strengthened, and my languishing graces revived. O let the author of spiritual life uphold and preserve life in my soul, inflame my coldness with the fire of thy love, soften my hardness with the dew of thy grace, enlighten my blindness with a beam of thy light, and anoint my blind eyes with thy eye-salve. Let thy compassion pity my vileness, let thy mercy pardon my sinfulness, let thy wisdom enlighten my darkness, and let thy strength support my weakness. Oh! will the Head let a member perish? shall a branch wither for want of juice? Thou art the true vine; O communicate sap and influence to my languishing soul. Lord, art thou not as willing to bestow the fruit of thy blood on us, as to shed it for us? Art thou not a ready Physician, willing to be employed by diseased souls? Dost thou not bestow thy cures without money and without price? Lord, here is work for thee, a Job full of boils, a Lazarus over-run with sores, as poor a patient as ever came to the Physician's door: yet if I could but touch the border of thy garment, or get but one word from thee, I should be made whole. Oh! say unto me, "Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt."

14. Pray for a willing and cheerful heart in performing this and all other duties: Oh! did my Saviour so cheerfully undertake to suffer for me; and shall I be slothful and careless in approaching to him? Did he go so willingly to the cross to die for me; and shall I be so backward to go to the communion table to remember his death? Lord, make me "run in the ways of thy commandments;" and let me pray, hear, and communicate with freedom and enlargement of heart. O draw my heart to thee, and let it be carried on with more unweariedness and cheerfulness in thy service. Send forth the gales of thy Spirit, that may "make my soul like the chariots of Aminadab."

15. Pray for nearness and communion with God in his ordinances, and especially at the communion table: Lord, what will a communion feast avail me without communion with Christ in it? I go not there for bread and wine, but to see Jesus. What are the elements to me without Christ's presence? Nothing but this can satisfy me; Lord, what wilt thou give me, if I go from thy table

Christless? Shall I go away empty from a treasure, hungry from a feast, dry from a fountain, cold from the sun, comfortless from the Comforter? Lord, stand not at a distance behind the wall: show thyself through the lattice of thy ordinance, and let me "see the goings of my God and my King in his sanctuary." Lord, do thou not only stand and knock, but do thou also open the door of my heart; vouchsafe to come in and abide with me, yea, sup with me, and let me sup with thee, that I may be abundantly satisfied with "the fatness of thy house, and drink of the rivers of thy pleasures;" and when "the King sitteth at his table, let my spikenard send forth the smell thereof." Descend into my heart by the influences of thy grace, and let me ascend to thee by the breathings of faith, love, and desire. Lord, make this feast a type and earnest of that eternal banquet above; and let me enjoy thy lightsome, reviving company in the state of my pilgrimage. O let Christ appear, and be "known of me in the breaking of bread; O let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine."

Cry importunately to God at this time; say, "I will not let thee go till thou bless me;—if thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." Wilt thou not relieve an importunate beggar, and hear the cry of a needy supplicant? Lord, open rivers in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. Let Jordan at this time overflow all its banks, and let all the dry roots of thy people be watered. And O let me come from thy table with my pardon sealed, my corruptions subdued, my graces quickened, my faith strengthened, my resolutions confirmed, my heart enlarged, and my soul refreshed and encouraged to run in the ways of thy commandments, and so inseparably united unto thee, that no temptation may be able to dissolve the union. O for the spirit of grace and supplication at such a time! For it is the praying and wrestling soul that will be the joyful and praising communicant.

## DIRECTION XV.

*After you have done your utmost for preparing yourselves for the Lord's Table, see that ye lay no stress thereupon, but wholly distrust your own preparations.*

O COMMUNICANTS! when you have made the greatest preparation possible, by self-examination, repentance, prayer, &c., say after all, "We are but unprofitable servants." The greatest stress and difficulty of the christian life lieth in this, to be diligent in duty, and yet wholly denied to our duties. Learn, then, this great point in christianity, to distrust all your preparations, and cast yourselves wholly on Christ for assistance, as if you had done nothing at all, saying, It is only "in the Lord that I have righteousness and strength." You ought to do as king Asa did; who, though he had raised a prodigious army of five hundred thousand, all mighty men of valour, to fight against the Ethiopians, yet he cried to the Lord, and trusted in him for help, as if he had been left alone, without one man to fight for him; for, after all his great preparations, it is recorded of him, 2 Chron. xiv. 8—11, "And Asa cried to the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power. Help us, O Lord our God! for we rest on thee, and in thy name go out against this multitude." So let every communicant say, Lord, all my strength and preparations are nought; I have no power for celebrating this feast; help me O Lord my God! for I rest on thee, and in thy name I go to this great and weighty ordinance. The soul is never so well prepared, as when it is most sensible of its own weakness, and relies on the Redeemer's strength: "When I am weak," says the apostle, "then am I strong." And hence it is said of the ancient worthies, Heb. xi, "Out of weakness [*i. e.* felt and apprehended] they were made strong." The gaudy flower, that stands and grows on its own stalk, doth quickly wither and decay; when the plain ivy, that hangs and leans on the house, is fresh and green all the year. We ought then to be denied to ourselves, and write after David's copy, who looked to the Lord, both for assistance and acceptance in all his duties, Psalm lxxi. 16, "I will go in the strength of the Lord, I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only."

A man may in words disclaim the opinion of merit and worth in his duties and preparations, and yet in his heart and secret practice put some trust in them; for there are practical Papists as well as practical Atheists. Hence God warns us against this inward trust and secret popery; Dent. ix. 4, "Say not in thine heart, this is for my righteousness." Though with our tongues we do not plead for merit, yet there may be a saying in the heart; and God doth well understand the language of the heart. Let us therefore look well to our hearts, when we have done our utmost in duty, and by way of preparation for this ordinance, that we be wholly denied to all, and cherish the thoughts of our own nothingness, according to Christ's noble rule, Luke xvii. 10, "When ye have done all, say, We are unprofitable servants." David owns he had nothing to plead, when he had done all: "for," says he, "of thine own, Lord, have we given thee," 1 Chron. xxix. Of this denied temper was Nehemiah also; for, when he had done all for God and his temple that he could, he makes free grace his only plea with God; Neh. xiii. 22, "I commanded the Levites to cleanse themselves, &c. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also; and spare me, according to the greatness of thy mercy." Whatever good things he had done, yet he depends upon none of them, but pleads, "Spare me, according to the greatness of thy mercy." Hence also Paul wholly disclaimed his own righteousness, and that not only while he was a Pharisee, but even when he was a christian, and a renewed man: "I count all things but loss for Christ." O this is a noble attainment, but not easily come at. Mr. Fox used to say, "He was more afraid of his graces than his sins," because he found himself in such danger by them to be puffed up, and tempted to self-confidence. Let us, then, be denied to our own attainments in preparation for this solemn ordinance, if we would be accepted of God; for that man comes to God most worthy, that comes most sensible of his own unworthiness. So much for the first head of directions how to prepare for a communion Sabbath before it come. I proceed now to the second head, to give directions how to spend it when it doth come.

## CHAPTER II.

CONTAINING DIRECTIONS FOR THE RIGHT SPENDING A  
COMMUNION SABBATH WHEN IT IS COME.

## DIRECTION I.

SEE that you rise earlier this morning than ordinary, seeing you have an extraordinary work in hand. And, while you are rising and putting on your clothes, let your minds be filled with suitable meditations and ejaculations.

Think what a privilege it is that your eyes see such days of the Son of man, which many prophets and kings desired to see, and might not. O that I may be thankful, and may not abuse thy mercy! This is a great day; O that it may be a good day to my soul, even a day in God's courts, and in God's presence, that will be better and sweeter to me than a thousand!

Again, think this may be the last communion day that ever I may see on earth; this may be the last time that I shall drink of the vine at a communion table; it may be the last offer that I shall get of the water of life; O that I may improve it well! Perhaps severals who saw the last communion where I am going, and also drank with me of the sacramental cup, have now a cup of the red wine of God's vengeance put into their hands, and are eternally sinking or swimming in the brimless and bottomless ocean of God's wrath: God keep me from unworthy communicating this day, lest that be my lot before the next sacrament. But, on the other hand, it may be there are some who sat with me at the last communion table, that are now sitting at the higher table, and are drinking it new with Christ in his Father's kingdom. What a new song are they presently singing! "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." O that I may this day get a foretaste of that celestial feast and heavenly joy, and such a seal of Christ's love, as may fill my soul with hope to be a communicant at that upper table, if God shall call me hence before the next communion table: Lord, let me have one good day in all my lifetime: show me a token for good before I die.

## DIRECTION II.

RETIRE presently, O communicant, for prayer and meditation, in order to excite and quicken grace in thy soul; and, in a special manner, see to get faith enlivened and love inflamed. And, for this end, 1. Take a new view of Christ's sufferings, and his unparalleled love manifested therein: Behold the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world. If you would have a clear discovery of his love and sufferings at the table, be taking frequent views of him before-hand.

Consider how free and undeserved Christ's love was. Behold the Son of God entreated by no man, but hated by all men: yet, in his love and pity, entreats for man, yea, suffers and dies for him, even then when he was a sinner and an enemy to him. Behold him suffering for sin, that never sinned; yea, behold him made sin for thee, who had no sin; that thou, who hadst no righteousness, might be made the righteousness of God in him. View his love with wonder, that made him take on the heavy burden of your iniquities, and bear it till he sweat, bled, groaned, and cried, under the weight. Behold him struggling, praying, and falling to the ground, till he is all covered with his own blood! fix the eye of faith upon him, till thine eye affect thy heart. Take a view of his tears and bloody sweat, his pierced hands and wounded feet, his scourged back and opened side, his streaming heart and yearning bowels to poor sinners; this is he, O sinner! that would rather die than thou shouldst die, who chose thy life before his own, and now pleads his blood before his Father.

Behold and wonder at his love, that made him tread the wine press alone for us, and drink the cup of the red wine of the wrath of God; a cup whereinto all our vile and deadly sins are grated, a cup that no angel durst taste: yea, the tasting of it made Christ's heart to melt like wax in the midst of his bowels, Psalm xxii. 14; which was a greater matter than if the whole world had melted to nothing; yet he drank it off, with the bitterest dregs of it, and left not so much as one drop of it for us. Behold him taking his most precious heart's blood, to quench hell's flames that were ready to break out on us! Was there ever love like this?

This love is unsearchably great ; you may sooner find out the height of heaven, the breadth of the earth, or the depth of the sea, than measure Christ's love ; for it passeth knowledge ; Eph. iii. It is the unfathomable ocean, that hath neither bank nor bottom. O whither did his love carry him ? Even from heaven to earth, from the throne to the manger, from the manger to the cross, from the cross to the grave ; yea, from the glory of heaven to the torments of hell ; and all this for poor creatures, that were despicable as worms, defiled as lepers, deformed as monsters, black as Ethiopians, yea, as black and ugly as hell could make us. Worse are we than devils, if we be not affected with this love, that made the glorious Son of God leave the heaven of his Father's presence, and wade through hell for the dregs of the creation. Did Christ see any thing in us to make him love us ? No, he saw much to loathe us, but nothing to love us ; yet the time when we were most loathsome was Christ's time of love ; Ezek. xvi. We were lying polluted in our blood, and all spread over with running ulcers and putrefying scres, when Christ loved us. Our souls were as unlovely as Lazarus' body, whose sores the dogs licked ; or Job's body when he was full of boils, and sat in the ashes, and scraped himself with a potsherd ; yet all this could not cool his affection to us.

The instances of Christ's love are inexpressible, both in their nature and number. Wonder at his condescendency, in becoming not only a creature, but such a mean creature as man, for us ; yea, not only a man, but in taking on him the form of a servant, for us ; and being willing not only to lie in a manger, but in a cold grave, for us ! Wonder that the glorious Redeemer of Israel should be content to be born as a beggar, live as a servant, and die as a slave, for us ! Wonder that he who is infinitely pure, should be willing, not only to be numbered among sinners, and to bear our sins, but also to be made sin, and likewise a curse for us ! Was it not for you, and your advantage, he did all this ? and will you not admire and love him ? He was content to endure the poverty of the world, that you might enjoy the riches of heaven ; he lived in the form of a servant, that you might have the adoption of sons ; he humbled himself to live with men, that he might exalt you to live with God ; he bowed his soul to death, that he might raise you to eternal life ; he

was shut up forty days with the devil, that you might not be shut up with him for ever; he was hungry that you might be fed; he was numbered among transgressors, that you might have room among the blessed. O believer! he wept that you might rejoice: sorrow oppressed his heart, that everlasting joy might be on your head; he was scourged and wounded, that you by his stripes might be healed of sin's wounds; he was crowned with thorns, that you might be crowned with glory; he was slandered and condemned before men, that you might be justified and acquitted before God; he bore the curse, that you might inherit the blessing; he drank the bitter and poisonous cup of God's wrath, that you might drink the pure river of life; he was deserted of God, that you might not be forsaken by him eternally; he bore the burden of sin and wrath, that you might be freed from that burden; he hung upon our cross, to advance us to sit upon his throne; he cried out in sorrow upon a cross, that we might shout joyfully in singing God's praise for ever; he thirsted on the cross, that we might not thirst eternally with Dives, for a drop of cold water to cool our tongue; he struggled in a bloody agony, that we might not struggle among devils in hell's furnace for ever: O what shall we say of this love! Lord Jesus, thy pity was infinite, thy love hath overflown all banks, and thy compassion knew no bounds: thou stoodst before the mouth of hell that I deserved, and stoppedst the flaming furnace of divine vengeance that was breaking out against me: when I was, like Isaac, bound to the altar, ready to be sacrificed to justice, thou offeredst thyself, like the "ram caught in the thicket," to be sacrificed in my room: when my sins had raised a terrible tempest, which threatened to drown me eternally, thou wast content to be thrown overboard, like Jonah, to appease the storm: when the sword of justice was furnished, and ready to be sheathed into my bowels, thou interposedst betwixt me and it, and receivedst the blow into thy heart: when I was shipwrecked and perishing, thou cast thyself in as a plank of mercy to save my life. Can I think on this, and my heart not burn? Can I speak of it, and not seek, with Joseph, a secret place to weep in?

View the surpassing nature of Christ's love. No love like to it; yea, Christ's love to us transcends his love to all other things; he loved us more than angels, for he

would not put on their nature; he loved us more than heaven, for he left that to come and save us; he loved us more than riches and honour, for he chose poverty, and became of no reputation, to redeem us; he loved us more than the comforts life, for he parted with these, and became a man of sorrows for our sake; he loved us more than his blood, for he willingly parted with that for us; he loved us more than his soul and body, for he gave both these to be an offering for our sins; he was more concerned for us than for himself; he rejoiced more in our welfare than in his own; he wept and prayed more for us than for himself; and in the time of his greatest strait, when heaven, earth, and hell were all at once rushing upon him, we have his prayer, John xvii., yet it is all spent for us, except one verse or two for himself. Again, Christ loved us more than his life, and "all that a man hath will he give for his life;" yet Christ willingly parted with that for our sakes; but, is there nothing that is better than life? Yes, David tells of one thing that is better; Psalm lxiii. 2, "Thy loving-kindness is better than life." The saints and martyrs, that parted with all other things would by no means part with that, they would rather part with a thousand lives than quit with that; yet Christ, who had infinitely more of it than ever any saint attained to, for our sakes parted with it, and had the light of God's countenance totally eclipsed from him on the cross; so that he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

II. If you would have the sacramental graces quickened, particularly faith, take a view of Christ in all his sweet offices and relations; "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;" Isa. xlv. 22. O communicant! endeavour, upon the morning of a communion Sabbath, to give a believing look to Christ, in all his blessed offices and relations, and this will strengthen and quicken faith, and help thee to act it the more distinctly at a communion table.

1. Look to Christ as a bankrupt debtor to his surety, and say, "Lord, I owe many thousands more than I can pay, but thou hast a sufficient ransom to pay all my debt; I flee to thee as my surety; Lord, undertake for me, and satisfy thy Father's justice, that I be not seized on, and dragged to hell's prison for ever."

2. Look to him as an able Physician to cure thy

wounds ; say, " Lord, here lies a Job full of boils, a Lazarus full of sores at thy gate ; here a paralytic hand, here a blind eye, here a hard heart, here a plague, and there a wound, that have scorned all other physicians, and despised other remedies ; let me this day get the balm of Gilead, even the sovereign plaster of thy blood, to my various maladies ; one touch of the hem of thy garment, and I shall be whole."

3. Look to him as a Ransomer of captives, and say, " Lord, it was thy errand to proclaim liberty to the captives ; I look to thee this day to knock off my fetters, loose all my bonds, and bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name."

4. Look to him as a Mediator and peace-maker, to remove all enmity and quarrels betwixt God and thy soul, and say, " Lord, stand betwixt me and the flaming sword ; let thy atoning blood this day quench the fire of thy Father's anger, and bring the news of peace to my soul."

5. Look to him as an Advocate, to plead for thy guilty soul ; say, " Lord, my crimes are great, and my cause is bad ; but never any cause miscarried that thou took in hand ; be thou mine Advocate, and let every one of thy wounds this day be as so many open mouths to plead for me : let thy blood speak, that ' speaketh better things than that of Abel."

6. Look to him as thy refuge-city and hiding-place, and say, " Lord, I flee to thee for my life ; for the avenger of blood, the law and justice of God, are at my heels pursuing me ; and if they find me afar off from thee, I am slain without mercy ; the clefts of the rock are my hiding-place ; Lord, be a safe-guard to me. A heathen could say, when a bird scared by a hawk flew into his bosom, ' I will not give thee up to thine enemy, seeing thou camest to me for sanctuary ;' and surely thou wilt not deliver my soul, when I flee to thee for shelter."

7. Look to Christ as the ark that can only save thee from being drowned by the flood of God's wrath ; say, " Lord, there is no ark to save me but thee alone ; I am shipwrecked in Adam, and there is no plank but Christ to bring me to shore ; I clasp to thee by the hand of faith ; Lord, save me, else I perish."

8. Look to him as a reliever of burdened souls ; say,

“ Lord, hear a heavy-laden sinner coming to thee this day for rest : O ! sin is heavier than a mill-stone, it is weighed down with the law’s curses : and O how many of these mill-stones are on my back ! Lord, I come this day to roll them upon thee, who art ‘ the sure foundation that God has laid in Zion,’ able to bear me, and all I can lay upon it : angels cannot free me of my burden, for the burden of one sin has sunk many thousands of them to the bottomless pit ; the saints cannot do it, they have burden enough of their own ; nay, the whole creation cannot bear my burden, for it is already groaning under the weight of me and it ; but, Lord, thou art the mighty one, on whom sinners’ help is laid, and hast promised rest to such as come to thee. Lord, let all my burdens fall off this day, that I may be at freedom to run in the ways of thy commandments.”

9. Look to him as a rich, a bountiful helper of the needy ; say, “ Lord, pity me, a needy beggar, this day, that is going to the feast-house to wait for a crumb ; thou hast supplied many, and I have heard a good report of thy bounty ; never came there a poorer wretch to thy door than I ; not a penny of grace is there left to help me, not a crumb to keep in my life. Lord, let me not go from thy treasure-house without an alms ; there is bread enough in thy house, and to spare, let me not go without a crumb.”

10. Look to him as a Prophet and Teacher, that can open thine eyes, and give thee gracious discoveries of his truths and ways ; say, “ Lord, I have heard much of thee by the hearing of the ear, but little have mine eyes seen of thee ; I have been long in Christ’s school, but little proficiency have I made : Lord, come this day, and teach me to profit ; let my eye be opened, that in this ordinance I may see the heinous nature of sin, the severity of divine justice, the greatness of divine love, the beauty of Christ, the preciousness of souls, the excellency of the remedy provided for sinners,” &c.

11. Look to him as thy Head and Husband, with whom you are this day to seal a marriage-covenant ; say, “ Lord, though I be a most deformed, black, and unworthy bride, and have nothing but poverty, debt, and danger to recommend me to thee ; yet, since thou, who art the chief among ten thousand, are content to match with me, O give me a heart to consent willingly to the

bargain, and say, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his.' Lord, help me cheerfully to say Amen to the covenant, and all the articles of it, that I was reviewing and renewing yesternight. O let the marriage-knot this day be cast, that sin or Satan, death or hell, may never be able to loose it again; let him this day kiss me with the kisses of his mouth. O for sweet communion and fellowship with him at his own table. Lord, show me a token for good, set me as a seal upon thine arm; manifest thyself to me as thou dost not unto the world."

### DIRECTION III.

LABOUR, O communicant! to get thy soul put in a right and suitable frame for approaching God's holy table, and entertaining thy Saviour there. Now the cry is making, "The Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him;" prepare the palace of your hearts to him; cleanse, sweep, and wash them; get them adorned and perfumed with the graces of the Spirit. Is Christ gone to prepare a place for you, and will you not prepare a place for him? Set up a throne for Christ, go forth to meet him with acclamation and praise; receive him gladly, set the crown on his head, and swear allegiance to him, and say, as the men of Israel said to Gideon; Judges viii. 22, "Rule thou over us, for thou hast delivered us out of the hand of Midian." O but Christ hath delivered us out of the hand of Satan, a far worse oppressor than Midian. Let us welcome him, and compass him about with songs of deliverance. O, communicants! deal not with Christ as his countrymen the Jews did; John i. 11, "He came to his own, but his own received him not;" when he came into the world, there was no room allowed for him any where but in the manger, and thither was he thrust. O deal not so with your Saviour; think not a foul stall good enough for Christ, but make clean your hearts, and give him the best room, yea, the upper room there. O send the key of you hearts this morning to Christ, saying, "Lord, take thy choice where to lie; alas! I may say, with the centurion, 'I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof;' my soul is a ruinous, smoky, and defiled cottage, thou hast not a fit place with me to lay thy head; but O! thou that didst not disdain to lie in a manger among beasts, and to be

entertained in the house of Simon the leper, come into my soul, repair the house, and prepare an upper room for thyself, that I may eat the passover with thee. Lord, speak the word, and thy servant's heart shall be healed, cleansed, and made holy, soft, and pliable, fit for thy use and service. Lord, none can mend my heart but thou that made it; I put it into thy hands. Lord, make it as thou wouldst have it."

*Ques.* What is that frame and disposition of soul that we should come with to the communion table?

*Ans.* Take these directions concerning it.

1. Come to it with holy awe and reverence of God. Were you going to a prince's table, you would go to it with some awe and concern; and will you have none when you go to the table of the great Jehovah, who is your Judge, searches the heart, and observes all your actions? He is a God that is very jealous of his honour, and will not be mocked; you ought to come to this table with a holy dread and reverence, adoring the holiness and justice of God, manifested in the sufferings of Christ. How vehemently did he hate sin, that he would not pity or spare his dear Son, when he cried to him! but, seeing he had undertaken to pay our debt, and drink our cup, the least farthing or drop he would not abate him. Though the sinner be spared, yet sin must be punished to the uttermost; our cautioner paid dearly for it. We ought to adore his justice, saying, with the men of Bethshemesh, 1 Sam. vi. 20, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" There is no standing but at Christ's back, our blessed cautioner, in whom God is well pleased.

2. Come with holy fear and jealousy over yourselves, lest you be found unwelcome guests, and draw down the guilt of unworthy communicating upon yourselves; cry, "Lord, keep me from wounding Christ and my own soul this day; let me not betray the Son of God with a kiss; deliver me from blood-guiltiness, and from drinking damnation. O! what if I want the wedding-garment, when the King comes in to view the guests!"

3. Come with brokenness of heart for sin, the cause of Christ's sufferings. Look on your pride, passion, hypocrisy, covetousness, malice, lying, swearing, &c., as Christ's only tormentors; behold how they pressed

him down in the garden, till he sweat blood—see them binding the cross on Christ's back—see them nailing his hands, piercing his temples, and grieving his heart—see them buffeting and spitting on him—see them making him groan, weep, and roar out his complaint, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was on us this tragedy should have been acted—on us these vials of wrath should have been poured; "for he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities," Isa. liii. 5. O, shall we see Christ's heart streaming blood, and our eyes not drop tears? Shall we see him stretched out and nailed for us, and our hearts not bleed? Oh! it was my sins that made the nails; they drove them in, they thrust in the spear, yea, they killed the Lord of life; and shall I not mourn? Did you see a malefactor, who had committed twenty murders, used like Christ, your hearts would be concerned; and will you not be affected to behold the innocent Lamb of God so abused by your sins? Look on him ye have pierced, and mourn. This passover must be eaten with bitter herbs. Sow in tears, if you would reap in joy. A weeping communicant is a very pleasing sight both to God and man; a broken-hearted, weeping sinner will suit well with a bruised and bleeding Saviour.

4. Come with burning love and affection to Christ. This is a feast only for the friends and lovers of Christ; Cant. v. 1. Without love you have nothing to do here. O believer! is thy heart cold when Christ's love is warm? Will you not recompense love with love? Can you behold Christ on a cross dying with love in his heart, and smiles in his looks; can you see his bleeding arms open to embrace you, the spear reaching his heart, and his affections streaming out to you in blood, and that when you were enemies to him, and haters of him, and not be ravished with his love? Can you behold his wounds, or put your finger into the print of the nails, and not be sick of love, and cry out with Thomas, "My Lord and my God?" Can you view him that is the chief among ten thousand, yea, among an hundred thousand, and among all the thousands in heaven and earth, and your hearts not love him? Turn over all things both in heaven and earth, you can find none like him, so excellent in himself, and so well adapted to your condition and circumstances. Paul was a learned man, and knew many

things—a travelled man, and had seen and heard many things; yet when he casts up his accounts of all he had ever seen, heard, or known, he says, “I count all but dung or loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ;” Phil. iii. 8, 9.

5. Come with much hunger and thirst to this full feast. See that your appetites be not gluttoned with the world, for “the full soul loathes the honey-comb;” it is only the thirsty that are welcome; Rev. x. 10; Christ fills the hungry with good things. When the desire opens the heart widest, then he opens his hands largest to fill it; Psalm lxxxix. 10. O then cry, Give me Christ, and deny me what thou wilt; a crumb of mercy from thy table, or else I am gone for ever. Endeavour to say, as Isa. xxvi., “The desire of my soul is unto thee, and to the remembrance of thy name. O that I knew where to find him! When wilt thou come unto me? O for further tokens of his love, and clear evidences of my interest in him! O for the smiles of his face, and the voice of joy and gladness! There are many heavenly dainties here; here are all the fruits of the tree of life, the comforts of the Spirit, the influence of his grace, the bread and waters of life; therefore come with enlarged appetites. The spouse cries, Cant. ii. 5, “Stay me with flagons;” as if she had said, My thirst is so great, it is not a drop or a little cup that will quench it, I would have whole flagons. Fear not to wrong your neighbours, for there is a river to every one of you. Observe how earnest Christ was to feast with us; Luke xxii. 15, “With desire,” says he, “have I desired to eat this supper with you,” though he had no need either of you or it. And will you not, whose needs are so great, say, With desire have I desired to eat this supper with Christ before I die: it may be my last communion, O let me have something to carry my expense through the wilderness; let me have something to comfort and support me when I go through the valley of the shadow of death.

6. Come with humility and self-denial, and content to be nothing, that Christ may be all; and willing to submit to any thing, for a blink of his countenance. Be sensible of your ill-deservings, and acknowledge a crumb will be a great mercy. Be content, with the prodigal and woman of Canaan, to be taken into Christ’s family, though it were in the meanest station and employment:

Let me be the meanest of Christ's servants, though I be ever so ill used, or ill respected, I will be thankful if I be within Christ's doors, have a relation to his family, and can call him Master. Again, come self-deniedly, renouncing all confidence in yourself, your preparations, humiliations, or performances: these may be good graces and good duties, but they will be ill Christs, and ill Saviours. Freely own that it is not your own righteousness that saves you, nor your own strength that quickens you; but only Christ's righteousness and Christ's strength. Say, Blessed Jesus, I flee to thee alone; I have no hope in myself, nor in anything besides thee; all my confidence is in the freeness of thy love, the mercy of thy bowels, the merit of thy death, the worth of thy blood, the sufficiency of thy righteousness, and power of thy intercession.

7. Come with charity and love to all men, even to your very enemies. Banish all malice and envy, pray for your enemies, forgive them, wish well and do good both to their souls and bodies, according to Christ's example on the cross; but especially bring with you love and affection to God's people, delight in their fellowship above all others, for they are the excellent ones of the earth.

8. Come with honest designs to seal a marriage-covenant with Christ. Consent frankly to Christ to be your Prince and Saviour; do not think of halving in with Christ, be willing to take him entirely upon his own terms. Be content not only to be saved by him, but to serve him; live for him, fight for him, and cleave to him all the days of your life; resolving that all the pleasures of sin, temptations of Satan, and allurements of the world, nay, the hopes of enjoying ten thousand worlds, shall never prevail with you to part with Christ. Come, resigning yourselves, your hearts, and all you have, to Christ: say, Lord, though I had ten thousand hearts, and every one of them ten thousand times better than they are, they should all be thine. Come with strong vows and purposes against sin, that murdered your Saviour; resolve never to harbour it, or make peace with it, but that you will fight against it to your last breath and revenge the death of Christ on it.

9. Come with thankfulness and praise to God for redeeming love, and providing such a Saviour for you. Let the high praises of God be in your mouths; send up

whole vollies of praise to your Redeemer, for undertaking your deliverance. Invite the angels and all the creation to assist you in this work. Stir up your souls, and all that is within you to bless his holy name; your souls, like Mary, should magnify the Lord, and your spirits rejoice in God your Saviour; your hearts should ascend, like Manoah's angel, in the smoke of thanksgiving and praise. Say, Lord, what shall I render to thee for all thou hast done and suffered for me? Lord, what am I that thou shouldst part with thy glory, yea, with thy blood and with thy life, for such a wretch as me? I am ashamed that I can love and praise thee no more; Oh! my heart is cold, my tongue is slow! Let heaven and earth, angels and men, join and extol his free grace and wondrous love; let all the world ring with his praise.

10. Come with hope and expectation, depending on God's promise and Christ's merits. You ought greedily to look to Christ, expecting something from him, as the poor cripple from Peter and John; Acts iii. 4, 5, Peter said, "Look on us: And he gave heed to them, expecting to receive something from them." We ordinarily receive little, because we expect little: "God's mercy is upon us, according as we hope in him;" Psalm xxxiii. 22. O raise your desires and expectations; for you come to a merciful and liberal God, that will not let the expectation of his poor creatures perish; Psalm ix. 18, "The needy shall not always be forgotten, the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever."

*Objec.* Alas! I am a poor, weak, heartless creature; I have little ground to hope.

*Ans.* You have God's call and promise to encourage you. Groan under your deadness, and use the means: aim honestly at your duty, and look to God for accomplishing his promise. Do as the Israelites did in the wilderness; Num. xxi. 16—18. God had called them to the place where he promised them water, which was very much valued in that dry desert: well, did they sit still idly, waiting till the water should spring? No, the nobles put to their staves, digged in expectation of God's fulfilling his promise, and sung, "Spring up, O well," &c. Make an honest mint, look up with hope, and cry for the springing of the well. Come, bring all your empty vessels to the fountain, in expectation of a fill. Do as the poor widow, 2 Kings iv., "Bring not a few;" for I am sure

the vessels will fail before the oil fail. Plead with God for the accomplishing of his word: Say, Lord, though we cannot say, "Pour water on us, for we are thirsty;" yet we can plead, "Pour floods on us, for we are dry ground." Lord, make us as hungry as we are empty, and thirsty as we are dry; Lord, if thou deal with us according to our sense of need, we will get little; but, Lord, we plead thou wilt deal with us according to our real need and thy royal bounty, and then we will be right enough.

O, poor soul! art thou longing for the springing of the well, saying, O that I knew in what part of this valley of Baca the well would spring, what ordinance, what duty would be the mean; there I would wait and lie, there I would dig and cry; one gush of these living streams would satisfy my longing soul! Poor soul, thou shalt not die for want; you have the word of a King for it; Isa. xli. 17, 18, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst. I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

#### DIRECTION IV.

AFTER you have this morning meditated, dealt with your hearts, wrestled with God, read his word, and performed family worship, with faith and fervency suitable to this solemn occasion, you ought timeously to repair to the church against the solemn worship begin. And let your hearts be breathing forth many heavenly ejaculations by the way; such as that, Psalm xliii. 3, 4, "Send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me, and bring me to thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy." O it were a pleasant frame this morning, to be going "with joy to draw water out of the wells of salvation!" Let us be very thankful that the waters of life do flow so pleasantly and plentifully to us, betwixt the banks of gospel-ordinances: bless God that has not made the barren wilderness our dwelling; but let us think as we go, that as God rained down manna from heaven on his people, so he rained down fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah.

This serves to teach us to rejoice so in the mercies which God rains down upon us in the sacrament, as to fear his judgments in case they be abused.

Again; think, I am now upon my way to mount Calvary; Lord, forbid that Christ's traitors be my attendants. Let all my lusts and idols be for ever banished from me; may they never find lodging in my soul any more. Lord, help me to go this day with such a melted heart and weeping eyes as the holy Virgin, Mary Magdalen, and the other tender-hearted women in Jerusalem had, when they went to mount Calvary, to behold Christ crucified. Am not I going up to see the same crucifixion represented before my eyes?

As it was a part of your secret work this morning to plead earnestly with God to direct his messengers to speak suitably to your case; so you ought by the way to be sending up ejaculations for this end, and frequently to be crying, "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south, blow," &c. (The minister's words will be but as wind, and a beating of the air, unless the wind of the Spirit blow.) O Spirit of God, come, influence my heart this day: I dare not go to the table without thy presence. Lord, stand not this day behind the wall; for there cannot be a sadder sight in the world, than a poor hard-hearted communicant with God's back turned upon him: "If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." O Lord, it is time for thee to work; I never stood more in need of thy presence than at this time. It is my errand to meet with thee at thy table: Lord, send me not away with a sore heart; a communion day, without communion with Christ, will never satisfy my soul.

Plead with God, O young communicant! that this may be the day of your acquaintance with Christ, even the day of your espousals, and a day to be had in everlasting remembrance. And indeed, if you enter this day into the bond of covenant, it will be a very memorable day: God will bless the memory of this day, for he will gain a son; Jesus Christ will write this day in his kalendar, for he will gain a brother; the Holy Ghost will rejoice, for he will gain a temple; angels and saints will be glad, for they will gain a fellow-servant; and you especially may rejoice, with exceeding great joy, for you will gain an eternal inheritance.

*Directions concerning our Carriage when the tim<sup>e</sup> of receiving the Sacrament doth approach.*

I. WHEN the time is come, or near, that you are to go to this table, consider that this is the most solemn and august ordinance under heaven, and requires the most profound awe and reverence from you. The place is holy, the table is holy, the bread and cup are holy; and God is terrible from his holy places. Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? Your danger is great, if you can make a rash approach, and seek him not after the due order; the least wrong touch at this time is criminal, and may cost you eternal salvation; it may provoke the Lord to make a fearful and visible breach among you, as he did upon Uzzah and the men of Bethshemesh; for the nearer to God's altar you come, the fire of his jealousy burns the more vehemently. Labour, then, to go to his table with holy fear and trembling; for as communion love is the sweetest, so communion wrath is the sorest; heavy judgments, both spiritual, temporal, and eternal, hang over the unworthy communicant's head. If you would prevent these, adventure to his table with holy fear and dread; for, if the woman with the bloody issue feared so much to touch the "hem of Christ's garment," Mark v., how much more ought you to fear to touch the symbols of his body and blood, to put your hand into his wounds, and feel the print of the nails? If such a holy man as John the Baptist thought himself unworthy to bear Christ's shoes, how much more are vile sinners like you, unworthy to touch and feed upon his broken body and shed blood? Let your souls then be humble as the dust when you approach, in a deep sense of your great unworthiness, former guilt, and breach of former vows made at this table; for to such humble souls God has promised to look in mercy; Isa. lxvi. 2.

II. When you are going to the table, labour to stir up your souls, and all your faculties and affections; excite all your graces and desires to attend Christ. O see that your souls be lively, and your hearts fixed, when you are about to draw near, and seal a marriage covenant with Christ. You have great need to look to your hearts and frames at this time; a dead heart, or an ill frame now, is very unsuitable; it is like the dead fly in the box of

ointment, it will be fair to spoil our communicating: for God's sake, look to it.

*Objec. I.* Oh! says one, my heart is in a lifeless and stupid frame, even at a dead stand, and thinks neither of good nor ill: what shall I do with it?

*Ans. 1st.* Despatch presently a swift messenger to heaven, an earnest ejaculation and prayer, to call for the help of God's Spirit; as Cant. iv. 16. Entreat him to breathe on your dry bones with a fresh gale, and take a coal from his own altar to inflame your affections.

*2dly.* Call on your hearts to awake to a lively frame. It is a mistake of christians to think they are only to call upon God: you must also call upon yourselves, and rouse up yourselves, as Psalm lvii. 8, "Awake up, my glory," &c. Stir up yourselves, and all that is within you, according to Psalm ciii. 1. Speak to your hearts, and expostulate with them: say, Oh! my drowsy, blockish heart, art thou not ashamed to think so coldly of thy bleeding Saviour? Is his heart so warm, and thine so cold? Doth a dead heart become the service of the living God?

*Objec. II.* Oh! saith another, my heart is a roving, wandering heart, I cannot get it staid one moment upon one subject: it presently gets away, and haunts after vanities; Oh! what shall I do with the levity and excursions of my heart?

*Ans. 1st.* Labour now to over-awe your heart with the deep apprehension of God's presence and an all-seeing eye; God noticeth you more now than ever.

*2dly.* Chide and check your heart for its vain excursions: say, Did I come here to think of any thing but of Christ and heaven? Is this a place for thinking on worldly toys? Is this the way to show forth my Saviour's death, which is my business here? What, cannot I watch with Christ one hour now? How then will I behold and contemplate him for ever?

*Objec. III.* Though I am come to this length in obedience to a dying Saviour's command, yet I fear to go forward, for I doubt my right; I cannot say that I am in covenant with God, or that I have faith, and an interest in Christ, or that his body was broken for me.

*Ans.* O discouraged soul, though you have not the faith of assurance, yet see if you can get the faith of adherence: though you cannot say that ever you took hold

of Christ or the covenant before, yet try if you can get a grip of Christ now; you are much nearer to him now than at other times. Make an endeavour, stir up your souls, and go to Christ with all the faith you can win at, saying, with that poor man, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." If you cannot apply Christ to yourselves, will you apply yourselves to Christ? if you cannot say Christ is your Saviour and hiding-place, will you run like a malefactor to him for refuge, and try if he will now shelter you in his wounds, when they are so wide opened in the sacrament? He noticeth any poor sinner that is engaging his heart to approach unto God.

Again; though you cannot say that Christ is yours, and you are in covenant with him; yet are you not willing to be his, and to give up yourself to him? The covenant indeed is mutual; Cant. ii. 16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his;" but if you cannot lay claim to one part of it, try if you can grip to another: is it your language, Though I cannot say he is mine, yet I am resolved to be his, and to give up myself to him? That is well said, poor soul: for you must first consent to be his, before you know that he is yours; you must be resolute in your covenanting with Christ; when you are driven from one horn of the altar, hold fast by another. Fly now to Christ, saying, Lord, though I cannot say thou art mine, yet I can say, Lord, I am content and resolved to be thine, wholly thine, only thine, and everlastingly thine. David could not always say, God is mine; but when he cannot say that, he cries, "I am thine, Lord, help thou me," Psalm cxix. 94. Hear one that belongs to thee, and has surrendered himself to thee; Lord, suffer not one of thine to perish.

*Objec.* IV. Alas! I cannot say to God, I am thine; I fear he will not accept of me, nor own me for his.

*Ans.* Though you cannot say, I am thine by God's acceptance, yet you can say, Lord, I am thine by my own resignation, I devote and give up myself wholly unto thee; I will not be the devil's, the world's, or lust's; I will not be my own, but I will be thine; I am thine, save thou me. Go to him with that plea the Campani came to the Romans with. After they had refused to help them as neighbours and allies against the Grecians, who were distressing them sore, and that because the Romans and the Grecians were in friendship together at that time; the Campani went and gave up their whole country in

vassallage to the Romans, saying, "If you will not help us as our allies, help us as your vassals and subjects, as we are content to be: we are sure you will not let your tributaries perish." And indeed this argument prevailed with them: and so it will be with God if you go to him with an importunate faith, and fasten yourself upon him. Plead, Lord, if thou wilt not love me as a friend, yet pity me as thy poor subject; I resolve to be thine, and if I perish, one must perish that deserves to be thine. Lord, whether thou accept of me or not, I give up myself to thy use and service. Art thou come this length, poor soul? fear not, thou shalt not perish. Christ is as willing to be thine, as thou art to be his; come forward, and take the seal of the covenant, and make a new surrender of yourself to Christ, and it may be he will be made known to you in the breaking of bread.

When this holy feast comes to be celebrated, see that your souls be rightly employed, and your graces suitably exercised; study to have your meditations and ejaculations suitably to what you hear or see.

When you are coming to this holy table, and perhaps may be put to stand a little by it, by reason of the throng, before you get access: think on what Moses said to the Israelites while standing at the Red Sea; *Exod. xiv. 13*, "Stand still," saith he, "and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you to-day." In like manner, you are standing by the glorious salvation he is showing to you this day.

Or you may think with yourself, that you hear Christ, the Captain of your salvation, now crying, as did Jehu, *2 Kings ix. 32*, "Who is on my side? Who?" Well, if you will not appear or declare for Christ, then you must throw your lusts, like Jezebel, out of the window, to be dashed in pieces.

When you see the communicants set about Christ's table, you may think on that word, *Psal. cxxviii. 3*, where God promiseth to the righteous man, that his wife should be as a fruitful vine by the sides of his house, and his children as olive plants round about his table. Behold this promise made out to Christ, God's righteous servant; the church, Christ's spouse, is a fruitful vine, and hath born him many children; would to God these may be Christ's children by adoption, as well as they are the church's by profession! May it be said of them, that

this and that man was born of her! O how pleasant a sight is it to see Christ's children set as olive plants round about his table, and to see Christ himself setting them there! Surely, if he set them, he will serve them also; they shall not have ground to go away with any complaint of him; for Christ is no niggard to his children, he is neither hard-hearted nor hard-handed: if his children seek bread, he will not give them a stone.

When you are allowed to come forward to the Lord's table, think with yourself that you hear Christ or his ministers saying to you, as the angels did to the women at the sepulchre; Matt. xxviii. 5, 6, "We know whom ye seek, ye seek Jesus which was crucified; come, see the place where the Lord lay;" come, see the promise, come, see the elements wherein the Lord lieth.

And, in the mean while, take care to entertain very high and exalted thoughts of Christ, and very low and humble thoughts of yourself: say, or think, Lord, I am not worthy to approach so near thee, far less that thou shouldst come under my roof. I am not worthy to eat the crumbs that fall from my own, much less these that fall from thy table. Oh! I am unworthy to be allowed to creep as a dog under the table, far less to sit as one of Christ's invited guests at the table. I deserve not a room to stand among thy servants, far less to sit down with thy children. I deserve not to have daily bread conferred on me, and shall I be allowed to eat of the bread of life? I am unworthy to lift up my eyes to heaven, and shall I get manna from heaven? I am unworthy to eat the bread of men, and shall I be admitted to eat the bread of angels? Shall I entertain him whom they adore; nay, sit down with him at whose feet they fall, to tread thy courts? Shall I, that am unworthy to breathe in thy air, have thy Spirit to breathe into my heart; or have leave to breathe out my desires unto thee? O how great is the condescending goodness of our heavenly Father to his prodigal children! These are wonders of mercy, miracles of compassion!

*Some Directions for Communicants when at the Lord's Table.*

I WOULD have you at this time to mind that word of Solomon, Prov. xxiii. 1, "When thou sittest to eat with a

ruler, consider diligently what is before thee." O communicant! consider diligently the sacramental elements, and what is represented and exhibited by them. Consider the sacramental promises, and what blessings are contained in them. Consider the sacramental actions, and the gracious acts which the soul should put forth in them. It should be a busy time, and well improved; for though it be short, yet you have many things to do in it, which may generally be comprehended under these two heads:—

1. Remember the suitable subjects which are to be considered and meditated on at the table.

2. Observe and exert the special graces which are to be employed and exercised there.

As to the first of these heads, I shall mention some suitable subjects of your meditation and contemplation at this time; as, 1. Christ's death and passion. 2. The bitterness and variety of his sufferings. 3. Christ's willingness to undergo these sufferings for us. 4. The blessed effects and benefits of his sufferings. 5. Christ's free love, as the impulsive cause of all he did and suffered. 6. The evil of sin, which brought on his sufferings. 7. God's holiness and justice manifested in them. 8. The communion feast above represented by this lower table.

I. Remember and meditate upon the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. David hath a psalm which he calls a psalm of remembrance; Psalm xxxviii. Here the Son of David hath a sacrament, which may well be called a sacrament of remembrance: for the great end of it is to be a memorial of Christ, its author and founder: for he said, when he instituted it, "This do in remembrance of me;" and we find these words used twice over, both at the delivering of the bread and of the wine; 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25; as if he had said, Whatever you mind, see that you forget not your suffering Redeemer. Some of Christ's works are narrated only by one evangelist, as his turning the water into wine, and some others; some of his works are recorded by two evangelists, as the history of Christ's birth by Matthew and Luke; some things are recorded by three of them, as the institution of the sacrament of the supper; but for Christ's death and passion, it is recorded by them all four. And this is done, no doubt, to teach us, that though all Christ's works and actions are seriously to be remembered and thought upon,

yet none so especially as his death and sufferings. And when should this be thought upon, if not at the sacrament, whose institution was purposely for the remembrance thereof? O communicant! will you not think of this subject when you have Christ crucified evidently set forth before your eyes, in the bread broken and the wine poured out? Oh! was his blessed body broken with torments, and his precious blood shed for the remission of my sins, and will I not think upon him? Dear Saviour, thou biddest me remember thee; O how should I ever forget thee at any time, and far less now when I sit at thy table! "If I forget thee, O Redeemer! let my right hand forget its cunning, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth." O that I could even go out of myself to remember thee, and never think on thee without an ecstasy of wonder!

II. Think upon the bitterness of Christ's passion, and the variety of his sufferings, and revolve in thy thoughts the several steps and degrees thereof; and particularly, take a view of your Redeemer's agony for you in the garden of Gethsemane; walk into that garden, and behold him falling to the ground under the weight of your sins, wrestling as in an agony, and sweating great drops of blood, and these bursting through all his garments. O see how he lay, and how he bedewed and stained the flowers of the garden round about him with his blood. Never any in the world was known to sweat in such a manner before, and never any since that time. In a natural way of speaking, the coldness of the night, his lying on the cold ground, and the exceeding greatness of Christ's fear at that time, should have drawn all his blood inward from the outward parts of his body. Oh! but this sweat was preternatural; he sweats without fire, and bleeds without a wound. There was no heat, no fire without him, that made him sweat at this time; no, the fire was within him, even the fire of God's wrath kindled his soul: this made the blood about his heart to boil, and burst through his veins, flesh, skin, and clothes, and all together. There is no wound outward as yet given him; no sword, no spear, no weapon as yet had touched him, and yet he bleeds: Oh! the wound was inward in his soul: deep and fearful was that gash which the sword of justice made at this time in his soul. The breach was wide as the sea, and accordingly a whole sea of wrath

brake in with violence upon his soul. He falls first upon his knees, and then upon the ground; he lies under the pressure till he is overwhelmed with his father's wrath and his own blood. Deep calleth unto deep, till all these dreadful waves and billows have passed over him. He cried to his father, he complained to his disciples, he sought their sympathy and prayers; but no relief had he from earth, he must tread the wine-press alone.

Next, O communicants! follow your Redeemer after he was apprehended, by your meditations, and trace his steps through the streets of Jerusalem. Think what he underwent when he was hurried from one tribunal to another. Go into the high priest's palace, and to Pilate's judgment-hall, and observe what unparalleled affronts and indignities he suffered there, and none to take his part. He was reproached, despised, and abandoned by all men, as if he had been the worst of men, and unworthy to breathe in the world. He was put in competition with a vile murderer for his life, and yet the murderer was preferred before him. Yea, his own chosen disciples, who had been eye-witnesses of his miracles, and ear-witnesses of his oracles, they turned their backs on him with the rest; one of them betrays him, another denies him, and all the rest forsake him. Behold how unworthy men buffet him, blindfold him, and spit on that beautiful face which angels behold with wonder. Behold how he was scourged, dragged up and down, affronted and mocked a whole night on your account, as if he had been the derision of wicked men and devils. Now the devil thought, if Christ was to be the elect's surety, and was to pluck them out of his claws, he should pay well for them ere he got them; and therefore many a wound and buffet he got; but content is our Redeemer to take all, to get his elect free and safe.

In the next place, behold how the heavy tree of the cross was laid and fastened on the sore and bleeding shoulders of our Saviour, and he obliged to carry it to the place of execution. Follow him in your thoughts, and see him wrestling under the weight, when going up mount Calvary; he carries it till he can carry it no further; he is spent and founders under the load, yet denies any relief. Ascend mount Calvary, and there see the cross laid down upon the ground, and Christ, the blessed victim, laid down upon the cross, which was a rack as well as a death; see

how he is racked and nailed to it by the bloody executioners. And then behold the cursed tree lifted up, with the Lord of glory fastened to it, and fixed upon the top of mount Calvary, as a sacrifice to justice for an elect world. Behold him ranked among malefactors, and hanging betwixt two thieves. Behold his hands and feet pierced and rent with nails, his glorious head covered with a crown of thorns, and his tender side run through with a spear. See how the thorns pierce his holy head; see how his precious blood trickles down from his many wounds; see how his royal visage turns pale; see how his head bows and lies a-dying on his bleeding breast. Is not this an affecting sight?

Again, consider the prodigious, outward darkness that was on Christ, during his passion on the cross, for several hours together, to show the horrible inward darkness that was on his soul while the wrath of God acted against him, as being the sacrifice for the world's sins. We read, that while Abraham was offering his sacrifice, Gen. xv. 12, the sun was going down, and an horror of great darkness fell upon him. So fared it with Christ, while he offered himself a sacrifice for us. Now, the Lord revealed his wrath from heaven against the unrighteousness of the world, which was at this time laid on Christ. Our Redeemer lay under this darkness, to show that we should have suffered the horror of darkness for ever, even that blackness of darkness which the apostle Jude speaks of. But, glory to God, the blackness of darkness caused by God's wrath for sin, was now laid on our Surety. Strange! God causeth his sun to shine upon the just and unjust, but on our Redeemer now it must not shine, as if, of all the unjust ones in the world, he were the most unjust, having the whole injustice of the elect laid to his charge. O! spotless Lamb of God, innocent Redeemer of mankind, most pure and just One, that never offended against the law! and must thou be dealt with as the most unjust person that ever breathed in the world, because of the injustice of others? Now all the powers of earth and hell were let loose against our Redeemer; all these lions, bulls, dogs, and unicorns were set upon him to tear him. And, was it not enough that earth and hell were against him, but must heaven itself be against him too, and declare its indignation by that visible sign of the horrible and continued darkness? Oh! this was heavier and

sharper to our Redeemer than all the rest of his sufferings. Under the rest he was silent, but now he cannot hold his peace; and, therefore, sends forth that formidable loud cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" During the continuance of these three dark hours was Christ drinking the bitter cup; and now he comes to the bottom, and bitterest dregs of it. Now were the euvenomed arrows of the Almighty piercing him in the most sensible part; and, therefore, he must cry. O how justly, then, might he have cried out with Job, and on better ground, too, than he; Job xix. 21, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me!" How truly might the Husband now have taken up the spouse's lamentation; Lam. i. 12, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger!" Do but imagine what excessive pain and exquisite torment he underwent, both in soul and body, when he made his fearful outcry; and canst thou, O communicant! see such a tragedy acted on thy bleeding Jesus with dry eyes? This sacrament is, as it were, a visible sermon on our Saviour's passion. In it we behold the whole tragedy that was acted on the cross; here we view the whole circumstances of the barbarous malice of the Jews and Romans against the innocent Son of God. And we should endeavour to be as much affected therewith, as if we had seen the same acted with our bodily eyes.

Moreover, think now upon Christ's cry upon the cross, when he said, "I thirst, I thirst!" No wonder he cried so, when there was such a furnace of wrath kindled in his soul, a fire that dried up both his strength and moisture like a potsherd, and made his tongue cleave to his jaws. A strange complaint!—"I thirst!" the Creator is thirsting, and there is no creature to give refreshment. Strange! might not one have cried, "O where were all the wells in Jerusalem at this time? Where all the fountains, rivers, lakes in the world? Where all the vines in that fruitful land, when my Lord and Saviour could not get a drink? Fy upon you all, that would let glorious King Jesus be burnt up with thirst." O! but they might have answered, "We dare not own nor re-

lieve him at this time; God hath laid an arrest on us, and we dare not break it to serve our Master." How strange to hear the fountains and vines say, "We will give Pilate and Herod, and all the enemies of Christ, drink, but we will give Christ himself none, though he die for thirst!" Oh! there is no liquor for precious Christ in all the earth, but bitter gall and vinegar, to increase his torment; not a cup of cold water for the Lord of glory, not a drop to cool his scorched tongue; but he must die crying out, "I thirst!" But, O! if my Saviour had not thirsted on the cross, I had thirsted with Dives in hell; nay, all the elect had lain there in that lake of fire, and cried for ever. "I thirst! I thirst!"

And further, consider the extent and universality of his sufferings. He suffered in both natures. His Godhead, indeed, could not suffer grief, but it suffered an eclipse, and lay under a veil for thirty-three years, except one hour it broke out and shone on Mount Tabor. He suffered in all his offices; for they mocked and ridiculed him as a prophet, despised and slighted him as a priest, abused and insulted him as a king, putting a mock sceptre in his hand, and arraying him with an old purple robe—mock habiliments of his majesty. He suffered in all the powers and faculties of his soul, and in all the senses and members of his body. His head, heart, hands, back, sides, and feet were all mangled and pierced, and no part of him free but his tongue, to pray for his enemies. He suffered in his outward goods; for what he had of this kind were his garments, and these were taken from him. Moreover, he was wounded in his name and reputation; for he suffered as a blasphemer against God, as a traitor against the Roman emperor, and as an enemy to Moses' law, though he was entirely innocent as to all the three. He suffered from all hands; from heaven, from earth, from hell, from Herod, from Pilate, from the high priest, from the Romans, from the Jews, from the soldiers, from the clergy, from foes, from disciples, from strangers—all were against him; but, which was worst of all, God was against him too; for, he being substituted in the room of sinners, God acted as an inexorable judge towards him; he smote him with the sword of justice, frowned on him in a terrible manner, and withdrew from him all the sensible feeling of his loving-kindness, and restrained the influence of those beams which might

any way refresh his troubled soul, in the hour of his greatest need. So that there was never any sorrow like our Redeemer's sorrow.

Hence it was that he "offered up his supplications with such strong crying and tears," Heb. v. 7. Hearken, O communicant, how Christ wept and sobbed in the garden, and how loud he cried on the cross, Father, Father; mercy, mercy! my God, my God! But, what a fray think you there was in heaven at this time! Why? The Son of God weeping! The Creator of the earth crying and sobbing out of the earth! Never was there such a commotion in heaven or earth, either before or ever shall be after. What a stir was there among the angels, when their Lord was weeping, crying, and sobbing! How amazed were they, and intent upon the issue! Strange! might they say, "he that takes up the isles as a very little thing," crying so hideously at this time; he that can bear up heaven and earth with a finger, weeping! What can be the matter? Surely there was more than the tree on Christ's back, more than the thorns in his temples, or the nails in his hands and feet. Oh! there were the curses of God's law on the tree that Christ bore, which were heavier than ten thousand mountains of iron; the poison of God's wrath went in with the thorns and iron nails, and entered into his very soul.

Christ's martyrs and sufferers have rejoiced in their sufferings, and sung praises under their tortures; and yet Christ, who is the author of their strength and comfort, doth himself complain and weep. Oh, but all the martyrs' sufferings were nothing but flea-bittings to Christ's! They had God's presence with them in their trials; but Christ had God angry and withdrawn from him; yea, the Lord did run upon him as a giant, and made him the butt of his envenomed arrows. Hence it was, that our Lord, at the sight of this wrath, began to fear and to be sore amazed, Mark xiv., to be astonished with terror. To see millions of men despairing is not so much as to see Christ beginning to fear. And O, it was not a small fear that was on our Redeemer; no, it was a great fear and amazement. Never was any man so afraid of the torments of hell, as Christ—standing in our room—was of his Father's wrath; because never man knew the power of that wrath so well as he. O what anguish was there at Christ's heart, that made it to bleed

without any outward violence, and that blood to burst through both flesh, skin, and garments at once. The perfect knowledge which Christ had of things aggravated his sufferings; he did not shut his eyes when he drank that cup; no, he perfectly saw how dreggish and bitter it was, and yet he ventured on it. Many men fear not hell, because they foresee it not; if they did see that pit open for them before they came at it, it might, perhaps, cause them tremble at their sins, and many wicked men might run mad at the horror of it: but Christ clearly foresaw all he met with, which was far greater, and worse than the torments of any damned soul: and this made him to be amazed with fear.

Finally, consider how our Redeemer at last bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. Strange sight! to see the Lord of life death's prisoner! to see the princely head of Jesus falling down upon his breast; to see the Lord of life wanting life; to see those eyes, that were oft lifted up to heaven in prayer, now waxed dim and fixed that they cannot move; to see that mouth that spake as never man spake, now silent, and not able to speak a word! An affecting sight! The world never saw the like: to see the fair corpse of glorious Jesus rolled in linen, and laid in a silent grave; to see him lying there dead that raised Lazarus from the grave; to see him wanting life that gave life to men and angels; and all for thy sake, O believing communicant!

And then, how moving were the circumstances of his passion! Remember how shamefully the Lord of glory was put to death, how he was stripped and hung naked before all Israel, and before the sun. And where was it? even at Jerusalem, which he had honoured with his presence, taught with his preachings, astonished with his miracles, and bewailed with his tears. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," said he, "how often would I have gathered you, but ye would not! O if thou hadst known in this thy day!" What place in Jerusalem was it? "Without the gates," in Calvary, among the stinking bones of vile malefactors. When was it? At the passover, a time of great concourse of all the Jews and proselytes; a time when they should receive the figure, they reject the substance; when they should kill and eat the sacramental lamb in faith and thankfulness, they kill the immaculate Lamb of God, our true passover, in cruelty

and contempt. With whom? Even in the midst of two thieves, as if he had been the captain of thieves. How great was the disgrace and contempt that was poured on the glorious Redeemer of Israel! Behold he who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, is himself made equal with robbers and malefactors. Jeremiah laments it in Israel's case, as a piece of the most reproachful treatment, that princes were hanged up by their hands; Lam. v. 12. Oh, thus was the Prince of the kings of the earth treated for our sakes: and shall not we be deeply affected with it?

III. Another suitable subject of meditation at the Lord's table, is the willingness of our Redeemer to undergo all these sufferings for us. He was nowise importuned or compelled, but most freely undertook to pay the elect's debt; Psalm xl. 7, 8, "Then said I, Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will." As if he had said, Father, I see no other is able to pay the debt of these poor bankrupts. The Levitical priests, for all the beasts they have killed, and all the sacrifices they have offered these many hundreds of years, they have not been able to pay so much as one farthing of the elect's debt to this day; it is entirely owing still. "Sacrifice and offerings thou wouldst not;" I see these will not do; but I know what will; then said he, "Lo, I come;" I'll be Surety, and I will do the work effectually; but I must leave the glory of heaven for a time. Then farewell, Father, for thirty-three years; farewell all my angels and all my saints, till I come back again; I must go and relieve these perishing souls, and I will do it to purpose. The Lord saith to us, by that wise man Solomon, "Be not surety for any man;" but, saith Christ, Though I give that advice to others, yet I will not take it to myself; I will be Surety for many men, yea, for strangers, though my very garments should be taken away for it; my heart bleeds for them; I cannot see them thrown into an eternal prison, when I am able to pay their debt; I will go and pay it for them. Well, when time came to pay the debt, did he begin to rue the bargain, when he found the debt great, and the payment heavy? Did he shun his creditors as many men do? No; he is as willing to pay the elect's debt, as God to exact it. "With desire," says he, "have I desired to eat this passover;" because now the term of payment which I have long looked for is come. One

might have thought, for as frank as he is in undertaking, yet stay till he once taste the bitter cup he is to drink, he will perhaps change his mind, and begin to shrink from it. No, no; the taste he had got of the cup's brim, made him thirst the more earnestly for the very dregs of it, that he might get his poor elect pent altogether beyond the danger of it; Luke xiii. 59, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" It is a terrible black cloud that hangs over my people's heads; I long for its breaking upon me their Surety, that I may get them safe and out of all hazard. And Peter drew a sword to defend his Master, and prevent his suffering: Hold thy hand, saith he to Peter, no swords; the cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? It is a bitter cup indeed, I find it from the large draught I have taken of it just now in the garden; but though it be bitter, yet it is just; I have undertaken it as the elect's Surety, and, Peter, will you hinder a man to pay his debt? What then would become of all my elect's souls, and of your soul among the rest? If this cup be death to me, it would be eternal damnation to you. I have legions of angels ready to rescue me, if I needed them; they are all looking on, and waiting my orders; but keep your posts, ye angels, come none of you to my assistance; let no man draw a sword, let none of my disciples offer to interpose: for I am resolved to pay debt, I will lay down my life for my sheep. Let Jonah then be cast into the sea, and ye shall be safe. Oh! what a willing sacrifice was our Redeemer! He is content to swim in a sea of wrath for the space of thirty-three years, and never desires deliverance till the sea is perfectly calm, and his elect out of hazard of being swallowed up.

Consider how he quickened the traitor, Judas, and bade him make despatch, when he was going about his bloody work. He sung a hymn when he was going to the garden to be apprehended. He casts himself in the persecutors' way; goes forth to meet them, and boldly presents himself to them, and, as if they were too slow in apprehending him, he quickens them to it, by telling them twice over he was the man they sought. And then remember how willing he was to let malefactors' hands be laid on his innocent hands; hands that never did evil, hands that never stole any thing, that never shed blood, nay, hands

that healed diseases, cured the lame, fed the hungry, and loosed our fetters. But what need was there for binding so willing a prisoner? He was to make no struggle, no resistance, but was like a lamb led to the slaughter without opening his mouth. O but he is willing to be bound for your sakes! Father, says he, bind me and loose them; let me be the ram caught in the thickets; slay me and save them. All their ills, all their debts, all their deserts be upon me; as Paul said to Philemon concerning Onesimus, Philem. 18, "If they have wronged thee, or owe thee ought, put that on my account:" charge it on me, take payment and satisfaction from me.

Again, when he was before the high priest accused, and witnesses laid against him, he would not say a word in his own defence; though they could prove nothing, yet he desired not to be released. Though he was entirely innocent of crime or fault before the world, yet he knew he was guilty by imputation and voluntary substitution, and therefore he holds his peace. Seeing he was liable before God as a Surety, he would not hinder the payment, but willingly submits to the hardest conditions for our relief. Though wicked Pilate was convinced of his innocence, and sought to save his life, yet he sought it not himself; hence we read how Pilate scourged Christ very sore, with sharp-plaited cords, and then brought him forth to the people, to see if their hearts would relent when they saw him all bleeding, saying, "Behold the man." Surely, thinks Pilate, when they see his furrowed back and bloody shoulders, they will be ready to say, Poor man! thou art ill enough handled already for any ill thou hast done. But Oh! he knew no better; justice was not satisfied, and these hell-hounds were not satisfied - they must have his life, his heart's blood, or nothing. And your loving Saviour, O believer, says amen to it: you shall have it, I will die, I will be a sacrifice for sin, I will satisfy my Father's justice to the uttermost, I will have my beloved bride out of danger: I will not leave one farthing of the debt for my people to pay.

Next, observe how willingly he took on the heavy cross upon his bleeding shoulders to carry it to the place of execution, though his strength was very much spent already with watching, wrestling, buffeting, scourging, and loss of blood. O what a sight do you think was our Lord Jesus going forth out of the gates of Jerusalem with his

heavy cross and your sins on his back ; and like to fall under the burden as he went ! How weak was he in body, and weary in soul, ere he got to the top of mount Calvary ! And what saw he before him as he was climbing that mount ? Nothing but a cursed death, and a black cloud of God's wrath. Yea, he had a load of wrath on his back that was far heavier than the cross he was bearing : Oh ! it was no wonder he staggered, foundered, or fell under his burden : so that Simon the Cyrenian was compelled by his enemies to carry the light end of the tree behind him, lest he had died before he came to the top of the mount. But our loving Jesus, though he was spent and weary in his body, yet forward and willing was he in his mind to go and be made a sacrifice for us ; and therefore up the mount he will go, though he sees justice, devils, and wicked men at the top of it, waiting to fasten on him when he comes : but, seeing there was no other way to deliver his lost sheep, he will go and meet them. Well, O communicant, observe and take notice of your Saviour's steps as he went up the mount, with the burden you laid upon his back ; follow him all the way with the eye of faith ; though it was cursedly heavy, yet how patiently doth he bear it ! He complains not, he opens not his mouth ; he will not bid you or any of the elect lend him a lift ; for he knows you are not able to bear the least grain of weight of his burden, it would break your backs, and crush you to hell for ever : he will bear it all alone ; only he will have you to notice him with the eye of faith, and to remember him with love and gratitude.

IV. Let the blessed effects and benefits of Christ's sufferings be the subject of your thoughts at this time. Hereby justice is satisfied, and believers are redeemed ; the fire of divine anger is quenched, the mouth of hell is stopt, the ocean of wrath dried up, the raging sea quelled, the roaring lion vanquished, the old serpent is unstinged, and his venomous head bruised ; the law is disarmed of its thunders and curses, and its loud clamours against us silenced ; our debts are paid, and a discharge obtained ; an angry God becomes a reconciled Father, and both grace and glory are purchased. Hereby our putrefying sores are cleansed, our deadly plagues cured, God's beautiful image restored, slaves of Satan become sons of God, heirs of hell become heirs of heaven, rebels against heaven become favourites of God, and traitors

get access to his throne. Hereby the gates of paradise are opened, the flaming sword removed, glorious mansions prepared, and the crown of life purchased for believers. It was not for nought that our Redeemer groaned and wept, sweat and struggled, bled and died. These great deliverances and mercies were deadly hard to bring forth. They made our Redeemer cry out, to the amazement of angels and horror of men, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But now it is finished, his agony is over, the deliverance is wrought, and redemption is purchased: justice now saith, It is enough, I am fully satisfied with the Surety's payment, I demand no more: the sacrifice is of a sweet-smelling savour to me, and it perfumes all the elect's persons and performances. Nay, so efficacious and acceptable were these sufferings, that the virtue of them reaches back to the beginning of the world, and extends forward to the end of it. God was so well pleased with them, that he accepted of them as a ransom for elect souls four thousand years before he endured them. The Surety's payment was so acceptable, that he took many thousands to heaven before the debt was paid, upon Christ's parole that he should pay: for all the saints went to heaven this way. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This God declared from heaven again and again, *q. d.* Many a time have the elect grieved me; many a provocation have their sins given me, yea, have their duties given me; but I am well pleased with my Son: their Surety hath satisfied me for them all.

V. You ought to meditate on the impulsive cause of Christ's suffering on his part. His free love was the only motive; it was this that caused him to take upon him the heavy burden of our sins, that would have sunk us into the bottomless pit. As often as we come to the Lord's table to partake of these elements, we should do it in remembrance of Christ's unspeakable and incomprehensible love to us: we should never perform this holy duty without admiration and astonishment at the thoughts of our Saviour's infinite love and undeserved compassion towards us, in that he laid down his life to save ours, who had rebelled against him. Our Redeemer well knoweth the evil nature and disposition of man, that he is apt to forget his best friends, and to turn unthankful for the greatest benefits ever he received; and therefore

he consults our eternal good, by enjoining us to solemnize this ordinance in remembrance of that immense love he expressed towards us in his death and sufferings. Beside what I have formerly said of your meditating of, and admiring the love of Christ, before your coming to his table, I do exhort you, now you are at the table, to fall a wondering at it afresh, for this is most proper work for you at such a time.

O the love of Christ, that passeth knowledge! Where shall I begin my thoughts on this subject? and when begun, how shall I make an end? Thy love, Lord, is ancient; thou lovedst us first, and that when there was "no eye to pity;" thou tookst not on thee, the "nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham;" they are bound with chains of darkness, whilst thou art drawing us with cords of love. Yea, thou lovedst us when enemies. To have spared our lives, had been unexpected, undeserved mercy to us. Who finds his enemy and lets him go away? But, Lord, thou hast found me in mine enmity, and hast pitied me; yea, when my hand was lifted up against thee, thine arms have been opened to embrace me. Nay, thou hast opened thy very heart to lodge thy professed enemies, who have trod thee under foot. Thy bowels yearned towards them who raked in them with their bloody hands. Thy heart burned with affection towards them that cruelly pierced it. "Herein Christ hath commended his love to us, that, while we were sinners, Christ died for us." O astonishing love! that the general should die for the soldier, the physician for the patient, the master for the servant, the shepherd for the sheep, the innocent for the guilty, the just for the unjust, the prince for the rebel, the Lord of glory for the children of disobedience: he that is without all sin, for him that was without all righteousness; yea, the Creator for the creature, God for man, the righteous Judge for the condemned malefactor. O love without a parallel! for the Judge to put himself in the malefactor's clothes and room, and suffer death for him; for the blessed Son of God to interpose his own innocent breast to receive these mortal wounds due to us. Behold God, all-sufficient, exposed to hunger and thirst, grief and weariness, reproach and indignities of all sorts: behold the world's Saviour wounded, mangled, and killed by ungrateful man, whom he came to save! Glorious Saviour, what love was this, that thou should become "a

man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" that from the womb to the tomb, from the cradle to the cross, thy whole life should be a continued martyrdom: that thou shouldst be content to be born among beasts, live among murderers, and die among thieves; and all to obtain a place among the blessed for us! O the unfathomable love of Jesus! His name is love, his nature is love, his words were love, and his actions were love: he preached love, he practised love, he lived in love, he was sick of love, nay, he died for love. The apostle might well call it a known unknown love; Eph. iii. 19. We may feel it, but O we cannot fathom it. Jacob showed great love to Rachel, in his enduring the heat by day, and the frosts by night, for her. But our lovely Bridegroom showed far greater love to his spouse, in undergoing the cursed, painful, and shameful death of the cross, for her. It is reported of the pelican, that when her young ones are stung with some poisonous serpent, she beats her breast with her beak, till the warm blood gusheth out, which they suck and recover. We are all stung mortally by the old serpent the devil; but behold the love of our heavenly pelican, he lets out his heart's blood to recover us!

O communicant, remember this love, seeing he requires it at this time; "This do in remembrance of me." O remember Christ, for he did not forget you. He minded you at his last supper, he made his testament, and put you in it, and left every believer a good legacy. At his death he minded you more than he minded himself. In his last prayer, he put up many a petition for you, but few for himself. In the garden, on the cross, and in the grave, his poor, lost sheep were still in his mind. He minded you both day and night; many a night's sleep Christ's sheep took from him, thinking on them, and pleading for them. O that was a remarkable night's sleep that Christ wanted, when he sweat blood in the garden for you; that was a night never to be forgotten; think on it now. When would you a night's sleep for Christ, thinking on his love, wondering at his sufferings, and pleading for an interest therein? O seek to make it up now, and say, O the breadth and length, O the height and depth of the love of Christ! Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? What is he that thou shouldst magnify him, and set thine heart upon him?

Strange! that thou shouldst set thine heart upon wretches, so as to give the glorious Son of thy love to suffer all the curses of thy law, and vials of thy wrath, to make us, who are children of wrath, yea, heirs of the curse, and firebrands of hell, to become children of God, heirs of the blessing, and of eternal life. Surely while you are thus musing on the love of God, your hearts, like David's, should wax hot within you, and the fire should burn; nay the flame of love to God should break out in the most lively and active manner; now your "spikenard should send forth the smell thereof;" now the sweet odour of your graces should fill all the house.

VI. The evil of sin, which was the procuring cause of Christ's sufferings, should also be the subject of your thoughts at the Lord's table. He had no sin of his own, but our sins were laid upon him; and divine justice, finding them there, took vengeance on our Surety to the uttermost. Oh! Lord, our sins were the principal actors of that woful tragedy; they were the traitors which, by the hands of Judas, delivered him up to be crucified; Pilate, the Jews, the Romans, were but the executioners of our sins. Our sins, with clamours more importunate than all the Jewish rabble, cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him." What foolish, inconsistent creatures are we, that bewail the event, but redress not the cause! Alas! we, naturally, have as great enmity against his image, as they had against his person. They grieved him in his body, we in his spirit: they opened his wounds, we make them bleed afresh. Neither had they got the least power to touch him, if it had not been our sins that made him obnoxious to wrath. Oh! who was it that armed the Jews and Romans against him? Who put the sword in justice's hands? Who forced these groans and bloody sweats from my Redeemer? Ah! who but I! my sins, my pride, my unbelief, my atheism, my covetousness, my malice, my lying, cheating, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, these raised the storm of wrath against my Surety. Blame not Judas, Herod, or Pilate, the Jews, or Romans, so much as my sins; nay, I am the Judas that betrayed him, the Herod that mocked him, the Pilate that condemned him, the executioner that drove in the nails, I the soldier that pierced him.

O my soul! behold thy Saviour now hanging on the cross for thy sins, and yet saying, "Weep not for me,"

that endures this torture, "but weep for yourself," that causes it; behold the cruelty of thy sins. Look through these gaping wounds into my heart, pierced first by love, next by sorrows, and then by a spear for you. Be persuaded what an evil and bitter thing sin is to me. See how it rakes into my side, and tears my very heart; canst thou love or harbour that which used me thus? You say you are my friends, and will you not take my part against this deadly enemy? Have not all these wounds mouths enough to persuade you to fall out with sin? Oh! will you hug my enemy, tear open my wounds, and crucify me afresh? O, communicant! let your heart answer, No, Lord, I will never requite thy kindness; so I will never account that light which made my Saviour's soul heavy unto death; that shall not be sweet to me, that was so bitter to him; that shall never be my joy, that made Christ a man of sorrows. O, shall not these sins be forsaken of me, that made him to be forsaken of God? Shall ever they be suffered to live with me, that would not suffer Christ to live in the world?

O what stupid creatures are we, if we do not now stand astonished at the heinousness and hideousness of our sins, for which no atonement could be made but by the bitter passion and agonies of the Son of God. Shall we not say, Surely there must be more in sin than men commonly reckon. It could be no small matter for which the beloved Son of God endured such horrible and dreadful torments. O heavy, dead weight of my sins, that pressed down my strong Redeemer to the ground, yea, pressed him down who upheld the whole fabric of the creation by the word of his power; Heb. i. 3; and who, without the least pain, could have borne millions of worlds more. O bitter and cursed sin! thou shalt be crucified this day, that crucified my innocent Saviour: couldst thou ever have been guilty of a more horrid deed than murdering of the Lord of glory? I will not rest this day till I have revenged my Saviour's blood upon thee. Say now of sin, as the church said of the daughter of Babylon, that enemy and persecutor of Christ mystical; Psalm cxxxvii. 8, 9, "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served Christ; happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones."

VII. Think on the holiness and justice of God manifested against sin, and adore the same at this time. You have other mirrors and bright looking-glasses in Scripture for representing the same to you, such as the casting down of the angels from heaven, the drowning of the old world, the burning of Sodom, the rejection of the Jews; but none so clearly show forth sin's evil, and God's spotless holiness, and inexorable justice against sin, as do the death and sufferings of our Redeemer. Come near, and hearken to the raging billows of God's indignation, dashing against the Rock of our salvation, and behold God's implacable hatred against sin. Many a greater storm and hurricane of wrath did he endure, to keep the sea of divine wrath from overflowing you. Our Rock groaned, trembled, and sweat blood; he cried, prayed, and entreated; yet divine justice would not hear, nor abate him one stripe. "Awake, O sword of the Lord," cut him off; let him die, saith justice, seeing he stands Surety for men's sins. O here is a greater evidence of the inexorableness of justice, and God's implacable wrath against sin, than if he had hurled all the rocks of the creation into the midst of the sea, or the whole world, full of men and angels, into hell. O you that make light of sin, go to the rock in Horeb, go to Gethsemane, go to Mount Calvary, go to a communion-table, and see what Christ endured for our sins; hear his heavy groans, and behold the blood standing above his garments. O communicants! tremble at sin, and come under the shadow of this Rock; run into the clefts of it; and though you hear the roaring and dashing of this terrible sea upon your Rock, yet you are safe here; a drop shall not reach you.

Finally, you ought at this time to have some thoughts of the marriage-supper of the Lamb above, whereof this table is an emblem and representation. Here in the wilderness we get a foretaste of the good things of the promised land, to sharpen our appetites after the Canaan above, where those first fruits do grow, and are fully ripe. O what a glorious and well-furnished table will that be where the church of the first-born will be all gathered in one general assembly, and sit down together with Christ? O where are the looks and longings we should have after that heavenly feast? Awake, my soul, from this dark, deceitful, and vexing world; O be not in love with thy disease, thy fetters, and thy calamities;

join not with those that take up their rest on this side Jordan, on this side heaven, and who say, "It is good for us to be here;" but with those heavenly pilgrims who say, "Arise, let us depart, this is not our rest, for it is polluted." Lament your distance from God: "Wo is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar; that I remain in this sinful, polluting place, among a strange people, and am so long kept from my Father's house above. "O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest: lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness," that I might be free from sins, snares, and temptations, and might have free access to enjoy God. "O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death," which so often troubles, disturbs, entangles, and hinders me from my duty?

So much for the subjects we ought to meditate on at the Lord's table. I come, in the next place,

*Secondly.* To speak of those graces which are to be employed and exercised at the Lord's time; such as, faith, repentance, love, spiritual appetite, and thankfulness. Now is the time, O communicant, that all your graces should be stirred up to the greatest liveliness; and therefore, do all you can to excite them to it; chide with them when languishing or dull, and say, What, can you not watch with my dearest Saviour one hour?

I. In the first place, the grace of faith should be most active, for it is most necessary at this time. Faith may say to thee, O communicant at the table, as Christ said to his disciples, "Without me ye can do nothing." Faith is the eye that sees Christ, the hand that receives him, the mouth that feeds upon him. Let faith's eyes be now opened, to see the great sight of Christ crucified on the cross. Do now as Moses when he saw the bush burning, *Exod. iii. 3.* "I will turn aside and see this great sight;" surely you cannot see a greater. Behold the rock of our salvation smitten, to let the water of life come forth to us. Come see him smitten by the rod of Moses, *i. e.* by the rod of the law, whose minister Moses was; with all the curses and maledictions of the law denounced against us, *Gal. iii. 13.* Yea, come see him smitten by many hands, by the rod of Moses, by the rod of justice, by the rod of devils, by the rod of the Jews, by the rod of the Romans, by the rod of your sins. Come see him smitten in his

head with thorns, in his hands with nails, in his side with a spear, in his heart with sorrows, yea, in his whole soul with the wrath of an angry God. O deep, deep was our Rock smitten, before the water of life could come forth to heal us; according to Isa. liii. 5—8. "He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities—for the transgression of my people was he stricken, and by his stripes we are healed."

Now let faith look sharply out for Christ at the table. Rest not in the bread and wine, but look beyond these: go a little further, and see if you can espy Christ himself. Let the language of your heart at this time be, "Saw ye him whom thy soul loveth?" Say now to the Lord, as the Greeks to Philip, "Sir, we would see Jesus;" Lord, I would now desire to see Jesus Christ; neither the word nor prayers, ministers nor elements, will content me, without a sight of Christ himself. Mind what Isaac told his father on Mount Moriah: "Father, behold here is the wood and the fire; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" So do thou look up at the table to thy heavenly Father, and say, 'Father, behold here is the minister, here is the word, here is the bread and wine; but where is the body and blood of my Saviour? Where is the Lamb for a sacrifice? Father, where is the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world? Alas! all is nothing to me, if he be away.' Let faith look up, and say to Christ, "Make haste, my beloved, be thou like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of spices. Make no tarrying, O my God; O when wilt thou come to me?"

When Mary came to the sepulchre, looked in and saw the linen, but not the Lord, she presently fell a weeping. Oh! said she, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." My Lord is away, and I know not where to find him. When our tender-hearted Saviour heard such a moving and mournful complaint, he hastened to her, and gave her a gracious meeting. So, when thou seest the linen and the elements, but not the Lord Jesus, then be not satisfied, but dart up thy complaints to heaven; 'Lord, I came not to see the linen, I came not for the bread and wine, but I came to see Jesus; Oh, Lord, what shall I do? They have taken away my Lord, and I know no where to find him. Ah, what is the word to me without Christ, but as a condit without water? What are the elements to me, but as a

cup without wine? Oh, Lord, what wilt thou give me, if I go from thy table Christless? O if there were such sights, such breathings coming from thy heart, thou mightest be confident Christ would hear them, and make haste to meet with thee, and bless thee.

Awake faith, O communicant, at this time; behold Christ, apply his benefits. Here a believer may find enough in the wounds and blood of Christ, by which he may resolve all his doubts, scatter his fears, supply all his spiritual wants, and find a remedy against all his soul-distempers, by a believing application thereof to himself. When thou puttest forth the hand of the body, see that thou also put forth the hand of thy faith, to receive the body and blood of Christ. Do like Joseph of Arimathea: come to Christ crucified, take him down from the cross, and lay him in the new tomb of thy heart. Now give a hearty allegiance to him as thy undoubted sovereign. And remember, faith, if true, must have two hands, one to receive Christ, and another to give the soul to Christ: see that both hands be now employed, both to take and give.

And especially, make use of faith's mouth to "suck honey from the rock," to derive supplies from Christ to thy soul's necessities. Observe what God directed Moses, *Exod. xvii. 6.* "Behold I will stand before thee upon the rock in Horeb, and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink." Would you have drink and supplies from Christ for thy spiritual refreshment? then smite the Rock, act faith on Christ. At the table, it should be a man's wisdom, which was Moses' error, to smite this Rock oftener than once, *Numb. xx. 11.* "With his rod he smote the rock twice, and the waters came out abundantly." So do you smite the Rock twice, again and again; put forth many acts of faith at this time.

II. The grace of repentance and godly sorrow for sin should be exercised at this time. O communicant, canst thou now look on him whom thou hast pierced by thy sins, and not mourn and be in bitterness for them? Canst thou see the Son of God hanging naked, and bleeding on a tree, upon the top of mount Calvary, as a sacrifice for thy sins, and not be grieved for the cause? O take a fixed look of him now, and let your eye affect your heart. Behold these hands that swayed the sceptre of heaven, now

nailed to the tree of reproach; behold these feet that trampled on all the powers of hell, and made his enemies his footstool, now nailed to the footstool of the cross. O did the earth tremble and shake, the rocks rend, the graves open, and the heavens turn dark at this sight? and will not our rocky hearts rend, and our dead souls be affected with this sight? Surely the hardest heart among us may now melt, and the dryest eye now drop a tear. O shall the Son of God so sweat and bleed for us, and we not weep for ourselves? Shall we see our sins pierce his head with thorns, his hands with nails, and his side with a spear, and yet look on this with unpierced hearts? Oh, our sins did envenom these thorns, these nails, and that spear. We, and none but we, were the evil beasts that devoured this Joseph; we the bloody executioners that tormented the glorious Redeemer; and, shall not our hearts bleed therefore?

O communicant, so behold Christ in the sacrament as the Virgin Mary, his mother, beheld him on the cross: "Woman, (says Christ,) behold thy son." And how did she behold him? Simon tells her, Luke ii. 25, "That a sword should pierce through her soul." Now was the time that the sword did pierce through her soul, when she beheld him pierced on the cross; that sight was like a sword through her heart; so, when we see Christ pierced in the sacrament, it should be like a sword or dagger in our hearts. Observe what David said, when he saw the people slaughtered by the angel's sword, 2 Sam. xxiv. 17. "Lo, I have sinned, and have done wickedly; but as for these sheep, what have they done?" So say you at this time, 'Lord, I have sinned, I have done wickedly; but as for this innocent immaculate Lamb, what hath he done? It is I that have sinned, but it is thou, O Lord Jesus, that hast suffered. It was my cursed lusts, my unbelief, my pride, my malice, my covetousness, &c. that put thee to death: I have eaten the sour grapes, but thy teeth were set on edge.' O what a sweet temper were it to behold Christ with a weeping eye and a melting heart! Oh, shall we not so much as shed tears for those sins for which we see Christ shedding his blood?

It was laid to the charge of those unkind husbands, Mal. ii. 13, that by their unkindness they caused their wives, when they should have been cheerful in God's

service, to "cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out; insomuch that he regarded not the offering any more, nor received it with good will at their hands." But how happy were it for us, if we could be so affected with our unkindness to Christ our husband, that we could cover the Lord's table with our tears, with weeping and crying out! Then, surely, in this case, the Lord would regard our service the more, and receive our communicating with good will at our hands. Ah, rocky hearts, harder than the nether mill-stone, that cannot dissolve into tears at the sight of so sad a spectacle as the sight of Christ hanging crucified on the cross for our sins. Oh! shall we see Christ's precious blood spilt on the earth, running on the ground, and the ground drinking it up, and our hearts not rend therefore: O let us call for tears, for mourning hearts, and say, 'O that mine head were tears, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep for a slain Lord!' Smite, Lord, thou canst bring water out of the rocks, and turn the flint into a standing pool. O that my flinty heart may be touched by the Spirit of God, that the waters may gush out abundantly: Oh! when will my heart melt, if not now? See, now deep calleth unto deep, deep sufferings in Christ for deep sorrow in me. David's kindness made even a Saul lift up his voice and weep; and will not Christ's kindness, which is infinitely greater, make me drop some silent tears? Was my Saviour's body broken to let his blood out? and shall not my heart be broken to let it in? May I now receive a bleeding Saviour with a broken heart.

III. Love is a grace most necessary at this feast: Christ's infinite love should now have a return of love from you: surely now, when you are musing on Christ's love, your heart, like David's, should wax hot, and the fire of love should burn. O believer, Christ died of love to you; and will you not be so much as sick of love to him? it would be a sweet and comfortable sickness, to be sick of love to him who died of love to you. You are now come to the fountain of love, you are now at Christ's pierced side. O look in and see his bleeding heart; see how it beats and pants with love, and see how love flows out in streams of blood, to cleanse you from your sins. And will not this lovely sight melt your affections, and warm your cold heart to love him? O behold princely

Jesus, the world's Saviour, our lovely Bridegroom, mounted on a bloody cross upon the top of Mount Calvary, for all nations to see him and flock to him; O what an engaging sight is this! Since that Mount was first created, it never produced such a tree, or such precious fruit as the Lord of glory hanging on the tree of the cross planted there. This tree of life made Mount Calvary a lovely paradise that day, notwithstanding of all the malefactors' bones which lay scattered upon it.

Now, communicants, can you look upon such a sight, and not have your hearts inflamed with love? Surely a crucified Jesus lift up on the cross, with his arms stretched out to embrace lost sinners, is the most drawing and attractive sight in the world; for he said himself, John xii. 32. "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me;" *i. e.* all sorts of men, both Jew and Gentile. A crucified Jesus is a loadstone of strange virtue, and hath drawn some thousands of iron hearts to him at one sermon. Now, he is lift up on high, upon the pole of the cross and of the sacrament, that you may look to him. Yea, his face and eyes are towards you, O communicants! and his voice is, "Behold me, behold me; look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth. Poor sinners of Scotland, of Britain, one of the far-off islands, and utmost ends of the earth, I have turned my back on the Jews, for they will not be drawn to me; and my face towards you, that you may see me, and flock to me." O will not your hearts be moved and drawn by this lovely sight of a crucified Redeemer, dying with love in his heart, and smiles in his looks towards you? He was most lovely when he was on the cross, and now he is most lovely when he is on the throne. O behold King Jesus with the crown of thorns wherewith his enemies crowned him in the day he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief for you: doth that sight affect your hearts with grief, and make you sad? Then come, behold King Solomon with the crown of glory wherewith his Father crowned him when he finished his work, and sat "down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Now he is clothed with light, and shines brighter than the sun. Oh! will not your hearts love him whom all the angels and saints in heaven do adore, and are ravished with his beauty? His high honour and exaltation above doth not in the least alter his affections, or make him for-

get his people: no, he loves all believers as dearly as ever. How oft doth he call them in the song, "My sister, my spouse!" The nearest affinity in the world is spouse, and the nearest consanguinity is sister; to show that Christ's affection is like that of the nearest relations; and shall not Christ's great love be answered with love again? O never give Christ cause to complain of you, as Paul of the Corinthians, "The more I love you, the less am I beloved," 2 Cor. ii. 15.

O then, awake and excite your love to Christ, and say, 'Lord, thou art infinitely lovely: though my heart loves thee not as it ought to do, lovely and amiable art thou in all steps of thy humiliation; lovely in thy birth, lovely in thy life, lovely in thy death, lovely with the crown of thorns on thy head, and lovely with the cross on thy back; lovely in the garden, and lovely on mount Calvary; lovely with the nails in thy hands, and lovely when the spear was thrust in thy side; and lovely art thou now with the crown of glory on thy head; nay, thou art altogether lovely. O for more love to my Saviour.' The apostle, when ravished with the love of Christ, cries out, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be anathema maranatha." O what a cold, unnatural heart must that be, that hath no love to this lovely one! O communicant, love him now, when you have seen such an engaging sight of his love: love him dearly, love him entirely; love him above all; love him more than all. And if you love him, then keep his commandments; delight to please him; love his ordinances; love his spirit; love his command; love his people; and love his very cross for his sake.

IV. At this time you ought to awake and excite your spiritual appetite after Christ and the benefits of his death. You are come to a full feast, an inexhaustible treasure, and the master of it allows you to partake thereof to the full: there is nothing wanting then, but a lively feeling of wants, and spiritual hunger; had you this, all would be well; for Christ "fills the hungry with good things." If there be any poor drooping communicants at the table, who are discouraged under a sense of their poverty and emptiness, I may say to them, as Jacob to his drooping sons in a time of great scarcity of food, Gen. xlii. 12. "Why do you look one upon another?" Ye are poor melancholy creatures, all involved in the same calamity

and distress ; ye may well look to one another, but one of you cannot help another. Well, I have good news to tell you, as Jacob told his sons, " Behold I have heard that there is corn in Egypt ;" there is bread enough in your Father's house, sufficiency of grace in Christ Jesus for all your wants. Oh drooping communicant, take heart, and hasten to your brother Joseph ; your elder Brother Christ is the Lord of the country, and hath the command of all the store-houses in the land ; he will fill your sacks as much as you can carry. Are thy wants many ? He has infinite wealth. Hast thou no money to buy, no worth to purchase ? Good news ! he sells " without money and without price : whosoever will, may come and drink of the water of life freely." Poor soul, camest thou hither for bread ? thy gracious Saviour will not give thee a stone. He took notice of thy serious preparation for the feast ; and do you think he will frustrate thine expectation at it ? Can you give any instances that ever he sent a hungry soul empty away ? No, this would be contrary to his faithful promise. I may say to thee, as the disciples to the blind man, " Be of good cheer, he calleth for thee ;" and if he call for thee, he will not send thee empty away. Come away, then, hungry soul, to a full Redeemer, and get all your wants supplied, your desires satisfied. What would you have ? What is thy petition, and what is thy request ? Would you have riches, honours, profits, pleasures ? You have them all here. Would you have all your five senses satisfied at once ? Come, partake of the feast your Redeemer hath provided for you. Would you have the sense of seeing satisfied ? Then, says he, " Look unto me, behold me," your dying, yet ever living Saviour. Would you have your sense of hearing satisfied ? Then, saith he, " incline your ear and hearken unto me ;" hear the sweet charming voice of your Saviour on the cross saying, " It is finished." Would you have the sense of tasting satisfied ? Then, saith he, " O taste and see that God is good." Would you have the sense of touching satisfied ? O then, says he, " Reach hither thy finger, and feel the print of the nails : reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side." Would you have the sense of smelling satisfied ? Then come to him whose " garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia," and " whose name is like ointment poured forth." O what a matchless Person is this, that can so richly supply

all your needs! I tell you again, if you go away without supply, it will be for want of a lively sense of your needs, and of panting desires after Christ and his fulness.

Awake holy desires and thirstings of soul, and say, 'Lord, let not the needy be forgotten, nor the expectation of the poor perish for ever. Let not a thirsty soul perish at the wells of salvation. O happy were I, if at this time I could get a sealed pardon of my sins! O blessed is he whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sin is covered! Lord, whatever thou deniest me in the world, do not deny me this choice blessing. O for a token for good at this time out of Christ's own hand! May I receive a plentiful effusion of the graces of his Spirit into my heart. O that my lusts and corruptions may be mortified and subdued! May I be enabled to do all my duties better than I have done. May I be more watchful over my heart, my tongue, and all my ways, than ever I have been. O that my soul may depart much bettered, much revived, comforted, and strengthened for this holy ordinance.'

V. Awake your thankfulness to God at this time for redeeming love. Join with the Psalmist, and say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name! Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits unto me? Let me speak of the glorious honour of his majesty, and declare his wondrous works." You should now be in Mary's frame, to sing and say, as in Luke i. 46. "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour;" and in Zechariah's frame, to say with him, Luke i. 68. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people." The ancients called the Lord's supper the Eucharist, *i. e.* the thanksgiving, because the great design of it is to keep the thankful remembrance of God's redeeming love; and believers, in partaking of it, should, with their whole souls, give thanks unto God for his unspeakable gift, and sing glory to God in the highest. And, for our example herein, our Redeemer both began and ended this institution with the giving of thanks and singing hymns of praise. The Jews, at their passover, did sing the 113th psalm, with the five following psalms, which they called *The Great Hallelujah*. A Christian should in every thing, and at all times, give thanks; but at the sacrament the great Hallelujah must be sung. If ever the heart be

tuned for the work of praise, it should be now ; for greater matter for it you cannot have on this side of heaven, than on this occasion. The great exhortation the ancients gave at the communion-table, was, *Sursam corda*—up with your hearts, communicants ; elevate them to God in thankfulness and praise. Invite the angels, and the whole creation, to help you to bless God for Jesus Christ, the mercy of mercies.

*Some further Meditations on the Sacramental Elements, Actions, and Words.*

BESIDES what I have said, the sacramental elements, actions, and words, may afford suitable subjects of meditation to communicants while they sit at the Lord's table, and may be improved for the quickening and upstirring of the sacramental graces above-mentioned. And here I shall give some few instances for the assistance and direction of weaker Christians.

When you see the elements of bread and wine set upon the table, think on Christ's goodness and condescension, in appointing these outward signs to confirm our faith and excite our affections ; they are no costly things ; Christ would not be burdensome to his people with any of his ordinances. Think how fitly they represent the body and blood of our Redeemer. *Bread*, ere it be fit to nourish us, must be first sown, and die in the earth ; then it must be thrashed, grinded in the mill, baken in the oven, broken, and eaten : so Christ, that he might be a fit Saviour to us, was content to die, and be bruised for our sins, and scorched in the oven of his Father's wrath. Bread is the most necessary thing in the world, it strengthens man's heart, it is the staff that upholds his life : so Christ is the mercy of mercies, the most useful and necessary blessing to our starving souls. *Wine*, ere it be fit for use, must be squeezed out of the grape, and this must be trodden and bruised in the wine-press : so Christ was crushed in the wine-press of his Father's wrath, till the blessed juice of his body, his precious blood, did gush out in abundance for the redemption of our souls. No liquor so fit as wine for cheering the fainting spirits, Psal. civ. 15 ; so there is nothing can refresh the drooping soul so much as the blood of Christ.

Though bread and wine be common things of them-

selves, yet they are highly valuable in respect of their signification and ends. A little wax, though in itself of small value, yet, when affixed to a charter, it serves to confirm our right and title to a great inheritance: so these elements, when consecrated and given to us by Christ's ambassadors, are to us a seal of God's covenant, and confirm our title to all Christ's purchase.

When you see the minister take the bread, think how God did choose and take Christ from among men to be our Mediator, and a sacrifice for our sins.

When the minister sets apart, blesses, and consecrates the bread, think how God set apart and sent his Son, sanctified and furnished with all the gifts and graces needful for his mediatory office.

When you see the consecrated bread and wine exposed to open view, think how God, in his infinite mercy, hath set forth Jesus Christ as a propitiation through faith in his blood, Rom. iii. 25. Behold how evidently Christ crucified is set before your eyes. Behold the Lamb opening the seals, the seal of God's covenant, the seal of God's treasures, the seal of the fountain of life, and the seal of heaven's gates; all which were shut before, till Christ came to open them. Suppose now you hear that voice, Rev. vi. "Come and see." Open the eyes of faith, and see a great sight. What is to be seen here? You may, O communicant, see here the heinous nature of sin, the severity of divine justice, the misery of the damned, the deservings of unbelievers; you may see the devil conquered, justice satisfied, a flame of love kindled in Christ's heart that many waters could not quench; you may see the clefts of the rock opened and a sanctuary found out; you may see the preciousness of souls, the price of pardon, and the worth of heaven; Christ's body and blood, which were given for them, do show that they are things of no small value.

When you see the elements, you have cause to bless God, and rejoice at the sight of this precious sign and seal of God's covenant of grace and salvation. We should rejoice to see the rainbow in the clouds, a sign of God's covenant and promise to secure the world against a destroying deluge: much more should we joy to see the signs of God's confirming his covenant with believers, securing them against the overflowing of God's wrath. If it still rained and never a rainbow appeared, we might

have reason to fear : so if we never saw this ordinance and seal of God's covenant, we might suspect danger : but, O believer, you see God is faithful, and willing to keep covenant ; there is the rainbow appearing, a pleasing sight to a guilty sinner !

When you see the minister lay his hand on the bread, lift up your soul, and pray, ' that God may lay his hand on your diseased soul, that all your distempers may depart from you ; Lord lay hold on my soul, as the angel did upon Lot ; save me from the flames of wrath, cause me to escape out of Sodom into the mount of God, and clefts of the Rock, that I perish not.'

When you see the bread broken, think on the breaking and tormenting of Christ's body, and the bruising of his soul for our sins. He suffered a double death, one in soul, and another in body : he suffered from men and devils, but all that was nothing to what he suffered from his Father : for when men were wounding his body, the Father's hand bruised his soul, made a thousand wounds therein, and poured in a whole ocean of wrath upon him ; he brake him with breach upon breach, and overwhelmed him with one wave of vengeance upon the back of another, till all his billows went over him. This was a sad time to our Saviour, yet all these floods could not drown his love to us, nor make him quit the grip he had taken of us ; but come of him what will, his poor people must not perish ; his love to them flamed highest when his sufferings were greatest.

You should at this time desire to be in the same frame as if you had been at Golgotha, standing at the foot of the cross, and had seen the blood trickling down, and heard all the dying groans of the Lamb of God. O, shall we see the blessed Son of God, the brightness of his Father's glory, with his eyes dim, his cheeks wan, his face pale, his head bowing, his heart fainting, his side bleeding, his wounds open to shelter us, and his love streaming forth in blood to us ; I say shall we see all this, and our affections not raised, our love not kindled, and our hearts not concerned ? O what a monstrous thing will it be, to see our affections and graces at the lowest ebb, when there is a high stream-tide of the love and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ flowing towards us !

Take a view of Jesus on the cross breathing forth love to us, when he was breathing forth his last : let us look

straightly and steadfastly to him, as he did to us. Many write that he was crucified with his face towards the west : The Jews did it out of despite, as reckoning him unworthy to look on the temple and holy city, that stood on the east side of mount Calvary ; but he had a gracious meaning and design to us thereby ; and now was that word remarkably fulfilled, Psalm lxvi. 7. " His eyes behold the nations : " for now his eyes looked to us Gentiles, when he was upon the cross ! and O it was an eye of love and pity he cast then upon us : and shall not this encourage us to lift up an eye of faith to him upon the cross for healing and salvation ? Especially seeing he calls us to do it, Isa. xlv. 22. " Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. " And it is to be observed, that Christ in this call had a special eye to us in Scotland, who were then Gentiles, and are likewise among the ends of the earth. O shall we in this land and corner of the world have such a loving invitation to look to a crucified Saviour for mercy, and will we neglect it ? Behold his arms stretched out to embrace you, and will you not desire to flee into them ? Behold him bowing his head on the cross to take a view of your wounds, and whisper comfort into your ears ; behold him opening a window in his side to take you into his heart, and pouring out blood thence to redeem you, and water to cleanse you, a fountain both for your justification and sanctification.

Again, when you see the bread broken, look to Christ's wounds as an open city of refuge for thy soul, that is pursued by justice, to take sanctuary in : his wounds are laid open, that you may see into his bleeding heart, and see his yearning bowels of mercy, and hear them sounding towards you, an object of pity and spectacle of misery. Poor shelterless soul, quit all other shelters, and flee to the clefts of the Rock here opened, saying, " This is my rest, and here I will stay. "

Pray, at this time, ' Lord, may my hard heart be broken and melted, that I may in some measure be conformed to my broken Saviour. ' Or, ' Lord, break the united forces of my sins, and scatter them by thy mighty arm. '

When you see the minister offering the bread to the communicants, and hear him saying, " Take ye, eat ye, " &c. think how freely God offers his Son, and Christ

offers himself to be ours ; think how you see him at the head of the table, making offer of himself to you, saying, Take me, and the whole purchase of my blood ; take my sealed testament, and all my legacies in it ; take a sealed pardon of all your sins, and a sealed right to eternal life.

When you receive the bread into your hand, see that you stretch forth the hand of faith to receive and embrace Christ crucified, as your bleeding High Priest, to make atonement for you. Say, with your heart, ‘Content, Lord ; even so I take thee, and seal a covenant with thee, I clasp about thee as mine ; “ I believe, Lord, help my unbelief.”’ If Christ be not received by faith in this ordinance, there is nothing done but what is ill. O will you come to this table, and receive the bread of the Lord, and not receive the bread, the Lord ? O it will be sad, it will be bitter at death or judgment : when you come to die, you will cry, “ Lord, receive my soul ;” well, may not Christ answer you, “ I will just receive your soul as you received my body in the sacrament, when you were entreated, and that was not at all.” O then, consider what Christ has done for you, and the absolute necessity you stand in need of him, and receive him into your souls. O will ye not accept of a bruised Lord, a bruised friend, when he is knocking with the cross on his back, the nails in his hands, and spear in his side ! Can you find in your hearts to hold him at the door in this posture ? Will you not open your hearts to him, who opened his side to you ?

When you are making use of bread, praise and magnify God for providing this heavenly manna to keep your soul from perishing ; bless him for this feast, and feed on it, that you may live : apply Christ and his benefits, for the nourishing your souls and strengthening your graces ; bless him for this noble contrivance and undertaking. Rejoice in Christ, that hath found out a way, by his death, to reconcile an angry God to you, and procure you access to his table, that you may feast with him. With what joy and thankfulness did the Israelites go forth to gather manna, that bread which God sent them from heaven ! But, oh here is better manna come from heaven ! will ye not be thankful for it, and run with desire to get it ? The Israelites’ manna could not give life to the dead ; but here is manna that can both restore and preserve life ; yea, give everlasting

life to both soul and body. The Israelites' manna fell not on the Sabbath, and they might not go to gather it that day; but, blessed be God, this manna falls every day, and double on the Sabbath, and welcome are ye to gather it this day; for Christ now rains it in greater plenty, and calls you to be more diligent in gathering it than on any other day; his table is well furnished with manna this day: O feed and refresh your souls well before you leave it, and strive to preserve the relish of it when you are gone. Cry now with those, John vi. 34. "Lord, evermore give us this bread." The bread both satisfies the soul and creates an appetite; O for a perpetual hunger for it! It is the same bread the glorified saints feed on for evermore; in heaven they never loathe this manna, nor weary of it, as the Israelites did of theirs. It is but a small crumb, O communicants, you get of it here, compared to that eternal feast provided above.

Again, bread in Scripture is called the *staff of bread*. O this is the true staff of bread: here is bread, if eaten by faith, that will prove a staff to support you, a staff to defend you, a staff to beat your enemies, and put all your lusts to flight: this is a staff that will enable you to run in God's ways and fight the armies of the aliens. That is a strange dream that one of the Midianitish host had when Gideon was coming upon them, Judges vii. 13. "Behold a cake of barley bread came tumbling into the host of Midian, and smote a tent," &c. Strange! a piece of bread overturned a tent. Lo! that dream is interpreted in this sacrament; here is a piece of bread, O communicant, if eaten by faith, that will tumble into the host of Satan and thy lusts, these Midianites who have long vexed you with their wiles, strike down their tents, and put them all to flight. Surely a view here, by faith, of Christ's body pierced and nailed by sin, will turn a believer's heart against it as the most hateful thing in the world; let sin flatter as it will, he will never forget what it hath done to his dear Saviour. This is both quickening and killing bread; for, as it is life to your souls, so it is poison to your lusts.

When you see the wine poured out, think how freely and willingly Christ suffered for you. He poured out his blood as freely as the wine is poured out to you; yea, it is said, Isa. liii. 12. "He poured out his soul unto

death," as freely as we pour water out of a vessel. He had freely emptied his veins in the garden and on the cross: every pore became an eye to weep blood for your sakes; he is wounded over all his soul for you; and would you have any more from your loving Saviour? O did he pour out his soul unto death, and will you not pour out your souls into his bosom?

Again, when you see it, by faith behold the wells of salvation now opened, the stone rolled away, and the fountain of the water of life running freely, and following poor sinners. O run not away from it, but turn to it; drink, and live for evermore. O shall the fountain of life be opened, and the mouths of your souls shut fast? Can you see Christ's blood running, and not desire to be bathed with it? Hast thou blind eyes or lame feet, weak hands or feeble knees, a cold or hard heart, a fearful or doubting soul? here's a cure for all thy diseases. Thou art at the side of the pool, just at the healing waters, one step will bring you to them: look to Christ for strength, stir up your souls, step in, drink, bathe, and be made whole for ever.

When you drink the cup, remember the precious blood of Christ; eye it by faith, plead it with God, apply it to your souls, and thirstily drink it by the mouth of faith. Say, 'I am an unrighteous creature, but here is justifying blood; my soul is wounded, but here is healing blood; my heart is very dead, but here is quickening blood; it is very hard, but here is softening blood: O let me not miss a cure, when the balm of Gilead is among my hands: this blood healed thousands, and shall my plagues continue? Lord, may that innocent blood, that dropt from thy hands and thy side, wash away all the spots and stains of my guilty soul.'

As you find the wine warm on your cold stomach, so let the love and blood of Christ warm your cold heart and affections with vehement love and desire to him. Shall Christ's heart be hot as fire to you, and will yours be cold as ice to him? Can you feel his warm and bleeding heart, and not cry out with Thomas, "My Lord and my God?" How shall I express my love to my lovely and loving Jesus, who loved me and gave himself for me! How dearly, Lord, hast thou purchased my love, unworthy as it is! What hath the world or sin to do with that which Christ hath bought so dear? O for

a heart ready to burst with love to him that is only worthy to be the object of it! O for a live coal from God's altar, to kindle a flame that many waters might not quench! Worse am I than a beast, if I be not ravished with Christ's matchless love.

When you see the elements divided and distributed among the communicants, believe it, that Christ is really, though invisibly, dealing forth the effects and benefits of his death and sufferings to the worthy receivers.

When you see both the bread and the wine given, think that God is offering and giving Christ, and all Christ unto us; and we must be willing to take Christ and all that is in him, all his benefits, all his offices, all his laws, and all his cross he thinks fit to lay on us.

When the bread and wine are offered to you, and you hear Christ saying, "Take, eat, drink:" O then cast open all the doors and gates of your soul, that the "King of glory may enter in;" say, 'Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without? As I receive the bread of the Lord into my mouth, let me receive the bread of the Lord into my soul. Lord, it was my errand to receive thee into my heart, let me not go without thee.' Stir up faith mightily, to receive Christ and all his benefits. Stretch out faith's arms as far and wide as you may, to welcome, embrace, and clasp about your Saviour; and say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his;" 'now may the marriage be sealed and ratified, and the knot cast which never shall be loosed again; and happy, happy for ever, is my choice, rich is my portion, my soul is made up to all eternity.'

When you are eating and drinking the bread and wine, let your soul be busy making close and particular application by faith, of Christ and all his benefits, according to your various necessities. And consider, that as by eating and drinking, your food incorporates with your bodies, and turns one with you; so is Christ by faith mystically united to you, and you are made one with Christ: as the broken bread enters into your body, and becomes yours by feeding upon it, so you are to believe, that as truly Christ's broken body, and the purchase of his blood, are applied to you for curing and saving your soul, and that all his merits and graces are yours by faith: "This is my body that was broken for you." Again, as eating and drinking of proper food is very pleasant to our bodies, so

we ought to take great satisfaction and complacency in partaking of Christ and his benefits. Let us satiate ourselves in tasting of his goodness, and feasting on his heavenly dainties. And as by our earthly food, our bodies are strengthened for labour, so, by this spiritual food, our souls and our graces are nourished and strengthened for the duties of religion.

Again, you are to look upon these sacramental actions as a mutual giving and taking sasine and infestment betwixt Christ and your souls. Hereby you get infestment of a crucified Christ, his great purchase and glorious inheritance; and hereby Christ takes infestment of your soul and body, to be his children, his heirs, his servants, and soldiers, to obey him, and fight for him while you live. You are hereby consecrated to be temples for his service and residence; beware of defiling the temple of the Lord; suffer not a herd of swinish lusts to enter therein, lest God abhor you, and cast you off for ever.

When you hear these words of the institution, "This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do in remembrance of me;" consider why it is called a testament; it is because in this ordinance we have Christ's testament and latter-will sealed, wherein he leaves many a rich legacy to his poor friends; and here he gives a sealed copy of his testament into every one of their hands.

*Quest.* What are the legacies he leaves?

*Ans.* Pardon, peace, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, grace, and glory.

*Quest.* But, how shall I know if I have any interest herein?

*Ans.* Are you one of Christ's poor relations? Can you claim any sibness to him by faith and regeneration? then your name is in Christ's testament.

*Quest.* But, how shall I be sure that the testament is in force, and will be executed?

*Ans.* It is become of force by the death of the Testator, who died, and left his testament in the hands of the blessed Spirit to be executor of it, and to apply it to those the Testator appointed: yea, (blessed be God,) the Testator is risen again, and lives to see the execution of it himself likewise.

*Quest.* But, will I get all Christ's purchase and legacies just now?

*Ans.* You shall be infest, and have your right secured

to all this great estate left by Christ's will to you ; and out of it you shall have a present maintenance, till the time appointed come when you shall enter into the full possession of the inheritance. You are but minors yet, and not fit to be intrusted with it ; but it is secured in good hands for you till you come to full age. In the mean time you hear the dying Testator leaves a charge upon you, to "do this in remembrance of him:" Think on him and his love to you : think what he has contrived, what he has promised, what he has done, what he is still doing, and what he is about to do for you ; remember him who remembered you in your lowest estate, and is still remembering you ; remember him that is coming again quickly in the clouds, to meet you, take you home to his palace, and put you in possession of all. He commands you to show his death till he come again.

When you hear of his coming again, consider what a glorious coming and glad meeting that will be. O believer ! you now see Christ only through these elements by an eye of faith, but then you shall see him by an eye of immediate vision, you shall see him even as he is ; and O how mightily surprised will you be at the sight ! You will say as the Queen of Sheba said of Solomon, ' The half was not told me concerning his glory, when I was in my own country ;' but, " behold a greater than Solomon is here."

Before you rise from the table you may think on Elijah's cake baken on the coals, and his cruise of water, in the strength of which meat he went forty days and forty nights, till he came to Horeb, the mount of God, 1 Kings xix. 6, 8. Think how much more substantial, durable, and nourishing the food is that thou hast been partaking of, and bless God for it. Elijah is twice there wakened to take a double meal ; and so ought you to rouse up and provoke your spiritual appetite to take another morsel ere you go : you should feed plentifully at Christ's table. It is a virtue to be a holy glutton at this feast : you know not if ever you get another feast like this till you come to the mount of God above ; this may be your last communion here, and the last time you shall drink of the fruit of the vine in this manner ; take a large fill to strengthen your soul for your journey, you know not what blasts and storms may blow in the way ; you have a siege to hold out, take in provisions here ; you have a

voyage to go, see that you victual your ship; death will try, and put all your graces to it. The wisest virgins have no graces to spare at the coming of the Bridegroom: what storms of temptations and difficulties do many poor saints meet with on a death-bed! It is with much ado they put safe into the harbour at last. O then gather manna while it is falling, for your gathering time may be short!

Consider, that while you are at the table, you are near Christ, your Physician; therefore be sensible of your maladies, and look up to him with your finger on your sore, and cry with the Psalmist, Psalm xli. 4. "Lord, be merciful to me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee." Now the balm of Gilead is among my hands, and it will be sad if I should miss a cure. The blood of Christ that hath healed thousands, is now at hand; O let not my plagues continue with me! O let a drop of that precious blood light on my cold, dead, and hard heart, that some heat, life, and softness, may be begot and preserved therein.

You are come to Christ on a good day, when he is on a throne of grace, with a sceptre of mercy in his hand; see that you make all your wants known to him. A feasting time is a time of granting requests. "What is thy petition, and what is thy request, Queen Esther?" said King Ahasuerus at the banquet of wine. So saith King Jesus to the worthy communicant at this royal feast, "What is thy petition, and what is thy request? What will ye that I shall do unto you?" as Christ asked the blind man, Matt. xx. 32. Let your requests be like those of the Psalmist, "Consider, and hear me, O Lord my God; lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death," Psal. xliii. 3. "Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee," Psal. cxix. 175. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," Psal. li. 7. "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit," Psal. li. 12.—Or you may put up some of the spouse's petitions at this time, "Draw me, we will run after thee," Cant. i. 4. "Awake, O north wind, come, thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits," Cant. iv. 16. "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or a young hart on the mountains of spices," Cant. vii. 14.

O communicant! thou art near a crucified Christ when at the table, as the penitent thief was near to him when on the cross; he got mercy from Christ when he sought it, and so may you, if you seek it with the same frame of spirit. Cry, 'Lord, look on a poor sinner at thy table, as thou didst on him that hung by thy cross. "Lord, remember me, now thou art in thy kingdom." Thy wounds are open now; Lord, shelter me in them. Thy blood is running fresh; O bathe my diseased soul in this fountain, that I may be whole for ever.'

So much for the second head of directions. I now proceed to the third head.

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### CHAPTER III.

CONCERNING A COMMUNICANT'S BEHAVIOUR AFTER PARTAKING, AND WHEN THE COMMUNION-SABBATH IS OVER.

IN discoursing this head, I propose to do these following things: 1. To give some directions concerning your deportment when rising and going from the Lord's table. 2. Concerning your carriage when you go home to your closets and retiring places. 3. Concerning your behaviour and conversation in the world, when all the work is over.

#### SECTION I.

*Containing Directions concerning your Deportment when Rising and Going from the Lord's Table.*

BELIEVERS are sometimes ready to say, "It is good for us to be here, let us build tabernacles," and dwell still. But this table, though it be satisfying, is not lasting; though the meal be sweet, it is short; 'All things here below are transitory, and communions are passing things with the rest.' You must rise and go down from the mount, and return to the world, and travel in the wilderness again! 'Oh!' may the believer say, 'and must I rise and go back to that unsatisfying and soul-starving world again! What shall I do there if my Redeemer go not along with me? Lord, take me by the hand, lead

me, uphold me, and be thou still with me; and at last bring me to that endless feast thou hast prepared for thy people above, where I may ever lie in thy bosom, under the uninterrupted beams of thy smiling and cheerful countenance, and for ever feed my hungry soul on thy blessed self, without the help of symbols or sacraments, and where the guests will never be called to rise from that glorious table any more.'

*Quest.* What is that frame and disposition of soul that we should have in rising and going from the Lord's table?

*Answ.* With respect to that, observe the following directions:

You ought to rise and go from the table,

I. In a wondering and admiring frame: continue to wonder at the love of God in giving his beloved Son to die a cursed death for us. Though he loved him most dearly, yet he wounded him most deeply, that his precious blood might stream forth and save us. Hence it is said, Isa. liii. 10, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." Junius reads it, *Valde delectatus est; i. e.* He was exceedingly delighted in it. Strange! other parents, whose love to their children is nothing in comparison of the Father's love to Christ, do follow their children to their graves with many tears, especially when they die violent deaths; but the infinite God delighted in the painful and bloody death of his only Son, because it tended to the salvation of believers; he willingly gave his own dear Son to die a shameful and cursed death, that you might live a glorious and blessed life for ever. O what manner of love was this! And what art thou, O believer, that thou shouldst be the object of this love more than others? By nature thou art mean as the worm, vile as the mire, black as hell, and a child of wrath even as others; and thou hadst now been wallowing in sin with the worst of the world, if free grace had not renewed thee; nay, thou hadst been roaring in hell at this hour, if free grace had not reprieved thee. Look about thee, and see others refused when thou art chosen, others polluted when thou art sanctified, others put off with common gifts, when thou hast special grace. Though you and they perhaps sat together in the same desk hearing the word, or at the same table receiving the sacrament, yet free grace came and made the difference, "One is taken and the other left." Here is matter for your admiration.

The consideration of this free love and distinguishing mercy of God should make thee say, with David, "Lord, what am I, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? What is man that thou art mindful of him?" and what am I, the worst of men, that thou shouldst be thus mindful of me? O how did Mephibosheth admire David's kindness, when he spake familiarly with him and said, "Thou shalt eat bread at my table continually," 2 Sam. ix. 7. Observe his answer, ver. 8, "What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?" But surely, O believer! thou hast much more reason to say so, and wonder that such a mean creature should sit at the table of the great God, and be honoured to feast with himself. Lord, what am I, that thou shouldst have noticed the like of me! I better deserved to have been howling among the dogs without the door, than to be set in and feasted among thy friends; I better deserved to have been sent roaring to hell with devils, than to be set at the table to rejoice with thy children. Lord, when thou wast pleased to look on me with an eye of pity, and embrace me in the arms of thy tender mercy, thou mightest justly have spurned my guilty soul into hell, saying, "Depart from me, I know you not." What a wonderful mercy is it, that I, who have forfeited all mercies, and deserved such a sentence as that in Jer. ix. 15, to be fed with wormwood, and to have the water of gall to drink, should nevertheless have the flesh of the Son of God given me to be my meat, and his blood to be my drink. The Lord Jesus might justly have said unto me, as in Zech. xi. 9. "I will not feed you; that which dieth let it die; and that which is to be cut off, let it be cut off." But, O how tender are his bowels, how compassionate his heart! Rather than my soul should starve, he is content to be slain, that his flesh might become my food.

II. Rise and go from the table in a thankful and praising frame. Thankfulness well becomes this encharistical feast, which is mainly designed as a thanksgiving to God for redeeming love. On this occasion you ought to "bless God in the congregations, even the Lord from the fountain of Israel," Psal. lxxviii. 26. Now you should "stir up your souls, and all that is within you, to bless his holy name," with the Psalmist, Psal. ciii. 1, 2, 3. Now you should, with the angels, sing, "Glory to God in the

highest," that there is "on earth peace, and good will towards men," Luke ii. 14. Now you should, with John, sing praise "to him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Rev. i. 5.

"O!" may the worthy communicant say, "How shall I mention the loving-kindnesses and praises of the Lord, according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses, and according to all he hath bestowed on me, and his great goodness to the house of Israel?" O that I could proclaim thy love to all the world, and make the whole earth ring with thy praises! O that I could sing praises to him that loved me; to him that made the world, and furnished it so richly for me to dwell in; to him that made my body so wonderfully, and gave me a soul so capable to serve and enjoy him; to him that remembered me in my low estate, that laid aside his glory, took on my nature, and paid my debt on the cross; to him who sent his Spirit to quicken me, dead in my sins; that opened mine eyes, bowed my will, and turned me from darkness to light; to him who forgives my iniquities, heals my diseases, redeems my life from destruction, and crowns me with loving-kindness; to him that hath endured for me many slights, put up with many affronts, and waited on me with infinite patience; even "to him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests to God his Father," a note the angels themselves cannot sing; and "to him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, be glory, majesty, and dominion, now and for evermore. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever. Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can show forth all his praise? Now blessed be his name for ever; let the whole earth be filled with his glory!"

And, O believer! remember that you only begin this duty of singing praise in this world, for eternity itself will not end it: endless eternity will be short enough for this glorious work of praise. You ought to be acquainting yourself much with this work while here, that you be not a stranger to it hereafter. Resolve, with David, not only to begin it, but to persist and hold on in it also, Psal. cxlv. 2. "Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever;" as if he had

said, I will begin it now, and do it every day while here, in hopes that I will spend a whole eternity in it hereafter. Again he says, Psal. cxlvi. 2. "While I live I will praise the Lord: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being." And when I have no longer being on earth, I hope to have a being in heaven, where I shall praise him to better purpose; and, wherein, Lord, I am deficient now in thy due praise, I will pay it hereafter in everlasting hallelujahs. O communicant! hast thou not great ground of praise this day, that thou livest not among the Pagans, that never heard tell of Jesus Christ? that thou art not among the fallen angels, for whom a sacrifice was never provided? that thou art not among the damned in hell, who are without the reach of mercy and of hearing the joyful sound? You have been set at a full table, when others suffer an everlasting famine. And what will you render to the Lord for this distinguishing love and undeserved goodness? I have good ground to caution you against unthankfulness, as Moses did the Israelites upon the view of their entry into Canaan, Deut. viii. 10, 11. "When you have eaten and are full, forget not to bless the Lord for the good land that he hath given you," that you have a Goshen on earth and the prospect of a Canaan above; bless him for a land of light that you dwell in, and for the rich table that he covers for you; bless God for a sacrament day, for it is one of the days of heaven; it is a day that you ought highly to prize, and to praise God for. They that know the worth of this day could wish, with Joshua, that the sun stood still upon it, that it might be lengthened out for their enjoying communion with God: but, in a special manner, they would wish, with Joshua, that the sun stood still this day and shined, that, with Joshua, they might get a more full revenge on their enemies, viz., their lusts, these cursed Canaanites, that remain still in the land.

III. You ought to go from this table in the eunuch's frame, who, after his sealing a covenant with God, "went on his way rejoicing," Acts viii. 39. God's people are frequently in scripture called "to rejoice and be glad in the Lord:" and, to be sure, there is not a more fit season for it than now, when he hath been making such a glorious discovery of that great love where-with he loved them. A man that is condemned for a

crime, and ready to be execute, O what joy hath he when he receives his pardon. And, should not believers rejoice in God, who here receive the atonement, and are, as it were, brought back again from the gibbet, by the mercy of God in Christ?

There are two things you ought to rejoice in: *1st*, In God; *2d*, In his ways.

As to the *first*, it is the duty of a covenanted people to rejoice in their covenanted God. With what joy doth Zaccheus entertain Christ, when he closed a bargain with him, Luke xix. 6; and likewise the jailor, Acts vi. 34. And, to be sure, whenever the babe of the new man is formed in the soul, it will leap for joy. It is most reasonable that Christ should have a joyful welcome into the soul.

God not only commands and presses this joy, as in Psal. v. 11. Joel ii. 23. Phil. iii. 1. and iv. 4; but he affords the greatest grounds for it. God the Father gives himself to us as a portion; his Son to be our Saviour: his well-ordered covenant as a never-failing spring of consolation; his Holy Spirit to be our Comforter; his influences to blow up this holy flame of joy; his graces of faith, hope, and love, to breed and feed it; his ordinances to maintain and increase it; and particularly, the Lord's Supper is a spiritual feast instituted for cheering the soul; for, after it, we see that Christ and his disciples sang a hymn.

What ground of joy have believers in their covenanted Redeemer, in his love, in his victories, and in his purchase! What ground of joy in his person and natures! In God incarnate they may see heaven and earth conjoined, God and human nature eternally married together, and themselves very nearly related to God. O believer! he is bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh, and has a fellow-feeling of your infirmities; and is not this matter of joy?

What ground of joy have you in the attributes of God, which are all engaged for you, and become yours by covenant? The thoughts of God may be sweet to you as to the Psalmist, Psal. civ. 34. The thoughts of God are a terror to the wicked, but every one of his attributes may be a cordial to you, yea even the most terrible of them: his justice, that before stood with a flaming sword, to keep you out of paradise, doth now turn an

advocate to plead for your happiness, 1 John i. 9. Justice is come over to your side, and pleads for your pardon and discharge, since Christ your Surety has paid the debt; and for the crown of glory to you, since he hath laid down the price.

His goodness and mercy afford you great matter of joy. Why? for he is good, so he doth good, and will let his people want nothing that is good for them; he will hear their cry, pity them in danger, and be a stronghold to them in the day of trouble. And, when you meet with mercies and comforts, you may receive them as tokens of his special love: they come to you wrapt up in the bowels of Christ, a right in his blood, and so are doubly sweet. When you get a deliverance from any distress, you may say as Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 17. "Thou hast, in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption." O believer! all thy mercies are covenanted to thee, which may make them sweet to thy taste; that word in Eccl. ix. 7. belongs to thee, "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for now God accepteth thy works." Every morsel of bread thou eatest comes from thy Father's hand, sweetened in the blood of Christ, and is an earnest of greater and better things laid up for thee.

God's wisdom and faithfulness may rejoice thy heart. He is a skilful Physician; he ponders our case, weighs our necessity, and knows how to prescribe sometimes bitter potions, and sometimes cheering cordials; he knows how to time our blessings and our crosses also. O covenanted soul! it may be sweet to thee to think that all thy afflictions, as well as mercies, are the fruit of infinite wisdom and faithfulness; yea, thy being within the covenant alters the nature and property of thy crosses, and makes them become good and medicinal to thee; thou art now to look on them as mercies covenanted and promised to thee. When his children transgress, he will visit them with the rod. "In faithfulness hast thou afflicted me," saith the Psalmist. O what comfort may this bring thee, when thou considerest that all thy afflictions are an article of the covenant, the effect of God's love, and a fruit of Christ's purchase; so that you may say of every rod you meet with, "The Lord sees I want this, otherwise I should not be exercised with it; my covenanted God and Father knows that this, and no less

than this, is needful for me : What am I, that he should be so mindful of me ?”

You may rejoice in the almightiness of God. He hath an arm that is full of power, that can easily level your spiritual Goliaths, pull down Satan’s strongholds, and make good his promises.

You may rejoice in his immutability. He is unchangeable in his love, and in his covenant. Mutable creatures change their respects, and break their leagues and covenants, but God’s covenant is indissolvable ; for he is engaged for our part as well as his own, Jer. xxxii. 40. O believer, God hath promised both for himself and thee ; as you may farther see in Heb. xiii. 5, compared with Jer. xxxi. 9, and 2 Tim. i. 12. If once in the covenant, thou art always in it : you may sing that sweet song, Psal. xlvi. 14. “ For this God is our God for ever and ever ; he will be our guide even unto death ;” yea, likewise in death and over death. That which dissolves the marriage-covenant among men, will not dissolve this ; adultery will not do it : for God saith, “ Though you have played the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto me.—Turn, ye backsliding children, for I am married unto you.” Death cannot dissolve it ; yea, it brings you nearer to your covenanted God, where you shall ever rejoice in his presence. Though death robs worldly men of their poor happiness, and hungry heaven ; yet it doth no harm to you ; nay, when you find death begin to assault your tabernacle of clay, you may “ lift up your head with joy ; for behold the day of your redemption draweth nigh.” You may sing with the Psalmist, Psal. lxxiii. 26. “ My flesh and heart faileth ; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.” What though my eye and my heart-strings be ready to break, and the lamp of my life be like a candle burnt to the socket, and near the going out ; yet still God is my God and portion for ever. Thus Olevian, a dying saint, comforted himself : “ My hearing is gone, my smelling is gone, my sight is going, and my speech is almost gone, but the loving-kindness of God shall never depart from me.” When the worldling’s portion is gone, yours remains sure to you ; lose what you will, you cannot lose that. Good cause had Habakkuk to say, Hab. iii. 17, 18. “ Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, &c., yet I will rejoice in the

Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation." O believer! the more you view your portion, you will find the more ground of rejoicing therein; for in God you have all things you need, and all things you can desire, yea, more than "eye hath seen, ear heard, or heart can conceive." But,

*Secondly.* As you ought to go from this ordinance rejoicing in God, so likewise in the ways of God; and, like Jehoshaphat, you ought to have your hearts "lift up in the ways of the Lord." Put on holy resolutions to proceed with zeal, delight, and alacrity in the ways of God's commandments: your hearts should now be enlarged to run and sing in his ways, and go about every duty with pleasure, steadfastly resist every sin, and especially the sin that hath most easily beset you, your predominant sin, your beloved idol. Abhor both outward and inward sins; flee drunkenness, uncleanness, swearing, lying, cheating, Sabbath-breaking, &c. Keep God's Sabbaths, and delight therein; make religion your main work, and make conscience of heart-holiness; study to live near Christ, make much use of him, and constantly depend on him for righteousness and strength; study to perform the duties both of the first and second table; carefully observe family-duties and secret prayer: in a word, go on cheerfully in all the ways of piety and devotion, and especially in those duties wherein communion and correspondence with God is to be obtained and kept up. Go on joyfully in the ways of justice and honesty, meekness and peace, temperance and sobriety, charity and beneficence, humility and self-denial; and trust in your covenanted God for covenant-strength, and furniture for every good word and work.

IV. In going from the Lord's table, you ought to mix your joy and praises with a holy fear and trembling: and you have great cause for this, when you consider, 1. Your manifold shortcomings in this solemn approach to God. Surely your souls were not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary, your preparation was defective in the sight of God. Have you not cause to be ashamed that your hearts were not more deeply affected with the great sights presented to your view, and the glorious things put in your offer? Have you not ground to be humbled for the coldness of your hearts, the waverings of

your minds, the deadness of your spirits, and carnality of your affections, when you were about this heavenly and spiritual work? Alas! for the weakness of our graces, the inconstancy of our frames, and the manifold infirmities which cleave to our best performances! Had we no more sin to answer for but the iniquities of our holy things, they would be too heavy for us to bear. Let us be humbled under the sense of them, and look to our great High Priest to make atonement for them. 2. You have cause to be humbled, and fear, considering the manifold dangers you are exposed to, and the enemies you are environed with, who are never more busy than after a sacrament and our being admitted to nearness with God. Christ, immediately after his baptism, and the solemn manifestation he had from heaven, was led away to be "tempted of the devil," Matt. iv. 1. And it was after the Lord's supper that Christ told his disciples that Satan desired to have them, that he might sift them as wheat, Luke xxii. 31. It was after Paul was rapt up to the third heaven, that he was in danger of being exalted above measure, or puffed up with pride, and therefore had a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him, 2 Cor. xii. Have you got any thing of the riches of Christ and the treasures of heaven at this ordinance? then look well to yourselves that you lose it not, for the devil is going about seeking to rob you thereof. Therefore be not lifted up or secure, but be humble and watchful, and walk circumspectly.

## SECTION II.

*Containing Directions how to behave when you go home to your closets and places.*

THINK not your work over on a communion Sabbath, when you are come home from the church; but, as soon as possible, retire,

1. For prayer. You should be more bent upon prayer now than ever. The Psalmist, when God had dealt kindly with him, resolves therefore that he will call upon God as long as he lived, Psal. cxvi. 2. This is a strange return he would give God for former favours; he would go and beg new favours from him, and lie the more closely about his hand; I will love God and love prayer the bet-

ter all my days. This is not the manner of men, but God is delighted with such a return.

QUEST. But what shall we pray for now? can God give more than what he hath given us in the sacrament.

*Answ.* Though God hath here given you the seal of the covenant, and a right to all its privileges and promises, yet he will be inquired of by you for the particular application and accomplishment of them; you must put God to his word, and pray with the Psalmist, Psal. cxix. 49. "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. Be it to thy servant according to thy word." Again, you should pray that God may continue and preserve any good frame or tenderness of heart, spiritual motions and resolutions, or any warmness of affections and desires, that have been wrought in you by this ordinance, for our hearts are ready to cool, and our goodness to vanish "like the morning cloud and the early dew;" you have need therefore to pray with David, 1 Chron. xxix. 18. "Lord, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of my heart;" and Psal. lxxviii. 28. "Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us." Your hearts are naturally deceitful, and your feet bent to backsliding; pray, as in Psal. xvii. 5. "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slide not." You have no strength in yourselves to keep the promises and perform the vows to the Lord which you have made: therefore, beg from your covenanted God that he may furnish you for every good word and work; for "it is he that worketh in you both to will and to do."

II. Self-examination is a duty most necessary on the back of this solemn ordinance, as well as before it. Review your carriage at it, that so you may be humbled for defects, or thankful for attainments; cast up your accounts, and see what you have gained at this great gospel-market. Will you not be as wise for your souls, as you are wise for your bodies? Were you at a market, trading for the things of this world, you would take this course after you had come from it; but, O "what will it profit you though you gain the whole world, if you should lose your souls?"

There are two things you should carefully search into when you come from the Lord's table: 1. If you had sincerity in covenanting with God; 2. If you had his gracious presence with you in this ordinance.

*Quest.* 1. How shall I know if I have sincerely transacted with God at his table, and if he hath taken me into the bond of his covenant?

*Answ.* It is of great consequence for you to know this, for it is not every one that externally receiveth the seal of God's covenant, that is really taken into the bond of it. Many thousands deceive themselves in this manner. You may discover all your sincerity in covenanting, by reviewing the frame and condition your souls were in when you were about it, and by considering the frame and disposition they are in now.

1. What was the frame of your souls when you were transacting with God?

1. Were you filthy and vile in your own eyes, and deeply humbled under a sense of your own unworthiness and ill-deserving; so that you were made to say with the centurion, from the bottom of your heart, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof:" I have lived all my days in rebellion against thee, the bottomless pit is my due? Then this is a good sign of thy being brought within the covenant, according to Ezek. xiv. 62, 63.

2. Were you weary of the burden of sin? Did you groan under it as a heavy load? Were you sensible that it was too heavy for you to bear? as the Psalmist was, Psal. xxxviii. 3. Then it is a good sign; for it is to such that Christ affords rest in his covenant.

3. Did your souls long and pant for Christ, as the hunted hart for the water brooks, the scorched ground for a refreshing shower, or a condemned man for a remission? Was it your cry, None but Christ; give me Christ, or else I die: Lord Jesus, here is a poor beggar for thy bounty, a diseased Lazarns for thy cure, an empty belly for thee to fill, a naked back for thee to cover: never was there a soul that stood more in need of thee than I? Then this is a good token; for whenever there is true faith, it empties thy soul, it discovers want and misery in ourselves, and gratefulness in Christ. Faith comes with an empty vessel to Christ's open fountain; it comes with an open mouth to his full feast, and with an empty hand to his rich treasure.

4. Were you in a resigning frame when you took the seal of the covenant into your hand? For faith, as it embraces and lays hold on Christ, so it delivers up the

soul to Christ; and as it takes Christ wholly, so it gives up the soul wholly to him. Did you give all you are, and all you have, your children, relations, honours, estates, interests, time, talents, health, strength, and all to Christ, to be disposed of, and employed by him, according to his pleasure? Then this is a good mark of thy sincerity.

5. Were you in a renouncing frame, willing to part with every lust, and put a bill of divorce in the hands of every Delilah, or beloved idol? Then it is a good sign: for every sincere soul will say at such a time, with Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

II. Consider the frame and disposition of your souls since you came from the Lord's table; for you may find out your sincerity hereby.

1. Ask your souls that question which Christ himself once asked the Pharisees, Mat. xxii. 42, "What think you of Christ?" Covenanted souls, to be sure, will have a very high opinion of him; for to all that believe, he is precious. Can you say, then, that you have high and admiring thoughts of Christ, and that you wonder at his beauty; once I was at peace with Christ, but now I see nothing but fire and wrath out of him: once I saw little beauty in him, and said, as the daughters of Jerusalem said to the spouse, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" But now I see him *altogether lovely*; yea, I see not only a matchless beauty in his person, but also in his way, his word, his ordinances, his people, nay, in his very cross, and every thing that belongs to him?

2. All covenanted souls will be mightily pleased with the contrivance, frame, and design of the covenant; they will say, it is well-ordered in all things; they will be satisfied with all the articles of it, and with all the offices and relations of Christ; they will be content to be re-governed by his laws, as well as to be justified by his righteousness. All they who have entered into a marriage-covenant with Christ, will look to his person more than to his patrimony, and they will embrace his precepts as well as his promises. Try, therefore, if it be so with you. Are you pleased with the design of the covenant, viz., to exalt free grace? Would you have Christ all, and yourselves nothing? Would you be content with heaven, though it were for no more than to stand an eternal monument of free grace, and that you might with others join in your note to glorify and exalt it? Do you

still love to cry, "Not unto us, not unto us, but to Christ be the glory?" Then this is a good sign you are within the bond of this covenant.

3. Have you heart-melting thoughts at the remembrance of Christ's wounds? Are you sensibly touched for your sins that pierced him, and resolved, through his grace, to pierce him no more, and that you will never give any harbour to those traitors that put to death the Son of God? Then it is a sign you have eyed him by faith at his table, and taken hold of his covenant.

4. If you be his covenanted friends, you will resolve to obey every commanded duty, John xv. 14. Ye will be "a people zealous of good works." And remember this, ye will resolve to perform covenant-duties in a covenant way, and in a gospel method; *i. e.*, ye will do all out of love and gratitude to your Benefactor and Redeemer; ye will do all to glorify him; ye will go out of yourselves, even to Christ, for strength, and depend on him for all.

*Quest. 2* How shall I know if I have met with Christ at his table, and enjoyed any thing of his gracious presence there?

*Ans.* Christ hath many ways in visiting his people, and holding communion with them; and, though he hath not done it in the way you were expecting, do not conclude that he hath not done it at all.

1. He sometimes draws near his people in this ordinance, by bringing light to their understandings, and making gracious discoveries to their souls. Sometimes he discovers to us his greatness and purity, so as to humble us to the dust, and make us seem nothing in our own eyes, and confess we are the vilest of sinners, and wonder that we are out of the pit; so was it with those holy men, Job xl. 4—Isa. vi. 3. Sometimes he discovers his goodness and mercy, in giving his Son to die for such wretches, and offering pardon to such rebels; and thereby he sheds abroad his love into our hearts, and melts them into tears, confessions, and thankful remembrance of his love, as in Luke vi. 44—1 Tim i. 19. Sometimes he discovers Christ to be altogether lovely, sin to be altogether vile, the world to be altogether vain, holiness to be altogether necessary, and heaven to be altogether glorious.

2. He kindly visits his people, when he draws out their

graces to a lively exercise, and particularly, sends his quickening spirit to melt their hearts into the exercise of repentance and mourning for sin, or to actuate their faith, and enable them to lean on Christ for pardon and salvation, and say with that poor man, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief:" or when he kindles love in the heart, and makes it to burn while he talks to them, and opens the Scriptures, as he did to the two disciples going to Emmaus: or helps you to say, with Peter, "Lord, thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee;" or when he draws out the desires, longings, and pantings of the soul after himself, and makes us thirst for him, and follow hard after him. Hence we see what a mistake many are in, who think there is no communion with Christ but by sensible consolations and manifestations of his love; for where there is a holy shame, grief, and sorrow wrought in the soul for sin, it is as real an evidence of his gracious presence, as when the soul is affectionately melted into love, praise, and joy. Though Christ come not to you by the higher way, yet be thankful if he come in the lower way.

3. Christ holds communion with his people in this ordinance, by strengthening them for duty, and making them delight in his service, and count it their meat and drink to do his will, and reckon one day in his courts worth a thousand elsewhere.

4. When he intimates his special love and favour to their souls, which he doth many ways, by dissolving their doubts and fears, scattering their clouds, shining on their graces, and clearing up their evidences; or whispering by his Spirit into their consciences, "Fear not, I am your salvation, be of good cheer, all your sins are forgiven you; the Lord hath put away thy sin, and thou shalt not die." It is this way the Lord sometimes brings his people into the banqueting-house, satisfies them as with marrow and fatness, makes them to hear the voice of joy and gladness, fills them with peace that passeth understanding, with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. It is thus that he kisses them with the kisses of his mouth, *i. e.*, applies the comforts of his promises, which are the sweet words of his mouth, yea, sweeter to them than honey or the honey-comb: it is here he makes them to drink of the rivers of his pleasures, brings them to his holy mountains and makes them joyful in his house of prayer; it is here

he brings them out of the miry clay, sets their feet upon a rock, establishes their goings, and puts a new song in their mouth, even praise to our God.

It might be proper in this place to speak to the cases of several sorts of communicants; but, having done this pretty fully in my Sacramental Catechism, I shall here speak only in two sorts:

I. Those who, after secret-examination, and reviewing of their communicating, are put to complain that they do not find any comfort or spiritual advantage by the solemn ordinance of which they have been partaking.

II. Those who cannot but acknowledge, to the praise of free grace, that they have been kindly dealt with, and privileged with special manifestations of God's love and favour at this holy ordinance.

*First.* As to the first sort of communicants.

There are sometimes found not a few of God's people, who, on the back of their communicating, are in a disconsolate condition. 'O (saith one) I have been examining myself since I came from the Lord's table, and reviewing my communicating; and I fear I have not met with Christ there, nor got any comfort or spiritual advantage by the ordinance. I think God is angry with me; and what shall I do?'

*Ans.* *1st.* Granting it to be so, that thou hast got no benefit by this ordinance, beware of laying the blame in the least upon the Master of the feast, who is a bountiful Lord, and delights in mercy; but leave your complaint entirely upon yourself, and search for the cause of your disappointment in yourself. And it is likely, upon due search, you will find, that either you have been slight in your preparations for the duty; your appetite hath not been sharpened with a sense of spiritual wants; you have not been watchful over your heart, either before, in time of, or after your communicating; or perhaps you have gone about this work too much in your own strength, without looking to God for strength and quickening in the gospel method. Jacob told his wives, Gen. xxxi. "I see your father's countenance, it is not toward me as before." Now what was the reason of it? "Jacob (say Laban's sons) hath taken away all that was our father's:" he hath enhanced his riches. Well, hast thou dealt thus with thy heavenly Father? Hast thou robbed him of his glory in any measure by thy self-confidence? Then it is

no wonder that his countenance was not so pleasant towards thee as at other times. Be humbled then, for your defects and shortcomings; and say, "Lord, thou art righteous, but I am wicked."

2d. God may hide his face from his people at the sacrament, either for their trial, or for their spiritual improvement and advantage. He may hereby try you, how you will behave under such a dispensation, if you will love him, and cleave to him, even when he hides himself and frowns upon you. Do not despond, O believer! though God appear to frown or to speak bitter things against you; but cleave to him still by faith, and bless his name that he is at all in speaking terms with you, and not wholly silent to you, as he is to many, upon whom he will not bestow a reproof, but gives them up to walk after the counsels of their own hearts. It is a great mercy to have God rebuking us for our good.

But the Lord may be hiding himself, to raise in you the greater earnestness and fervency in seeking after him. Thus he dealt with the spouse, Cant. iii. 3. She was too lazy and careless in her inquiries for him, therefore he retires; and thereupon she rose from her sloth, and went through all the streets of the city in quest of him, saying, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? tell him that I am sick of love." It were happy if your disappointment had the same effect on you, to make you rise and seek him more earnestly, and go further than you did before. The spouse went a little further, she went further than the watchman, before she found him whom her soul loved; and so must you. You must go further than ministers, ordinances, or sacraments; go and look beyond all to Christ himself. Go also further in respect of diligence, sincerity, spirituality, and heart-holiness. Do as blind Bartimeus did; when he thought Christ was like to pass by without noticing him, Luke xviii. 39, "He cried so much the more;" *q. d.* Lord, pass not by me, allow me one word from thy blessed mouth, one crumb from thy gracious hand. O believer! do not limit God to the precious time of communicating; your feast may be yet to come, for the banqueting-house is not yet shut, though the communion-table be uncovered; there lie still at the door, and cry so much the more. 'Lord, others are served, and not I; hast thou not one blessing for me, even for me, O my Father? Lord, I

cannot depart without it, I must even die at thy threshold.' Thus pray in faith, and wait in hope, and God will come in due time. 'It is good that thy soul should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.'

3d. God's people do sometimes get gracious tokens of his bounty, and marks of his favour, when they are not well sensible of it: so that they have cause to say with Jacob at Bethel, Gen. xviii. 16. "Surely God was in this place, and I knew it not." There may be real communion when there is no sensible communion. The two disciples going to Emmaus, their hearts did burn with love to Christ, and Christ conversed with them when yet they knew it not. Or they may sometimes reckon what they have got at the sacrament to be nothing, because they got not what they were expecting. They were perhaps expecting peace, comfort, or joy, which they have not found; and this makes them overlook any revivings or smokings of grace, which now are begot in their hearts. Hast thou, O communicant! got a crumb of grace? do not undervalue it, though it be small, but be humble and thankful for it, for surely it is more than you deserve. It is not good manners for a stranger, when invited to a great man's table, to carve for himself: therefore be content with God's carving for you, and bless him that he hath not sent you to the table of devils, and given you a portion with the damned.

Many are apt to think nothing is a feast, unless they get smiles from God, joy, peace, and sensible manifestations of his love; but there may be great bounty shown to us without these; particularly, if you have got any more sense of sin's evil, or concern for the hardness of your hearts; if you have got any higher esteem of Christ, and of the contrivance of salvation through his mediation; if you have any more hunger and thirst after Christ, any more love to holiness and the ways of Christ, any more desire after his presence in duties and ordinances, any more sense of the need of the fountain of his blood; then all these are gracious tokens of his bounty to your souls, for which you have cause to bless and magnify the Lord. We may enjoy the saving influences of the Spirit when we do not feel his more abundant consolations. God may graciously accept of us, hold communion with us, and seal our pardon to us, though he do not testify it by giving extraordinary joys. The truest communion with

God is to enjoy communion with him in his graces, whereby our souls are made conformable unto God and are stamped with his image. Well, if you have got any more grace, be thankful to God though you have got no more comfort. Though you do not spring upward in joy, bless God if you root yourselves more downward in humillty. Though you do not enjoy much of God in the ordinances here, yet be thankful if you get your desires more enlarged after the full enjoyment of God above. The kindness of God must not be overlooked, nor the day of small things despised; but the least crumb of grace is to be noticed, and received with thankfulness; and this is the way to get more.

We are not to judge of our profiting in duty, and of our gaining by ordinances, by our present feeling and receiving of sensible comforts: for the souls of God's people may be in a thriving state of grace, even when they are much cast down and sharply exercised. Let us then seriously reflect upon our communicating, and see if we can say, that our hearts were single and sincere in the performance of the duty, and in our covenanting with God, and if we continue steadfast with God therein; this may administer ground of comfort to us upon our after-reflection, though our souls were not lifted up with joy and comfort in the time of performance. God looks not so much to people's sudden fits of passion, or flashes of affection, as he doth to the steady bent and tendency of a sincere soul.

Let none, then, go from this ordinance with any harsh thoughts of Christ, or at all give credit to those evil reports that Satan and our wicked hearts would bring upon his good ways; but let us still love and praise him, and speak to the commendation of his grace and bounty, whatever way he take in dealing with us. Though we should get no more from him, surely it is great matter of praise, if he continue to strive with us by his Spirit, when he lets others fall dead asleep; if he keep us waking and restless without him, when he suffers others to lie still in careless security; if he keeps us still hoping and waiting in the way of duty, when others are sunk into the gulf of despair. Whoever they be that sincerely trust in God's mercy, their hearts shall at last rejoice in his salvation, Psal. xiii. 15.

*Secondly.* As to the second sort of communicants be-

fore mentioned, namely, those of God's people, who cannot but acknowledge, to the praise of free grace, that they have been kindly dealt with at his table, they have been privileged with special manifestations of God's love and favour at this holy ordinance.

Well then, O believers! hath the Lord distinguished you from others at this occasion? Hath he taken you into his banqueting-house, and dealt bountifully with your souls? Hath he feasted you with the goodness of his house, and allowed you his gracious presence, and the special intimations of his love? Then, to be sure, you are under the highest obligations of love and gratitude to him: God looks for more at your hands than others. Be careful to give him suitable returns, and improve what you have got to his glory. And for that end I shall give you the following advices:

I. Delight and solace yourselves in his presence: say as in Psalm cxvi. "Return to thy rest, O my soul: for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Make Christ's love and favour the beloved centre of your soul. How much did Peter solace himself in that manifestation of Christ's love and glory he had on the mount of transfiguration? "It is good for us (saith he) to be here. Let us build three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias." Not a word of building one for himself: he was so satisfied and delighted with the glory he saw in Christ, that he was content to be without doors to behold it; neither cold nor rain could make him faint or weary.

II. Is Christ come into your soul? take care to entertain him suitably, and attend him duly; wander not from his presence, but keep close by him, and follow hard after him, that you may be able to say with the Psalmist, "I am continually with thee; I will lie down with thoughts of him at night, and when I awake I will be still with him." Beware of any thing that may be uneasy to him: it is a pity that such a blessed guest should meet with any disturbance, or be smoked out of the house by sin: O then lay a strict charge on all your lusts, corruptions, and worldly thoughts, to depart, that they "stir not up nor awake your beloved till he please;" according to Cant. ii. 7.

III. Earnestly entreat him to stay with you: say, 'Lord, be not as a wayfaring man, that turns aside to

lodge for a night, or a short time; but be thou my constant guest. And, when he hints to go away, strive to detain and hold him by prayer, as Abraham did Christ, Gen. xviii. 3. "My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away from thy servant;" and, with the two disciples going to Emmans, Luke xxiv. 27, say, "Lord abide with us; for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent;" and it is said, "They constrained him, and he went to tarry with them." In like manner plead with Christ, 'Lord, it is towards night, and I know not what a black clond is coming on me or the church: I need thy strengthening presence before-hand; Lord, stay with me a while; I know not how far I may go, and what storms I may meet with ere I get such another meal.'

IV. Set conscience to the watch-tower of thy soul, charge it to keep its post, and strictly examine all that go out and all that come in, what thoughts go out from the heart, and what temptations are seeking to come in: and when lusts come in knocking at the gate, seeking entrance into the heart, answer them according to that word, Ezek. xliv. 2, 3. It is for the Prince; the Lord God hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut: it shall be patent to none but Christ. O it is sad when conscience falls asleep, suffers an enemy to come up to the gates, and enter into the city, without giving warning. Charge conscience then to watch and give a timeous warning against every lust and temptation, against every declining of affections, or backsliding of heart, and against every wrong or untender step that may blot your evidences, or darken your sky; for though a believer cannot lose his salvation, yet he may lose the joy of his salvation, Psal. li., and be left to grope in the dark, and in a most uncomfortable state, without sun or stars appearing to him for many days.

V. Delight to think on Christ. Let your meditation of him be sweet; remember him on your bed, and meditate on him in the night-watches; let him lie as a bundle of myrrh all night between your breasts, *i. e.* in your heart. Carry him up and down in your thoughts all the day; mind what a view you got of Christ at his own table, think on what he has done and suffered; what a sea of wrath, what a sea of blood, a sea of tears, a sea of sufferings and sorrows, he did wade through to bring redemption and pardon to you. If we rightly considered

what cost and pains Christ had been at for us, we might wonder how he should be one whole hour together out of his people's minds: O what a shame it is to forget him! We see a worldly man doth not weary to think of his money, lands, buildings, and plantings, for a whole day or a week to an end; but, alas! we weary to think on precious Christ and heaven for an hour or two. O let us lament this plague, and beseech our blessed Physician to cure it.

VI. The more you see of Christ and his beauty, be still desirous of further discoveries of it; if you have shared of this holy feast, you will find it both satisfies and begets an appetite. No doubt Moses was ravished with divine contemplations through the forty days he conversed with God on the mount; yet after he comes down from it, he still longs for more, and cries, Exod. xxxiii. 18, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." In like manner thirst and pray for further discoveries of the King in his beauty.

VII. Take pleasure in commending Christ to others, and showing what a lovely Saviour and choice Master he is; invite them to come, and taste, and see that God is good. Let his name be sweet and savoury to you: delight in mentioning it. How sweet was his name to Paul. For, in 1 Cor. i. and the first thirteen verses of that chapter, he mentions his name no less than twelve times; he could never get enough of that sweet name Jesus, that rings with salvation: he sometimes there mentions it twice in one verse.

VIII. Remember that Satan envies you, and eyes you as a pirate doth a richly laden ship, and will do what he can, either to rob you of your treasure, or give you a troublesome voyage; you may expect trials on the back of this feast, and it may be from hands that ye would little expect; but resolve, whatever temptations come or winds do blow, that you will cleave to your Master, and never weary of his work and service; say to him, as the Hebrew servant to his master, Deut. xv. 16, "I will not go away from thee, because I love thee and thine house, and because I am well with thee." I am sure, O believer! thou hast far better reason to say so than any else; there is no drudgery in Christ's service; you have the best Master, the best work, and the best wages: have you not found him kind to you at this time? Will you

ever forget it? You have at this time eaten plentifully of his bread; O do not lift up the heel against him! never betray him, nor give a wound to his interest any more.

IX. Be much concerned for his glory, and for the advancement of his kingdom. Pity those who are strangers to him, and pray for them; send portions to them for whom nothing is provided; pity others who have not won your length, and put in a word for them, pray for a crumb to them from that full table at which you have been feeding so plentifully.

X. Hath Christ been dealing more kindly with you than others? Then he expects you will do more for him than others, Mat. v. 47. He hath done singular things for you; see that you do singular things for him; carry as becomes his peculiar people. Be not content with common mercies, or such portions as bastards may have; be not content with common gifts, graces, and attainments, such as hypocrites may have; be not content with common conversations; live not as the men of the world, whose hearts are set on things below; but live above the world, have your feet where other men's heads are; show so much humility, mortification, patience, heavenliness, and charity in your walk, that the world may not only take notice that you have been with Jesus, but that you design to lodge and live eternally with him. Live not according to common examples, but set Christ and his saints before you for patterns; and, whatever others do about you, resolve to stand for Christ, though it were alone; say with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve our covenanted God."

XI. Labour to keep still up a lively and spiritual frame of soul, and beware of losing what you have; be sensible that you are not able to maintain it, more than to beget it; you have many enemies seeking to rob you of it; walk with a holy suspicion and jealousy, as a traveller, having much money about him, suspects every one he meets for a thief. Delight in Christian fellowship; one live coal helps both to kindle others and to keep them burning, Heb. x. 24, 25. "Let us consider one another, to provoke to love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another." Again, be tender and circumspect in your walk, for a tender walk keeps up a

tender frame. Beware of the cares of the world and earthly-mindedness; for if you thrust a knife into the earth, it blunts its edge. Frequent sacramental occasions and those heart-warming ordinances which God hath appointed for your soul's advantage, call your hearts frequently to account: say, O my soul! how is it with thee now? Time was when thou hadst a good frame, good motions, and desires! What is become of you now? Such a chamber, such a place in the field, such a kirk or communion-table, can witness the meltings of thy heart, and flowings of thy affections towards Christ and things above: Where are they now? But, above all, be much in secret prayer, and in the exercise of faith on Christ the fountain of life: intrust your hearts and frames to his keeping, who is your great Friend and Surety: believingly say with the Psalmist, "Lord, be surety for thy servant for good; into thy hands, O Lord, I commit my spirit: for thou hast redeemed me, O God of truth:" let thy everlasting arms be underneath me, and hold up my goings. Plead for the constant supplies of his Spirit, that he who is as the dew of Israel, may afford oil to your chariot wheels, and wind to your empty sails. You have need to watch and pray, for Satan is still going about: this old crooked serpent can win himself in at a very narrow hole; he hath many cold frost winds to freeze up your affections, many deceitful charms to lull you asleep: you may sleep, but he never sleeps. O communicant! watch: for if he find you asleep, he will soon steal away the living child, and lay a dead one in its room; God save you from this dead sleep.

XII. Have you tasted of God's goodness at this occasion? Sit not down satisfied in what you have got: but let it excite in you earnest longings for heaven, where the full feast is. These are but the foretastes and first-fruits of the promised land, sent to wean your hearts from the world, and sharpen your desires after the Canaan that is above, where these first-fruits do grow and are fully ripe. A communion-Sabbath is the likeliest thing we have in the world, to that everlasting Sabbath that is above: but how small are the comforts of the lower table, if compared with the higher table? What is a sacrament-feast here, to the marriage-Supper of the Lamb? What is drinking of the fruit of the vine here, to the drinking of it new with Christ in his Father's kingdom, where the glorious

heavens will be the room, and heavenly hosts the attendants? Here we feed on Christ by symbols and sacraments, and have but bad appetites, but there they enjoy and see him as he is; here are many traitors and unworthy communicants, that thrust themselves in among the children, but there no Judas, unfurnished guest can come, nor any thing that can impair the glory of that feast. What is the singing of psalms here to the music of angels there? Had you been with the shepherds, Luke ii. and seen the angels, and heard the multitude of the heavenly host praising God, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will towards men," you would never have forgot that glorious sight and sound: but O that is little to what you shall see and hear above.

The greatest manifestations of God here below are but a faint shadow of the beatific vision above. When Moses was talking a little with God in the mount, and saw his back-parts from the clefts of the rock, it made his face so glorious, that the people could not behold it without a vail; but, O how will Moses' face and all about him shine now! It was little that he saw then, to what he sees now and what we (if believers) will see ere long.

Peter was so transported on the mount with a sight of Christ's transfiguration, and Moses and Elias talking with him, that he was in an ecstasy of admiration, and said, "Master, it is good for us to be here, let us build tabernacles;" *q. d.* let us dwell still here, and not go down to you vain empty world again; here's better company and purer delights. But O how much more is Peter ravished with wonder now! This was but a small part of that glory which Peter and the saints above see there.

O believers! you ought on a communion-day to get up to the mount of meditation, as Moses did to Mount Nebo, and view this promised land; and as you see it, you ought to long for it, and also "rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" and say, 'O shall I ere long join with that one hundred and forty thousand that follow the Lamb? Shall I bear a part in that heavenly comfort? Shall all tears be wiped from my eyes? Shall my poor dying body be turned into a glorious star? Shall I be for ever with the Lord, and drink of the rivers of pleasures that run clear as crystal alongst the banks of eternity, and whose streams make glad the city of God?

And shall not my heart leap for joy at the prospect of it? The night is far spent, the day is at hand, the sun is at the rising, and will not a believer rejoice in the hope of it!

The wise men, when they but saw the star that pointed out where Christ was, yet it is said, "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy," Mat. ii. 10. But, O believing communicant! thou wilt shortly *see the Star of Jacob*, namely Christ himself, who is the "bright morning Star," shining in his glory; and will not that cause far more joy to thee? If the disciples returned from the sepulchre with great joy, when they but got the news that Christ was risen from the dead, what joy will it be to thee, to see him risen and reigning in his glory, and thyself raised from the grave to reign eternally with him?

Well, then, let a communion-day, and the comforts of it, put thee in mind of that happy state, and raise suitable desires and affections in thee towards it, and make thee long, and say, 'Lord, these joys are too great to enter into me now: O make me fit to enter into them!'

*Lastly.* As far as time and strength can allow, the evening of a communion-Sabbath should be spent in secret and family duties. I acknowledge our frail bodies may be much fatigued by our long attendance, intensesness, and abstinence this day; but, O if we could say this evening, and particularly ministers and elders, who had greater work this day upon their hands than others, that though we may be weary with our work, yet we are not weary of this work: for it is Christ's work, which is both pleasant and profitable, and carries its own reward in its bosom.

And since your bodies must be refreshed this night, and you must entertain some fellowship with others, there ought to be a more divine and heavenly air upon your conversations at this time than ordinary: let your carriage and discourse be such as becomes those who have been on the mount this day with God, that others may take notice of you, that you have been with Jesus.

When you see the table covered this night, or supper set upon it, you may think or say, 'Now I am come from a communion-table to a communion-table; from tasting of the upper springs, to share of the nether springs; from feeding on manna, to eat the bread that perisheth; how great is the change of my fare! Lord, let not this table be a snare to me, nor anywise tend to divert my

mind, either from the sweet table I have been at, or that blessed table above I would be at.' We may likewise take occasion to admire the infinite bounty and goodness of God to both our souls and bodies; O what pains and cost he is at with us! At our common-tables we see his beasts killed to maintain the life of our bodies, and at the communion-table we have seen his dear Son slain to preserve the life of our souls. In the last place, keep a watchful eye upon all your thoughts and words this night; look well to the frames of your souls. Hath God shed abroad his love this day in your heart? Then keep yourselves in the love of God. Lie down this night with sweet thoughts of Christ, fervently praying for a rich blessing upon the day's work, and for his gracious presence on the morrow, that the last day of the feast may be the greatest and sweetest.

### SECTION III.

*Containing Directions to all Communicants in general, concerning their after-conversation in the World.*

REMEMBER you have been covenanting with God, and taking solemn vows on yourselves at the Lord's table; see that your conversation be suitable hereunto. You have been admitted to great honours and special privileges; see then that ye show your thankfulness to God, the author of your mercies, by the love of your hearts, the praises of your lips, and exemplariness of your lives. But, more particularly, observe these following directions:

I. Study to be true and faithful soldiers to your General, whose colours you have solemnly sworn to. You have come under a sacramental oath to God: see that you keep it sacred and inviolable. The Psalmist gives it as a mark of a man that will go to heaven, Psal. xv. that he keeps his oaths and promises, even though it should be to his hurt and prejudice. How much more, then, should a man be careful to keep his oaths and engagements he comes under to God in the sacrament, when it is greatly for his good and advantage so to do? O communicant! be faithful to the Captain of your salvation, abide by his standard, desert him not in the day of battle, go not over to his enemies' camp. Remember what he hath done and suffered for you, and let the love of Christ constrain you

to abide with him. Plutarch tells us of the soldiers of Pompey, that when he could not keep them in the camp by any persuasion, yet when Pompey threw himself on the ground, saying, 'If ye will go, ye shall trample on your general,' it is said they were overcome, and persuaded to stay. So your General, Christ, when in the garden, threw himself on the ground, wrestling in an agony, to save you from sin, and stop your career to hell: O, then, do not trample on your General, but stop your self-destroying course, and abide with your Saviour. We read, 2 Sam. xx. 12, that David's soldiers, while marching very fast, when they saw the dead body of Amasa, lying in the way, viz., their general wallowing in blood, they stopt their march and stood still. O communicant! though formerly thou hast been marching furiously in the ways of sin, yet when thou seest the mangled, wounded, pierced, and crucified body of thy Saviour before thee, thou shouldst stop thy course, and proceed no further. Oh! do not trample on thy wounded General, do not despise his bleeding wounds, nor forget his dying love. Keep stedfastly your sacramental oath, and never act contrary to it. Beware of plotting against him, or corresponding with traitors. Let it never be heard, that any of Christ's sworn soldiers shall either desert or betray their renowned General. If ye would be faithful soldiers to Christ your General, then carefully obey his orders, courageously adhere to his interest, valiantly fight for his cause, manfully resist his enemies, and abide by his standard to the very last. "Be thou faithful to the death, and thou shalt get the crown of life," Rev. ii. 10.

## DIRECTION II.

*Study to be active and diligent in a Course of new Obedience, after the Sacrament.*

YOU should now walk circumspectly; be more humble and pious towards God, more just and righteous towards man, and more sober and temperate towards yourselves. Have a sincere respect to every commanded duty; keep the Sabbath more exactly, hear more attentively, pray more fervently, meditate more frequently, and see to watch over your hearts, your words, and your ways, more diligently, that so you may please God, walk worthy of

Christ, walk worthy of the covenant, of the sacrament, of the kingdom, of the gospel and grace of God. Let your present deportment be answerable to your future preferment; and see that there be some proportion betwixt your privileges and your duties.

It should be with a man, after his communion with God in the sacrament, as it was with Jacob after his communion with God in Bethel, Gen. xxix. 1. "Then Jacob lift up his feet," as it is in the original, "and came into the land of the people of the East." And after Jacob had met with God, then he lift up his feet, *i. e.* he went on his journey with strength, with spirit and cheerfulness. So, after we have had fellowship with God in the sacrament, we should, in the strength of that meal, lift up our feet, and go on cheerfully and resolutely in our journey towards heaven. Nay, we should, like Jehoshaphat, not only have our hands and feet, but also our "hearts lift up in the ways of the Lord." We should now run his errands most readily, sing in his ways, and serve him with alacrity. When God calls us to any duty, we should presently answer the first intimation of his will; "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." O communicant! thou oughtest now to be swift to hear every one of God's calls: be like the Psalmist, Psal. xxvii. 8. "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Though before I have neglected to seek thee in public with others, and in private by myself, and been, alas! very negligent in the duties of thy worship; yet now I will begin to read the Scriptures, praise thy name, and pray diligently, not only in society with others, but also by myself in secret, and do all these duties of holiness that mine oath at the sacrament doth bind me unto. And see that you resolve and perform all these, leaning to the strength of your covenanted Redeemer.

### DIRECTION III.

*Abandon all your former known Sins, and strictly guard against them after the Sacrament.*

REMEMBER what Paul saith, Eph. iv. 28. "Let him that stole steal no more," &c. In like manner, say I, let him that profaned God's name, profane it no more; let him that swore by faith, conscience, &c., swear no more; let

him that lied, lie no more; let him that used to break the Sabbath, get drunk, cheat, be unclean, &c., do so no more. Hath Christ been washing you in the laver of his blood? O do not go back to wallow in the mire. Did he speak peace to you at the table? O do not turn again to folly.

Let never that be charged upon communicants that was laid to Israel's charge of old, Exod. xxxii. 6. "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Oh! will any sit down to eat and drink at the Lord's table, and then rise up to play the wanton, play the prodigal, play the apostate, and join with the enemies of God? Surely O communicant! if thou shouldst do so, thy sins would not be of an ordinary dye: they will be very heinously aggravated, and far more grievous and piercing to Jesus Christ than the sins of many others. David was not much troubled at Shimei's railing, but Absalom's rebellion pierced his very soul, 2 Sam. xvi. 12. "Behold, my son which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life." So may Christ say, the sins of the wicked are no surprising thing, but the sins of communicants are very piercing: "He that did eat bread with me, hath lift up the heel against me," Psal. xli. 9.

O believer! hath Christ delivered thee from sin and Satan, hell and wrath? and, wilt thou rebel against thy deliverer? O! wilt thou thus requite the Lord for his marvellous loving-kindness? Mayst thou not say, with the Jews, after their return from the Babylonish captivity, Ezra ix. 13, 14. "After such a deliverance as this, should I again break thy commandments, wouldst thou not be angry with me, till thou hadst consumed me?" If I should again join with the wicked, and return to my old sins, O what a dreadful place in hell might I look for!

#### DIRECTION IV.

*Keep a watchful eye, and a strong guard, against the Temptations of Satan, upon the back of a Sacrament.*

SATAN is never more busy, nor more violent to tempt and draw men to sin, than when they are newly come from the Lord's table: Why? He is exceedingly malicious and hellish in his enmity against souls: and he knows, if he can draw them into sin upon the back of such a near approach to God, it is the way to make their sins

out of measure sinful before God, and exceedingly to widen the breach betwixt God and their souls. Look how Sennacherib dealt with Hezekiah, after he had reformed the church, settled the worship of God, and put all in good order, 2 Chron. xxxii. 1. There it is said, "After these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib, King of Assyria, came and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself; in like manner doth Satan deal with communicants, after they have been at the sacrament, and have renewed their covenant with God, and established their resolutions against the commission of sin, and for the performance of duty; after these things will the devil come with all his forces, and encamp against the fenced cities, (the communicants' hearts,) and seek to win them for himself. He hath an army of stratagems, wiles, devices, snares, and temptations, always at command; and he lays many ambushments against the communicant: Oh! what need have we to be on our guard after such a solemn ordinance, and to labour to foresee and prevent Satan's hellish designs against us! It were happy if we could say with the apostle, "We are not ignorant of his devices."

O communicant! when Satan comes to tempt thee to sin after the sacrament, say, What! wouldst thou have me perjured before God? Shall I, who have been at God's table, and have ate and drank with him, lift up my heel against him? Shall I take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? Shall I defile that body wherein he hath chosen to reside? Shall I force him out of his habitation by any impurity, or offend him by entertaining noisome thoughts, or the vile suggestions of that unclean spirit? Shall these hands, that have received the sacred elements work deceit? Shall these eyes, that have been filled with tears at the Lord's table, be filled with lust or envy? Shall the mouth that hath drank of the consecrated wine, be full of rotten discourse? Imitate Joseph when tempted, flee with haste out of temptation's way, and say, "How shall I do this wickedness, and sin against God?" Or say with the sponse, "I have washed my feet how shall I defile them?" I have washed my soul, how shall I pollute it with sin? I have taken on with Christ, and how shall I turn my back on so good a master? "Get thee behind me, Satan."

## DIRECTION V.

*Study that blessed Art, of improving and feeding on the Sacrament and a crucified Jesus represented therein, after you are gone from it.*

WE should not only feed on Christ while at the sacrament, but should continue to feed on Christ, the matter of this feast, when the communion-table is removed. As the Israelites in the wilderness, they did not only drink of the rock when they were at it, but, after they were removed and gone from it, they still continued to drink of it. But how could that be? The apostle tells us, that "the rock followed them," 1 Cor. x. 4; *i. e.* the water that issued out of the rock followed them as they journeyed in all their stages and removes. So, when we are gone from the clefts of the rock that were streaming to us in the sacrament, we should continue to make use of these streams, and share of the virtue and efficacy of this water of life, which follows us, and streams after us all the while we are travelling in the wilderness of this world, until we come home to the heavenly Canaan. And as the streams of the rock not only followed, but also accompanied the Israelites, and run before them too, so we must have Christ with us, and depend on him every step of our journey, and likewise have our eye still upon him as our guide and leader to heaven. O that we could learn the heavenly art of living by faith on the Son of God; by a continued dependence on him, and making application to him for righteousness and strength: righteousness for removing our guilt, and justifying our persons before God; and strength for performing duties, conquering lusts, and bearing of crosses! O that we could come with our daily sins and pollutions to a crucified Jesus, and make renewed and daily application of that blood we were bathing our souls with in the sacrament! May we still drink of the spiritual Rock, and daily find the virtue, efficacy, and benefit of the sacrament following and streaming after us while we are in the wilderness! May we constantly meditate on the love and death of our lovely Jesus, carry the print of the nails in our hearts, and continually bear about with us the dying of the Lord Jesus, that we may look still to him, draw nourishment

from him, and walk on in the strength of the spiritual meal we have been receiving, till we come to perfection.

## DIRECTION VI.

*Endeavour to keep up a lively and lasting impression of the Vows of God upon you.*

CONSIDER seriously the engagements you have come under at the sacrament: you have done like the people of Judah in Nehemiah's time, Neh. x. 29, who entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God's law, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord. It is a solemn oath, and a fearful imprecation you come under at the Lord's table, to be faithful subjects and servants to Christ; you swear allegiance to the King of heaven, over the broken body and shed blood of the Lamb of God: you imprecate upon yourselves, that a cup of wrath may be put in your hands, instead of the cup of the New Testament, if you deal falsely with God in his covenant which you do here seal. Now, if you perjure yourselves, consider the hazard; you incur not only all the curses of God's law, but the sore vengeance of his gospel also; you not only draw down upon you the wrath of a just God, but likewise the wrath of a merciful Mediator; and whom have you to interpose for you, if he be against you?

O communicant, if thou shouldst, like Samson, break all these bands asunder, and venture to fetch that sacrifice away from the altar which thou hadst tied to it with such strong cords of oaths, vows, and covenants; mayst thou not expect to bring fire from the altar along with it, that will consume thee?

There are some who remember their vows no longer than the sacrament lasts: while they are at the Lord's table, they have perhaps some sense of their obligations to serve God, and leave sin; but when they rise and depart from the table, the sense of their engagements departs from them. I have read of the Abyssines, that after the sacrament they think it not lawful for them to spit that day till the setting of the sun. This is superstition in them, but yet their superstition will rise up in judgment against the profane carriage of many after the sacrament. Would they not spit that day? What

shall we think of those who so soon forget their vows, that they do not stick to spit in Christ's face on that very day they eat his bread, by their loose and ungodly practices afterwards.

There are others not quite so gross, that will lay themselves under some restrictions for a day or two after the sacrament; but then, alas! they drop all their engagements, and return to their former sinful liberties. Oh! doth the sacramental covenant bind but for a day or two? Doth the efficacy of that solemn ordinance last no longer with you? Is not the bond thereof as strong on thy conscience the next month, or the next year, as the very day thou receivest? The sacrament of baptism is but once administered, and that in our infancy; and yet we own that the baptismal vow and covenant doth bind to the day of our death, though we should live an hundred years. Now, is it not the same covenant and vow we renew at the Lord's supper, which we make in baptism? Why then should not the bond in this sacrament be as binding and lasting as in the other?

O communicant! keep up always upon thy spirit a fresh sense of thy sacramental covenant; renew the impressions thereof every morning in thy secret retirements, and then thou wilt be in a better case to beat off all the temptations to apostasy through the day. Say still to temptations, tempt me not from my allegiance and fidelity; the vows of God are upon me, sealed at the sacrament, and recorded in heaven; not one of my fellow-communicants but will be witnesses for God, that they saw me personally and publicly own and renew my covenant with him; wherefore, for my oath's sake, and those that sat with me, I will not do this evil, and sin against God. Shall I alienate and pollute the heart so solemnly devoted to God? Shall I make light of my oath, turn disloyal to my King, and false to my God? Shall I ever be so ingrate or perfidious, as forget his kindness to me, or my vows to him? Shall he escape that doth such things? Or shall he break the covenant and be delivered?

Thou hast great need to pray that God may fix the lasting impression of thy vows upon thy heart; for it is naturally deceitful, prone to forget God, and seek after the vanities of time. Cry with the Psalmist, Psal. cxix. 36, 37. "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and

not unto covetousness; turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way." Let me never be so eager upon the world, as to forget to retire to converse with my Saviour; let me never so perplex myself with worldly business, as to omit to pray, to meditate, to read, and sing due praises to my God. No, no; I will say to the world and all time's things, "I am not at my own disposal: I have sworn and will perform that I will keep God's righteous judgments." O how deeply am I obliged to him that has paid my debt! What shall I render unto the Lord! Lord, though I can do nothing that is satisfactory, let me do something gratulatory. Christ gave himself a sin-offering for me, let me give myself a thank-offering to him; let me offer up myself a living sacrifice to my Redeemer, who offered up himself a dying sacrifice for my redemption.

#### DIRECTION VII.

*See that you crucify Sin, after you have been seeing Christ crucified set forth before your eye in the Sacrament.*

HATH sin been so cruel as to put to death the Son of God? See that henceforth you have no pity upon the murderer of Christ your Saviour. As Saul eyed David to kill him, so do you eye these traitors, your sins, from this day forward, to kill and destroy them. Never correspond or parley with them any more; never entertain a favourable thought of them, nor give them a kind look again, seeing they have done so horrid and inexcusable a deed.

O communicant! hast thou seen Christ struggling to satisfy justice for sin, and save thee from it? and will you, after all, choose wilfully to walk in sin? will you not burn the spear that pierced him, and break in pieces the nails that crucified him? Every one of Christ's wounds is a mouth opened to plead for wounding and killing of sin. Had you seen Christ wrestling in the garden, in his bloody agony, sweating great drops of blood, lying on the ground: had you heard him utter these words, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:" had you seen his soul beset on all hands by

your bloody sins, and even brought to a nonplus, John xii. 27. when he knew not (to speak with reverence) well what to say: had you seen him bound, led and nailed to the cross, with a black angry cloud upon his soul, crying out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" would you not have vowed a revenge upon sin? O could you have loved or hugged the soldier, or been fond of the spear that pierced his blessed side? Well, O communicant! this thou dost when thou huggest thy sins, and especially when thou entertainest thy predominant lust, or darling sin, your other sins are as the nails in his hands and feet, but this is as the spear that made a great wound in his side, and went nearer his heart than any of the rest.

Oh! never suffer sin to live any more in you, that would not suffer your Saviour to live in the world; never allow that a room in your heart, that would not allow him a room among the living on earth. O beware of crucifying Christ afresh. Never dispute any more, when a temptation is presented, whether Christ or Barabbas should be preferred; your lusts denied, or Christ crucified; but presently cry out against your lusts, "Crucify them, crucify them." Have you seen God taking off your former burdens, and laying them upon the back of his dear Son, who willingly took them on for you, though they pressed him down to the earth? O then go not to lay any more loads upon him! Hath he taken you, and washed you from your sins in his own blood? O do not return, with the sow that is washed, to her wallowing in the mire. Hath the Lord been graciously sealing the pardon of your sins? Go not to turn his grace into wantonness, by venturing to run on in a new score. If you have washed your feet in the blood of the Lamb, O beware of defiling them again.

#### DIRECTION VIII.

*Walk always under a sense of God's all-seeing eye upon you in every thing you do.*

A HOLY and circumspect walk is what every communicant should endeavour, especially after the sacrament; this would tend not only to your own peace and comfort, but also to the glory of God, and the promoting of his in-

terest and kingdom in the world. Were your lives tender, circumspect and shining in holiness before the world, there would be little need of miracles to confirm the word, or convert infidels; for your conversations would allure strangers, and mightily recommend religion unto them, so that they might thereby be drawn to seek acquaintance with the God of holy communicants, as Nebuchadnezzar was with the God of Daniel; and thus you would be the instruments of "turning many to righteousness," and so "shine as the stars for ever and ever."

Now if you would shine in a holy walk and exemplary conversation, then you must, like Caleb, "walk after God," Num. xiv. 24, you must imitate him in his holiness and purity. Again, you must, like Enoch, "walk with God," Gen. v. 22, live in communion and fellowship with him. And then, you must, like Abraham, "walk before God," Gen. xvii. 1, live and carry as those who believe he hath a special eye upon you in all that you do: and when you go about any action or business, spiritual or temporal, say to your souls, 'I have a watchful eye over me, that pierceth into all my thoughts, that discovers the principles from which I am acting, and the ends to which I move; let me act, then, as one that still believes this, as one that shortly must be accountable to God for all I do, and I know not how soon.' Or say to that purpose, 'Now I am going about such a business, such a duty; and, if Christ shall send for me at the end of it, what account will I be able to give of my management to him? What do I know, but at the end of this duty I may either be in Abraham's bosom, or in a gulf of misery?'

Walk now in all your steps as if you saw Christ crucified before you, breathing forth his dying love to lost sinners, and pouring out his blood to cleanse them from sin. Would not that be a great awe-band upon you to restrain you from sin? Walk now as a damned soul would walk, were he again to live under the offers of mercy; how diligently, think you, would he obey, how fervently would he pray, and how peremptorily would he reject all temptations to sin! So ought every sincere communicant to do that intends to please God, and walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called.

## DIRECTION IX.

*Endeavour to walk cheerfully and contentedly under every Lot and Condition.*

YOU may look for trials and difficulties while you sojourn in this world ; but, in the midst of all, you should aim to be much in the eunuch's frame, after the seal of baptism, Acts viii. 39, who " went on his way rejoicing." Have you got the seal of God's covenant ? Then, whatever your afflictions be, you cannot but have a reviving cordial, for your sins are pardoned. Let not worthy communicants say they are sick, when their iniquities are forgiven them. Should they walk dejectedly, who have got an interest in the new covenant secured, and all the promises and privileges of it ratified and confirmed to them ? For what do they want but is to be had here ? Whatsoever is a blessing is secured here, either sanctified riches or a contented poverty.

A worthy communicant may say, let God do with me as he will in this world. I desire to be content, seeing he hath engaged himself to be with me in all states and conditions, and to order all things for my advantage ; surely he cannot lie, he cannot deny himself ; all his words are oaths for their certainty, and all his promises the sure mercies of David. Let my covenanted God choose out my lot for me, surely it shall be with more wisdom and more affection than I can choose for myself. He whom almighty wisdom and goodness takes a fatherly care of, and hath engaged to feed, cannot but have enough. If Christ be mine, all things are mine, nothing is excluded, where he is included.

## DIRECTION X.

*Delight in the Company of the People of God.*

SHAKE off all ungodly society, and have your heart linked to all those that bear Christ's image. Set the Psalmist's example before your eyes in this matter, Psal. cxix. 115, " Depart from me, ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God." And, ver. 63, " I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep

thy precepts." It is a true saying of Solomon's, Prov. xiii. 20, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Make the liveliest of God's people your greatest intimates, and upon all occasions improve their fellowship to the best advantage. Beware of the cooling of your affections to the people of God; but let that divine sentence still run in your minds, 1 John iv. 11, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Let the love of God, manifested to you at the sacrament, engage you to carry lovingly and affectionately to all his people. Henceforth behave yourselves as servants of the same family, branches of the same vine, members of the same body, and children of the same Father.

#### DIRECTION XI.

*Study to shine in the graces of Meekness, Patience, and forgiving of Injuries.*

THIS is the way to make you like your glorious Redeemer and pattern; and this is the way to adorn the profession of religion, and to make it amiable in the eyes of strangers. And surely all those who have been sharers of God's infinite mercy and goodness in the sacrament, will come away from it with a disposition to bear injuries, and a readiness to forgive those that do them wrong.

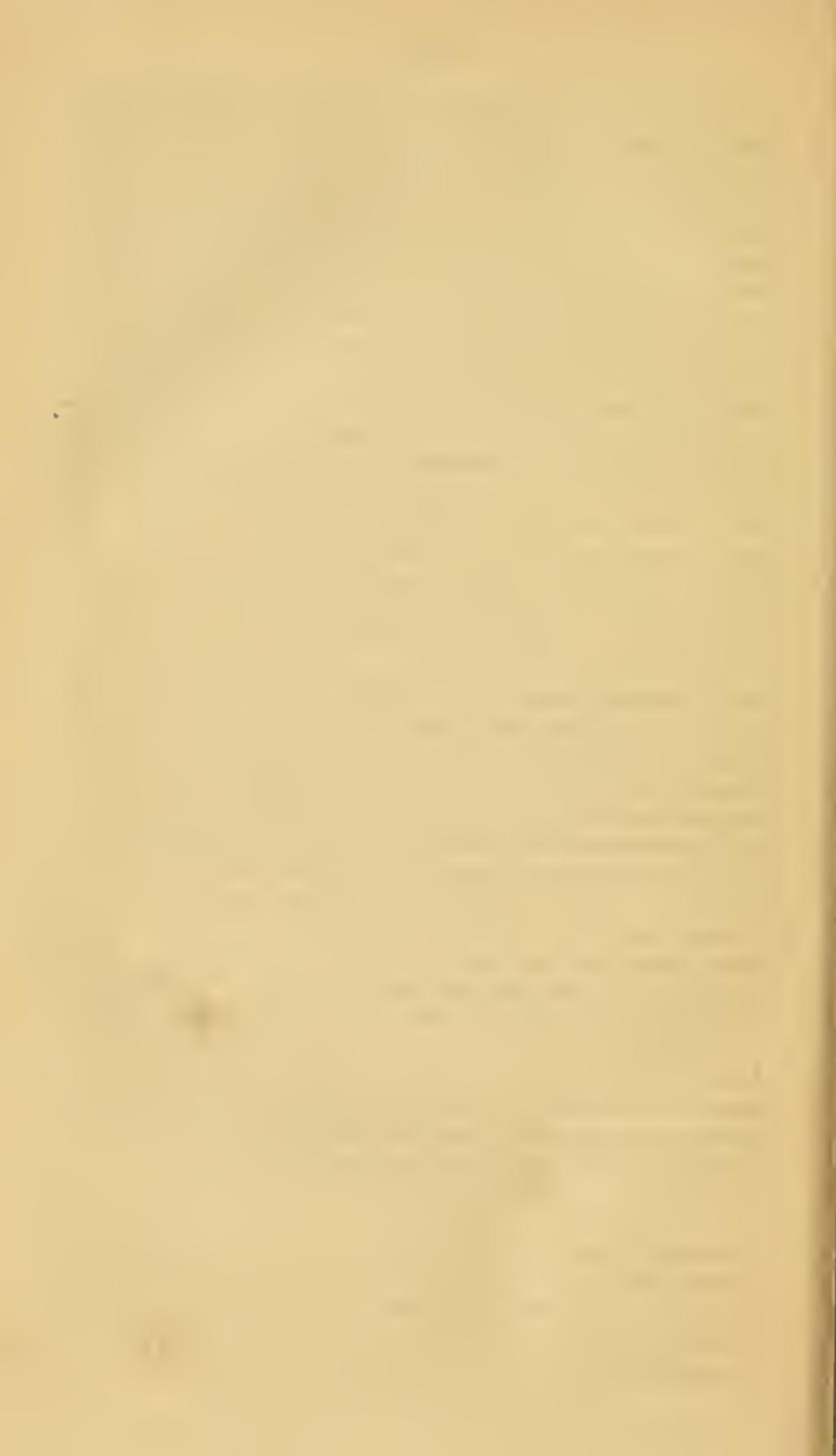
#### DIRECTION XII.

*Labour to keep up Constant Longings for Communion-occasions here below, and for the Eternal Supper of the Lamb above.*

SURELY those who have met with Christ in this ordinance will be breathing for further discoveries of his sweetness and beauty. You ought to be saying, like Moses when he came down from the mount, "I beseech thee, Lord, show me thy glory:" let me have new manifestations of thy excellency, fresh intimations of thy love, and clearer discoveries of thy will. Oh! when will the opportunity return? When shall I come and appear before God? When shall I again see his power and glory in the sanctuary? When shall I taste his love and goodness again

in the sacrament? When shall I again behold his well-covered table, sit down thereat with his children, and be satisfied as with marrow and fatness?

But, seeing this lower table is transient and uncertain, look for one to come which is fixed and abiding: Yet a little while, saith Christ, and I will see you again, and I will come and receive you to myself. O believer! your lovely Bridegroom will keep his word and his day, he will come and marry you to himself for ever; therefore, ever stand upon thy watch-tower, wishfully looking for his appearance; never slack thy watch, nor let thy expectation cool, till he come and take thee home to himself, and set you down at the higher table, where he shall for ever lay aside his vail, and his amiable countenance never more be clouded with frowns; where you shall not have a sacramental but a beatifical vision; where you shall not remember him, but behold him as he is; where you shall feed on him without signs, and see him without a vail; where all your sorrows shall be turned into joy; where, for every reproach you meet with in God's service, you shall reap eternal honour; for every hour of sorrow, you shall enjoy endless ages of comfort. "Make haste, my beloved: let the day break, and shadows flee away. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Take me to that place where mysteries shall be turned into revelations, faith into vision, hope into fruition, espousals into embraces, sorrowful sighs into nuptial songs, drops of tears into rivers of pleasures; transient glances into the radiant and direct beams of the Sun of righteousness; short tastes into everlasting feasting and fulness. How small are the comforts of the lower table, if compared with those of the higher table! How dark are the discoveries believers have here, if compared with those bright manifestations above! But, because I have insisted on this head formerly, I shall add no more here upon it; but wish that we may come at length experimentally to know the difference, to our everlasting comfort.



## APPENDIX.



MEDITATIONS *and* EJACULATIONS *proper before partaking of the Holy Sacrament.*

### MEDITATION I.

I AM now called to celebrate the memorials of my Lord's death at his table; my strait is great, I know not what to do; my need is so great I cannot think of staying back; and my preparation so little, I know not how to go forward. Lord, what shall I say? My guilt stops my mouth, and fills me with blushing: but glory to God, thy goodness is greater than my sinfulness, and thy mercy surpasseth my misery; for though my sins reach even unto the clouds, yet thy mercy is above the heavens. Lord, hear not the cry of my sins, but hear the cry of my wants and miseries. Holy God, if thou help me not for the sake of my miseries which I have deserved, yet help me for the sake of thy mercies which thou hast promised in Christ thy Son. Doth not his precious blood cry louder for pardon than my sins for punishment? Lord, hear the cry of that blood, and let it not be as water spilt upon the ground. Good Lord, for the sake of that blood, pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek thee, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. Lord, I trust not in my faith, but in thy faithfulness; not in my repentance, but in thy gracious pardon; not in my preparation, but in thy acceptance. O take away my filthy garments, and clothe me with the best robe, "The Lord our righteousness."

### MEDITATION II.

I AM now going to seal a covenant with God in Christ; Lord, help me to a covenanting frame. O let me be grieved for my long distance, and slighting thy kind offers, and preferring Satan's drudgery to Christ's service. Let me be convinced of my sinking and perishing state

while on the old bottom of a covenant of works, that I may be willing to flee from it to a covenant of grace and a borrowed righteousness. Let me now come to an open rupture with all the enemies of God, break league with sin, Satan, and the world, renounce self-righteousness, and be content to embrace Christ in all his offices, and give up myself and all that I have unto the Lord, and engage, in Christ's strength, to walk in all the ways of new obedience; and now, when God is setting tryst with me at his holy table to conclude this blessed bargain, yea even for me to sign and seal a marriage-contract with Christ, and that in a very solemn manner, before all the persons of the glorious Trinity, before the elect angels, before Christ's ambassadors, and all the congregation, Lord, strengthen me to keep tryst with him. There have been many meetings and trysts about this grand affair to no effect. The world, Satan, and sin, have formerly broke off this treaty; God forbid they do it now. O that the long-spoke-of match betwixt a crucified Jesus and my soul may now hold! This may be the last tryst that ever Christ will set; it may be now or never with me. Surely the Bridegroom must be in earnest when he is to put on his marriage-ropes, his dyed garments, his red apparel, and to come with the marriage-contract in his hand, and lay it down on the table for me to sign. O that I may be fully content to go with the man *Christ*, when he thus asks my consent: I may say with Thomas, "He is my Lord, and my God;" and with the spouse, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." I accept of him in all his offices, his laws as well as his love, his cross as well as his crown. I take him as a priest upon his throne.

### MEDITATION III.

O WHAT a beautiful and lovely bridegroom is he that now is in my offer! how delicate is his complexion, he is white and ruddy; white in regard of his innocence, and ruddy in respect of his bloody passion! how peerless is his person! how ravishing his beauty! how charming his voice! how stately his goings! how fragrant are his garments, they smell of aloes and cassia! Though I should seek all the world, I cannot find his equal; one sight of him is enough to ravish the hearts of men and angels; his locks are black and bushy as the raven; his lips are

like lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh; his legs as pillars of marble set upon sockets of gold; his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars; yea, he is altogether lovely: can my heart now refuse this lovely one? especially when I think how he loved me and died for me, and hath appointed his portraiture, with the mark of his wounds, to be put in my hands at his table, and all to win my heart. O that there I may view it narrowly, and remember him kindly! How many were the wounds he received from me, by the thorns which pierced his head, by the pincers that plucked his hair, by the scourges that tore his back, by the nails that pierced his hands and feet, and by the spear that opened his side! Let me view him in that case, and love him: for though he be bleeding, wounded, and mangled by my sins, he is still fairer than all the sons of men, yea, and all the sons of God too: for faith then doth see him to be white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.

#### MEDITATION IV.

Now I am going to a great feast, let me examine if I be a welcome guest, one upon whom the Master of the feast will smile. O then, can I say in sincerity, I am one of his heart-friends? Good news! for he says, "Eat, O friends," Cant. v. 1. Or, can I say, that I am a sensible sinner? Good news! for he says, "He came not to call the righteous but such sinners as these," Mat. xi. 13. Can I say, sin is my greatest burden? Good news! for he bids the heavy laden come to him for rest, Mat. xi. 28. Can I say, I am sick, and groan under my diseases? Good news! for he says, the Physician chooseth to converse with such, Mat. ix. 12. Can I say, I am poor and needy? Good news! for he tells me the needy shall not be forgotten, Psal. ix. 18. Can I say, I hunger and thirst for a crucified Christ? Good news! "for he fills the hungry with good things," Luke, i. 53. Can I say, my heart loves Christ? Good news! for he says, "He will manifest himself to such," John xiv. 21. Can I say, my heart is open to Christ's offers, and consents to him in all his offices? Good news! for he says, "If any man hear his voice, and open the door to him, he will come in, and they shall sup together," Rev. iii. 20. Have I put on the wedding-garment of imputed righteousness?

I shall neither be excluded nor neglected. Lord, I am assured thou art more willing to give the Spirit to them that ask it, than loving parents are willing to give bread to their hungry children: for what is our compassion to our children, in comparison of thine? O Lord, I rest upon thy word, for thou art not more free in making promises, than faithful in making them good. Thou art a God that keeps covenant to a thousand generations. Why then, I will venture in hope to thy holy table.

### MEDITATION V.

LORD, enable me beforehand to take frequent views of my work at thy holy table, and wisely to consider how to manage it when the time cometh. I have three graces then to be exerted, faith, love, and godly sorrow. I have three subjects of meditation at the time, Christ's passion, Christ's affection, and my own corruption. Who can think of Christ's sufferings without sorrow, and of his blood without tears, if he but firmly believe that amazing word, Isa. liii. 5. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities!" Surely Christ's love, in its heat, may well thaw the most frozen spirit. Can I see my loving Jesus substitute in my room and stead, God acting against him as an inexorable Judge, Jehovah running against him as a giant, not only withdrawing his loving-kindness from him, but making him the butt of his envenomed arrows, and not be filled with love to my Saviour, and sorrow for my sins? Oh! my sins were the thorns which pierced his head, the nails which pierced his hands, and the spear that pierced his heart. My cursed sins put the Lord of life to a cruel death. When my Lord was in the garden, no Judas nor Pilate, no Jew nor Gentile was there, to cause his amazing horror of soul, and fearful sweat of blood. But, oh! my unbelief, my pride, my carnality, my hypocrisy and other sins, were there, and with their weight pressed him to the ground, and brought that agony and sweat upon him. Oh! my dissimulation was the traitorous kiss; my ambition the thorny crown; my drinking iniquity like water, the potion of gall and vinegar; my want of tears caused him to weep blood; my forsaking of God made him to be forsaken of God; my soul being

exceeding guilty, made his soul exceeding heavy. Lord, prepare and fix my heart to meditate upon Christ's soul-sufferings for my soul's sins!

### MEDITATION VI.

O FOR faith's view of the love of Christ! surely a right sight of it is sufficient to mollify a heart more cold and frozen than ice itself. O love unfathomable! who can measure its dimensions? It hath a height without a top, a depth without a bottom, a breadth without a side, a length without end: Wonderful! that my Lord should stoop to become a man, a poor man, a dying and a dead man; nay, more, that he should be made a curse, and underlie a dreadful load of wrath upon his innocent soul, yea, infinitely more than any damned soul in hell can bear: O what a sea of wrath did Christ swim through, to save me from perishing! That sea wrought, and was tempestuous; it roared most terribly, and threatened to swallow me up, with the rest of the elect world. But how seasonably did Christ offer himself to be the sacrifice for calming the sea! "Take me, (saith he as Jonah,) throw me in, and ye shall be all safe." In this red sea, our blessed Jonah was content to swim for thirty-three years, and never desires deliverance, till the sea is perfectly calm, and every elect soul is out of danger. God help me to remember and admire redeeming love and redeeming blood, at my Redeemer's table. See that blood, O blessed Jesus, that ran from thy holy heart and blessed side, wash me from all sin, and cause showers of blessing to fall upon me: "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." O say to me as to the leper, "I will, be thou clean." If Christ be coming to me in streams of blood, let me rise and meet him with floods of tears. Lord, descend thou into my heart by the influences of thy spirit, and let me ascend unto thee, by the actings of my grace. "While the king sits at the table, let my spike-nard send forth the smell thereof." I may well cry with Jehoshaphat, Lord, I have no ability, no might for this great ordinance, neither know I what to do, but my eyes are unto thee. Help, Lord, for I rest on thee, and in thy name I go forward to this awful table. "If thy presence go not with me, carry me not hence. I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention

of thy righteousness, even of thine only. Awake, O north wind, and come thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices may flow out."

*MEDITATIONS and EJACULATIONS proper in time of Partaking, or in time of Serving the Communion Table.*

### MEDITATION I.

O LET not that which God hath instituted as a blessing, be made a curse to me through my unworthy partaking of it. Wherefore, Lord, rebuke at this time all unseasonable thoughts and imaginations; stir up and act in me every grace of thy Holy Spirit; and help me so to behave now, that I may not provoke but glorify thee, that I may not increase my guilt, but augment my grace. My request now is that of the spouse, "Lord, draw me, and I will run after thee." My soul is heavy with sin and guilt, and unfit to run; but when shall I move if not now, when I am near a lifted-up Saviour, who hath said, "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me;" *i. e.*, people of all tongues, kindreds, and languages; multitudes of all sorts, Jews and Gentiles. O let me be drawn among the rest! O what a drawing engine is a lifted-up Saviour on the cross, with his arms wide extended to embrace sinners! The first experiment was made of its virtue by the Apostle Peter, Acts ii., there were three thousand souls drawn to Christ at once; yea, whole nations have been drawn to him, by lifting up this blessed engine in the gospel offers: surely it hath not lost its virtue to this day: now it is lifted up in an eminent manner. O let me feel its power; let my heart be drawn off from the vanities of time and the love of sin! Let the cords of Christ's love draw my heart home to him! Now the devil is holding, but Christ is drawing: Satan indeed is the strong man, but Christ is stronger than he. Christ and the devil are fighting for my heart; the eyes of the glorious Trinity, the eyes of angels, ministers, and saints, are on me, to see what the issue will be. O let Christ gain the prize! It is his by right.

### MEDITATION II.

WHEN Christ was lifted up on the cross, his face was turned to the Gentiles, his eyes beheld the nations, and

all to draw us unto him ; there he bowed his head towards us, to draw my soul to him ; there he opened a cleft in his side, to draw me ; there blood and water flowed from his heart, to draw me. O what a drawing sight is it to see, by faith, my dear Lord nailed and lifted up on a cross, his royal visage turned pale, his head bowing, his side red with his own blood, and the streams of this precious blood watering his pierced feet ! O now let the King Jesus exert his dying power ! Lord, I can never move toward thee, if thou draw me not ; I can never overcome the pleasures of sin and the temptations of Satan, if thou give not a pull. Neither word nor sacrament, ministers nor angels, ordinances nor providences, judgments nor mercies, can draw this heavy heart of mine ; but I look beyond them all to my lifted up Saviour, who only can do it. Lord, I'll sit still in Sodom, if thou draw me not ; I'll die in my sins, if thou draw me not ; I'll be eternally damned, if thou draw me not. It will be a lifeless and lost ordinance, if thou draw me not. Lord, how easy is it for thee at this time to draw me ! One pull of thy grace, one touch of thy hand, nay, a look of thy countenance, one cast of thine eye, would do it. O now let me have it, to draw love from my heart, and tears from mine eyes ! Did Christ sweat blood and weep blood for my sins, and will I not weep tears for them ? O, shall I be more sparing of my tears for Christ, than Christ was of his blood for me ? How fast did the blood trickle down Christ's cheeks in the day he wore the crown of thorns for me ? but how slowly did the tears trickle down my cheeks in the day of commemorating his love ? If I get one tear to drop, with what difficulty can I get another to follow ? Blush, O hard heart, and dry eyes ! can I shed tears in plenty for a dead child or relation, and have I none reserved for a dead Saviour, a Saviour slain by my sins ? How sad to see how many weeping eyes at a funeral, and so many dry at a communion-table !

### MEDITATION III.

O now let the sight of a bleeding Saviour make me a weeping sinner ! Had I been upon Mount Calvary, and seen my dear Lord racked and nailed to the tree, had I seen him lifted up, beheld his dying looks, and heard his

dying groans, and seen his blood for many hours run from his hands and feet to the earth! O, could I have stood by with dry eyes, or an unconcerned heart, especially when I had considered that he suffered all this in my room, and for my sins? O then, should not I be as much concerned now, when I come to celebrate the memorial of that fearful tragedy? O what kind of blood is it that I see running down? Is it not innocent blood! precious blood! heart blood! nay, the blood of the Son of God, every drop whereof is of infinite value? and yet all shed for such vile worms and traitors as I am! Oh! can I see this blood run down in streams, and my eyes not pour out some drops! Shall I not give drops of water for streams of blood? Oh! what a hard heart is this of mine; can I see others weeping that sit at the same table, eat the same bread, and drink the same cup with me, and I cannot get one tear? Is God come and waiting with his bottle for my tears, and shall my eyes remain dry? Shall others drop tears plentifully into God's bottle, and shall not I have one tear for it? Astonishing goodness! that God should so carefully notice and observe his people's tears, that none of them can be lost! Lord, pity my hard heart, and give me such a look as thou gavest Peter, that may cause me weep, and weep bitterly, at the remembrance of my sins, my pride, my passion, my disobedience, which pierced my dearest Lord. O let this be the time of fulfilling that prophecy, Zech. xii. 10, "They shall look upon him they have pierced, and mourn!" O, when shall I mourn and weep, if not now, when I see Jesus my surety all red with blood, for my red and scarlet-coloured sins? Lord, what means the hardness of my heart, and the dryness of my eyes, at thy table? Oh! dost thou intend to reserve weeping for me in hell, where tears shall never be dried up? God forbid. Now is the time to weep. Lord, make this my weeping time, that hereafter I may rejoice!

#### MEDITATION IV.

Now is the time for me to draw nigh to my crucified Jesus. Lord, I will not stand afar off, and look to thee, as those who followed thee from Galilee to the cross, Luke xxiii. 49. No, I will come close to thee, and take a near and narrow look of thy wounds, and hear what

they say, when, like so many mouths, they are wide open to speak to me. Beside many lesser wounds, I behold five big wounds my Jesus has received for me, in each of his hands and feet, and in his side. Methinks I hear the language of the two wounds in his hands saying, Come to me and I will embrace you. Methinks I hear the language of the wounds in his feet, Run to me, cast yourselves down at them, and I will protect you from the avenger of blood. I hear the wound in his side saying, Look into my heart, and see it burning with love; flee to me, O trembling dove, and I'll shelter thee in the cleft of the Rock: "Behold the window opened in the side of the ark." O how sweet is the sound I hear! Lord, I obey thy voice to me; I quit all other shelters, and take my flight to these open wounds and clefts; Lord, "this is my rest, and here I will stay;" neither earth nor hell shall ever pluck me from this rest. O that, when I see how cheerfully a crucified Christ opened his heart and wounds to shelter me from justice, I may willingly open my heart to receive my wounded friend, and entertain him with the best I have! Awake, O my graces, faith, love, and repentance: What! can ye not watch with my dearest Saviour for one hour? O let my faith now feed on my Saviour's fulness, who bids me eat and drink abundantly! A man here without faith, is like the unbelieving lord, that seeth the plenty, but doth not eat of it. "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief. Increase my faith."

#### MEDITATION V.

LORD, I may well approach thy table in an admiring frame; for, though thou mightest justly have gathered us altogether this day for a sacrifice to thy justice, yet, instead of that, thou callest us together to intimate a sacrifice of thy own providing, which is sufficient for us all; nay, actually to behold the bleeding victim of the innocent Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world. Now, Lord, I know that thou lovest me, seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son, from me. Unsearchable love! I may well feel it, but I cannot fathom it. O the breadth, O the length, O the height, O the depth of the love of Christ, that passeth knowledge! Admirable is the wisdom of God, that found out a way,

through Christ, to satisfy both the demands of justice and the intreaties of mercy. Well may a crucified Christ be called the *Wisdom of God*.—When I take the cup of wine, let me not forget the *cup of wormwood* which my Saviour drank for my sake. “He drank of the brook in the way,” even the cup of God’s wrath, that I might drink the cup of blessing. O what shall I render for this love? This might have been the day that I might have been drinking the cup of the fierceness of God’s wrath, but, lo! there is he that hath done it for me. O thou who sparedst not thy Son for my sake, do thou now spare me for thy Son’s sake! Is not thy Son’s bloody death a sufficient satisfaction for all my sins, and a sufficient price for my redemption? is not the least drop of his blood of more value than a sea of mine? My sins have shed the blood of Christ, but, Lord, impute not the guilt but the merits of his blood unto me! My sin did shut me out of paradise; but here is the blood that opens the heavenly paradise for me again; here it gives me a right, and afterwards an admission; it is through this Red Sea I must enter into this heavenly Canaan. O my soul, thou art near the fountain of life, apply and live! Awake, O my faith, and receive the atonement; flame out my love, and enjoy the beloved! Now the wax is warm, O let the seal be stamped fair, that I may see the impression ever afterward!

## MEDITATION VI.

O HOW low was our fall, that nothing could raise us but the low abasement of the Son of God! How low was the step he must make to help us! The Almighty Physician must come from heaven and let his heart be pierced, to prepare a medicine to cure our desperate disease. He that thought it no robbery to be equal with God, must be made equal to robbers and murderers. Amazing love! Now I see the remedy is provided, the well of salvation is opened; let me come with the chain and bucket of faith, to draw water with joy. Now the healing streams are running on either side of the table, let me bring all my diseases to them; my blind eyes, weak hands, feeble knees, lame feet, my hard heart, cold affections, my doubting soul. Now the balm of Gilead is among my hands, let me not miss a cure. One drop of that blood which

fell from Christ's wounds can cure all my maladies. O for faith to apply it! Save from unbelief, lest I die in my sins. Who would have pitied a stung Israelite, though he had died of the poisoned stings of the fiery serpents, if he had refused to lift up his eyes to the remedy God appointed for him? and who will pity me, if I refuse to apply my Saviour's blood?

Here Christ's testament is sealed, and every true believer gets a sealed copy of it put into his hands, with all the legacies in it. Let me have a copy also, and be enabled to read my name in the testament. O that I were of kin to the Testator, and could receive him in my arms by a true faith, then all the legacies are mine! Lord, I believe, and do here put in my claim for what is left me. I plead the will of the Testator, my elder Brother, with my heavenly Father. Now the Testator is dead, the testament is valid. Lord, thou wilt not alter the will of the dead; be it to me according to his will. My Redeemer hath left me pardon, peace, grace, faith; yea, he hath bequeathed to me all the sure mercies of David. Though in myself I deserve nothing but a curse, yet my Testator hath left me a blessing, and many precious legacies; and, as an earnest thereof, hath given me the cup of the New Testament. Lord, fulfil the will of the dead to me; grant me pardon for Christ's sake! I will not let thee go till thou bless me.

*MEDITATIONS and EJACULATIONS proper for Communicants after Partaking.*

MEDITATION I.

LORD, thou hast prepared a table for me in presence of mine enemies; thou hast set before me the rarest cheer, even the flesh and blood of thy dear Son: 'I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste. He brought me into his banquetting-house, and his banner over me was love. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who

crowneſt thee with loving-kindneſs and tender mercieſ ; who ſatiſfieth thy mouth with good things, ſo that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.' O that the food I have been getting may quicken my appetite for more of this kind and for the table above, which ſhall never be drawn. Let it be the conſtant cry of my ſoul, " Lord, evermore give me this bread." Some of my dear friends who went to ſit with me at this table, I obſerve their ſeats empty. Why? They are gone to the higher table, where there will be no uncovering of the table, no removing of the diſhes, no diſmiſſing of the aſſembly for ever. O that I may daily live in heaven, long for heaven, be grown liker heaven, and may make quick progreſs towards it! In the mean time, let me not forget to praiſe God for the feaſt I have been ſharing of. Since my ſoul is ſatiſfied as with marrow and fatneſs, my mouth ſhall praiſe him with joyful lips. Let me look like my meat, and be fat and flouriſhing in the courts of my God.

## MEDITATION II.

I HAVE ſeen what my Saviour ſuffered for ſin ; O let me never have ſlight thoughts of ſin any more ! Have I beheld my agonizing Saviour under wrath, complaining of the burning heat and thirſt which the fire of juſtice created within him? Have I ſeen the great drops of blood riſing and ſtanding above his garments? Have I heard his cries and roarings under the bruises and anguiſh of his ſoul? Let me henceforth be convinced of the dreadful evil and demerit of ſin. Let never that ſin light on my ſoul that ſat ſo heavy upon Chriſt's ſoul ; let never that be counted ſmall which pierced my Saviour's ſide with a ſpear, that crowned his head with thorns, and filled his ſoul with grief. Nay, let my heart ever riſe againſt ſin, as the moſt hateful and abominable thing in the world. What deſperate malignity muſt there be in it, that could not be expiated without ſo coſtly a ſacrifice ! What fools are they, who make a ſport of what coſt the Son of God ſo much ſoul-travail and inward horror ! And what a fool am I, who have been ſo eaſily tempted to that which coſt ſo dear before it could be forgiven ! O let me never have a lifeleſs apprehenſion of Chriſt's love, nor a favour-

able thought of sin any more! O that I may henceforth guard against that hateful evil, sin, and tremble at the wrath of an angry God!

### MEDITATION III.

LORD, how distinguishing are thy favours to me, an ill-deserving creature! I justly deserved to have had a cup of trembling and unmixed wrath put in my hands; a cup filled with horror of conscience and fearful despair; but instead of that, I have got the cup of blessing filled with the hope of pardon and eternal life. Lord, I might have been in hell long ere now, drinking of the damned's cup, that horrible cup into which justice is still pouring more wrath and fury; yea, pouring in as fast as they drink it out, so as they shall never be able to exhaust it. But instead of that, I have been admitted to thy table, and have got the cup of salvation to drink. How sweet and delicious is my cup which my Saviour hath mingled for me! But Oh! how bitter was his cup! The dregs of God's wrath were in it, and yet he willingly drank it for me, that he might purchase to me a cup without dregs. Admirable love! How different is my case this day from that of fallen angels and damned souls! Manna has been rained on me, while an eternal shower of fire and brimstone falls upon them. They continue without hope under the deluge of God's wrath, while the welcome rainbow of the sacrament hath appeared to me as a token of God's covenant, for securing me from that overflowing flood. Many of the old world were not permitted to come into the ark, that saved others from the flood. Some came within a few steps of it, and perished; others were washed off the sides of it; but I have seen a window opened in the side of the ark for me, yea, a hand of mercy put forth to pull me in. Nay, I have heard mercy's kindly voice saying, as to Noah, "Come, thou and all thy house, into the ark;" abide here, and thou shalt be in safety. O say then, This is my rest, and here I'll stay!

## MEDITATION IV.

AMAZING goodness, that God should seal a marriage-covenant with me, whose descent is base, whose person is ugly, whose portion is nothing but diseases and misery! Lord, when I compare the rock whence I was hewn, and that on which thou hast set me: when I consider thy low stoop, to purchase such a clod of earth and sin with thine own blood, I am amazed at thy love, I am confounded at my ingratitude. Oh! how little was I affected at thy table, when I saw Christ's dying love and sufferings set before me? I could scarce drop a tear for sin, that was the woful cause of all his sufferings. Lord, lay not to my charge my defects in preparation, my coldness, my wanderings, my unbelief. I am ashamed of the hardness and unconcernedness of my heart. The very dead earth trembled, the rocks rent, the graves opened, the heavens turned dark at the sight of a dying Jesus: But O, how little did my rocky heart tremble or quake for offending God! O let the heart of stone be changed into a heart of flesh! Let the fire of Christ's love descend, and kindle such a flame in my soul, as may consume all my lusts and corruptions! It was by fire that God answered his people of old: thus let him answer me, even with a twofold fire kindled in my heart, as the two disciples, viz. of love to Christ, and indignation against sin. O let me not spare my darling sins for thy sake, who sparedst not thy beloved Son for mine! "Let the words of my mouth, and meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and Redeemer!"

## MEDITATION V.

LORD, what am I, a gospel-slighting and grace-abusing creature, that thou shouldest spare, yea feed and feast me in such a manner? Long ago mightest thou have shaken off the hand of thy providence such a viper as I am, into fire unquenchable, and there made me know, to sad experience, what it is to abuse free grace, by the loss of eternal glory. But instead of that, thou hast, of thy infinite compassions, become my surety to appease justice for my heinous sins, when no other sacrifice would

do. Lord, it had been much if thou hadst provided an angel to mitigate my sufferings, by giving me drops of water to cool my tongue in hell. But that thou thy blessed self should be content to become a curse, and undergo amazing soul-travail, besides bodily pain, to redeem me from the curse, is love inconceivable. O that I may henceforth live under the continual sense of my infinite obligations to my glorious Surety, that would make his soul an offering for my sin! What return shall I give him for his soul-travail and agonies for me? O that I could all my days magnify his grace and love, give cheerful obedience to his laws, and live to his glory, that bought me at so dear a rate! Now blessed be his glorious name for ever and ever: let the whole earth be filled with glory, and let all the people say, Amen.

#### MEDITATION VI.

I HAVE been beholding the bloody tragedy of Christ's sufferings re-acted, which might still pierce and rend my heart. But, glory to God for the encouraging word I have heard from the cross, "It is finished." Now the tragedy is over, my Saviour's sufferings are ended, the ransom finished, the righteousness complete, the prophecies accomplished, the ceremonies abolished, the elect's salvation wrought out: I have a sure foundation now to lean my soul upon. Well, since Christ's sufferings are finished, let me not go about to crucify him over again by my sins. It is enough, he died once, his pains were grievous enough already; I will not put him to suffer over again. I have been washing my soul at the fountain opened in the sacrament, yea, I have been making my robes clean in the blood of the Lamb: O let me keep them clean, and not defile them again in the mire of sin! I have now turned my back on Satan's nasty dwelling, and am going forward to my Father's house above. It is a clean house I am going to, a pure dwelling, an undefiled city; I cannot take filthy hands or feet thither, for "no unclean thing enters there." Having therefore such great and precious promises, let me cleanse myself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Has God promised me a happy eternity; O that I could diligently spend this

small span of time in his service! Let me imitate the holy Jesus, whose whole life was one continued act of goodness; let his blessed will be the rule of all my actions; and, Lord, give me those daily supplies of grace which may enable me to serve thee, and lead my life in all godliness and honesty. Give strength to do what thou commandest, and then command what thou wilt. Lord, take not thy Holy Spirit from me; forsake not the work of thine own hands, but perfect, O Lord, that which concerneth me! O thou, who hast begun a good work, be pleased to carry it on to the day of the Lord Jesus! Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus!

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