

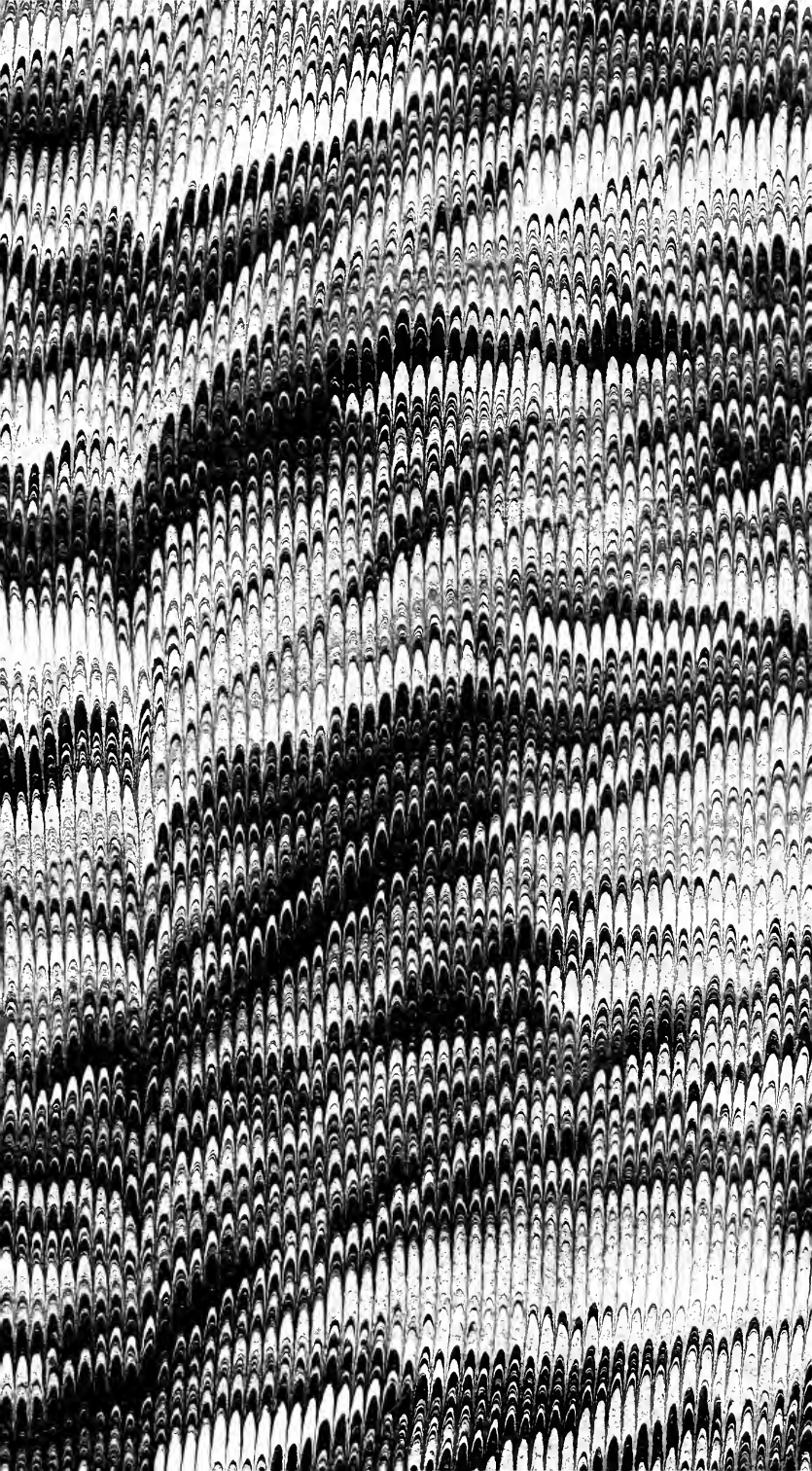
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PRESENTED BY

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THE
WHOLE WORKS
OF THE
REV. JOHN HOWE, M.A.
WITH
A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

IN EIGHT VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

CONTAINING

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| I. OF DELIGHTING IN GOD. | V. SERMONS. |
| II. CHARITY IN REFERENCE TO OTHER
MEN'S SINS. | 1. MAN'S CREATION IN A HOLY
BUT MUTABLE STATE. |
| III. THE RECONCILEABLENESS OF GOD'S
PRESCIENCE, &c. — WITH A
POSTSCRIPT. | 2. OF MAN'S ENMITY AGAINST
GOD. |
| IV. OF THOUGHTFULNESS FOR THE
MORROW—AND THE IMMODE-
RATE DESIRE OF KNOWING
THINGS TO COME. | 3. OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN
GOD AND MAN. |
| | 4. PRAYER FROM THE NAME OF
GOD. |
| | 5. ON THE INQUIRY, DO WE
REALLY LOVE GOD. |
| | 6. PEACE GOD'S BLESSING. |
| | 7. FOR THE REFORMATION OF
MANNERS. |

EDITED BY THE
REV. JOHN HUNT, OF CHICHESTER.

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1822

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A
TREATISE
OF
DELIGHTING IN GOD:

From Psalm xxxvii. 4.

DELIGHT THYSELF ALSO IN THE LORD, AND HE SHALL GIVE
THEE THE DESIRES OF THINE HEART.

In Two Parts.

CONCERNING

FIRST—THE MEANING OF THE PRECEPT,

AND

SECONDLY—THE PRACTICE OR EXERCISE OF DELIGHT
IN GOD.



TO
MY MUCH VALUED FRIENDS,
THE
MAGISTRATES AND OTHER INHABITANTS
OF
Great Torrington
IN
DEVON,
WITH THE SEVERAL WORTHY AND
RELIGIOUS PERSONS AND FAMILIES OF MY ACQUAINTANCE
IN THOSE PARTS.

IT is likely that the title of the following treatise will put many of you, my dearly esteemed friends, in mind, that sundry sermons were preached twenty years ago among you upon this subject. I had it indeed in design, to have given you some abstract of those sermons; but searching among my papers, could find none but so imperfect and broken memorials as would be of little use for that purpose. And yet being desirous to present you with somewhat that might both be a testimony of my affection, and an advantage to you: and knowing this subject was grateful to many, and affords what may be useful to all of you; I have for your sakes, applied myself to a reconsideration of it. Few passages or expressions, probably, will occur to you that you heard before; yet you will find the substance of the doctrine the same; as from so plain a text it could not well but be, whosoever should have had the handling of it. The *first part* is even altogether new, except the introductive suppositions in the beginning. Nor do I remember I then had more than one discourse to you on that subject, before the practical application of it. The *other part* contains many things formerly delivered to you, though perhaps not in the same order, much less in the same words, whereto the short notes in my hands could no way enable me.

The matter here treated of, is the very substance of religion; the first and the last; the root and the flower; both the basis and foundation, and the top and perfection of practical godliness; and which runs through the whole of it. Nor knew I therefore what to present you with, that could have in it a fitter mixture and temperament of what might be both useful and pleasant to you. As there is therefore no need, so nor do I desire you should receive the matter

here discoursed of, merely for my sake; there being so great reason it should be chiefly acceptable on higher accounts. I do very well understand your affection to me; and could easily be copious in the expression of mine to you, if I would open that sluice. But I do herein resolvedly, and upon consideration restrain myself; apprehending, that in some cases (and I may suppose it possible that in our case) a gradual mortification ought to be endeavoured of such affection as is often betwixt those so related as you and I have been: which is no harder supposition, than that such affection may be excessive and swell beyond due bounds. So it would, if it should be accompanied with impatient resentments towards any providence or instrument, whereby it finds itself crossed, or from whence it meets with what is ungrateful to it: if it prove turbulent and disquieting to them in whom it is, or any others: or if it occasion a looking back with dis-tempered lingerings after such former things as could be but means to our great end, with the neglect of looking forward to that end itself still before us. Far be it from me, to aim at the keeping anything alive that ought to die; that is, in that degree wherein it ought so to do. But our mutual affection will be both innocent and useful, if it be suitable to mortal objects, and to persons not expecting the converse we have had together any more in this world; if also in the mean time it preserve to us a mutual interest in each others prayers; if it dispose us to such acts and apprehensions of kindness as our present circumstances can admit; and if, particularly, as it hath moved me to undertake, it may contribute any thing to your acceptance of this small labour, which is now designed for you. The subject and substance whereof, as they are none of mine, so they ought to be welcome to you, for their own sake, and his who is the prime author, though they were recommended to you by the hand of a stranger, or one whose face you never saw. They aim at the promoting of the same end which the course of my poor labours among you did (as he that knoweth all things knoweth) the serious practice of the great things of religion, which are known and least liable to question; without designing to engage you to or against any party of them that differ about circumstantial matters. They tend to let you see, that formality in any way of religion unaccompanied with life, will not serve your turn, (as it will no man's,) than which, there is nothing more empty, sapless, and void both of profit and delight.

I have reflected and considered with some satisfaction, that this hath been my way and the temper of my mind among you. Great reason I have to repent, that I have not with greater earnestness pressed upon you the known and important things wherein serious Christians do generally agree. But I repent not I have been so little engaged in the hot contests of our age, about the things wherein they differ. For, as I pretend to little light in these things (whence I could not have much confidence to fortify me unto such an undertaking;) so I must profess to have little inclination to contend about matters of that kind. Nor yet am I indifferent as to those smaller things, that

I cannot discern to be in their own nature so. But though I cannot avoid to think that course right which I have deliberately chosen therein, I do yet esteem that but a small thing upon which to ground an opinion of my excelling them that think otherwise, as if I knew more than they. For I have often recounted this seriously with myself, that of every differing party, in those circumstantial matters, I do particularly know some persons by whom I find myself much excelled in far greater things than is the matter of that difference. I cannot, it is true, thereupon say and think every thing that they do; which is impossible, since they differ from one another as well as me. And I understand well, there are other measures of truth than this or that excellent persons opinion. But I thereupon reckon I have little reason to be conceited of any advantage I have of such in point of knowledge, (even as little as he should have, that can sing or play well on a lute, of him that knows how to command armies, or govern a kingdom,) and can with the less confidence differ from them, or contend with them. Being thereby, though I cannot find that I err in these matters, constrained to have some suspicion lest I do; and to admit it possible enough, that some of them who differ from me, having much more light in greater matters may have so in these also. Besides, that I most seriously think, humility, charity and patience, would more contribute to the composing of these lesser differences, or to the good estate of the Christian Interest under them, than the most fervent disputes and contestations. I have upon such considerations little concerned myself in contending for one way or another, while I was among you; or in censuring such as have differed from me in such notions and practices as might consist with our common great end; or as imported not manifest hostility thereto: contenting myself to follow the course that to my preponderating judgment seemed best, without stepping out of my way to jostle others.

But I cannot be so patient of *their* practical disagreement, (not only with all serious christians, but even their own judgments and consciences also,) who have no delight in God, and who take no pleasure in the very substance of religion. I have been grieved to observe that the case hath too apparently seemed so, with some among you: some have been openly profane and dissolute, and expressed more contempt of God (which you know was often insisted on the one part of the day, (from Ps. 10. 13) when I had this subject in hand the other) than delight in him. I know not how the case may be altered with such since I left you; or what blessing may have followed the endeavours of any other hand. Death I am sure will be making alterations as I have heard it hath. If these lines may be beforehand with it, may they be effectually monitory to any such that yet survive! That however this or that external form of godliness may consist with your everlasting well-being, real ungodliness and the denial of the power never can; which power stands in nothing more than in love to God or delight in him. Therefore seriously bethink yourselves, do you delight in God or no? If you do, methinks you should have some

perception of it. Surely if you delight in a friend, or some other outward comfort, you can perceive it. But if you do not, what do you think alienation from the life of God, will come to at last? It is time for you to pray and cry, and strive earnestly for a renewed heart. And if any of you do in some degree find this, yet many degrees are still lacking. You cannot delight in God, but upon that apprehension as will give you to see, you do it not enough: therefore reach forth to what is still before. I bow my knees for you all, that a living, delightful religion may flourish in your hearts and families, in the stead of those dry, withered things, worldliness, formality and strife about trifles. Which will make Torrington an Heph-zibah, a place to be delighted in; your country a pleasant region: and (if he may but hear of it) add not a little to the satisfaction and delight of

Your affectionate servant in Christ,

Who most seriously desires your true prosperity,

JOHN HOWE.

Antrim, Sept. 1, 1674.

A
T R E A T I S E
O F
D E L I G H T I N G I N G O D :

From Psalm xxxvii, 4.

*Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee
the desires of thine heart.*

P A R T I.

THE DUTY EXPLAINED; SHEWING

FIRST, THE DELECTABLE OBJECT OF DELIGHT.—SECONDLY, THE DELIGHT
TO BE TAKEN IN THAT OBJECT.

CHAP I.

I. Introduction: connection of the words: persons to whom this direction is given. II. The meaning of the precept more distinctly opened. FIRST, The delectable Object of delight considered. *First*, Absolutely. *Secondly*, Relatively. 1. As a Lord to be obeyed. 2. As a portion to be enjoyed. III. What enjoyment of God supposes. *First*, Some communication from God. *Secondly*, That however God himself is enjoyed, yet this communication is also a sort of mediate object of delight as suited to the wants of the renewed soul. IV. The nature of divine communication considered. It contains, *First*, An inwardly enlightening revelation of God himself to his people; which exceeds the common appearances made to all: 1. As it is attributed to the spirit. 2. Spoken of as a reward of their love. 3. It is much more distinct and clear. 4. It is more powerfully assuring.

I. **T**HIS psalm, by the contents of it, seems to suppose an afflicted state of good men, by the oppression of such as were, in that and other respects, very wicked; the prosperity of these wicked ones in their oppressive course; an aptness in the oppressed to impatience under the evils they suffered; and a disposition to behold, with a lingering and an envious eye, the good things which their oppressors enjoyed, and themselves wanted. Hence the composure of it is such as might be most

agreeable to these suppositions, and the fortifying of the righteous against the sin and trouble which such a state of things might prove the occasion of unto them.

This verse hath a more direct aspect on the last of these cases, or on this last mentioned thing considerable in the case, of upright men suffering under the oppression of violent and prosperous wickedness, namely, that they might hereupon be apt both to covet and envy the worldly delights of their enemies; to be desirous of their dainties, and grudge they should be theirs, who, they knew, deserved worse things: and while themselves also felt the pressure of worse, which at their hands they deserved not. What is here offered to the consideration of the sufferers, tends aptly to allay their discontent, to check and repress their inordinate desire towards inferior things; or to divert and turn it another way; as in case of bleeding to excess and danger, the way is to open a vein, and stop the course of that profusion by altering it. As if it had been said, "You have no such cause to look with displeasure or immoderate desire upon their delicacies; you may have better; better belong to you, and invite you, the Lord himself is your portion: it becomes both your state and spirit to apply yourselves to a holy delight in him; to let your souls loose, and set them at liberty, to satiate themselves, and feed unto fulness upon those undefiled and satisfying pleasures unto which you have a right; and in which you will find the loss and want of their meaner enjoyments abundantly made up unto you. You have your natural desires and cravings as well as other men; and those may be too apt to exceed their just bounds and measures; but if you take this course, they will soon become sober and moderate, such as will be satisfied with what is competent, with an indifferent allowance of the good things of this earth. And towards the Lord, let them be as vast and large as can be supposed, they can never be larger than the rule will allow; nor than the object will satisfy: the direction and obligation of the former being indeed proportioned to the immense and boundless fulness of the latter."

We need not operously inquire what sort of persons this direction is given unto. It is plain, that it is the common duty of all to delight in God. But it cannot be the immediate duty of all. Men that know not God, and are enemies to him, have somewhat else to do first. They to whom the precept is directly meant, are the regenerate, the righteous and the upright, as the psalm itself doth plainly design them, or his own people. The most profitable way of considering these words, will be chiefly to insist on the direction given in the former part of the verse:

and then to shew towards the close, how the event promised in the latter part, will not only by virtue of the promise, but even naturally follow thereupon. The direction in the former part, gives us a plain signification of God's good pleasure, that he himself would be the great object of his people's delight: or, it is his will, that they principally delight themselves in him. Our discourse upon this subject will fall naturally into two parts: the former whereof, will concern the import, and the latter the practice of the enjoined delighting in God. Under which latter, what will be said of the latter part of the verse will fitly fall in.

II. We proceed to open more distinctly the import and meaning of this precept of delighting in God. In order to this it will be necessary to treat, of the delectable object, and of the delight to be taken therein.

FIRST. The delectable Object. The general object of delight is some good, or somewhat so conceived of; with the addition of being apprehended some way present. Here it is the chief and best good, the highest and most perfect excellency. Which goodness and excellency considered as residing in God, give us a twofold notion or view of the object whereupon this delight may have its exercise, namely, absolute and relative.

FIRST. God may be looked upon in an absolute consideration, as he is in himself, the best and most excellent Being; wherein we behold the concurrence of all perfections; the most amiable and beauteous excellencies, to an intellectual eye, that it can have any apprehension of.

Secondly. In a relative consideration, namely, as his goodness and excellency are considered, not merely as they are in himself, but also as having someway an aspect on his creatures. For considering him as in himself the most excellent Being; if here we give our thoughts liberty of exercising themselves, we shall soon find, that hereupon he must be considered also as the first Being, the original and author of all other beings; otherwise he were not the most excellent. From whence we shall see, relation doth arise between him and his creatures that have their being from him. And besides the general relations which he beareth to them all, as the common maker, sustainer and disposer of them; observing that there are some which by their reasonable natures, are capable of government by him (in the proper sense, namely, by a law) and of blessedness in him. To these we consider him as standing in a twofold reference, in both which we are to eye and act towards him, namely, as a Lord to be obeyed, and a portion to be enjoyed, and have most delectable excellencies to take notice of in him (that require we should suitably comport

with them) answerable peculiarly to each of these considerations, in respect whereof we are to look upon him.

1. As the most excellent Lord; most delectably excellent (we take not here that title so strictly, as to intend by it mere propriety or dominion; but as to ordinary apprehension it is more commonly understood to signify also governing power, or authority founded in the other) whom we cannot but esteem worthy of all possible honour and glory; that every knee bow to him, and every tongue confess to him, that universal homage, subjection and adoration be given him for ever.

2. As the most excellent Portion, in whom all things that may render him such do concur and meet together; all desirable and imaginable riches and fulness, together with large bounty, flowing goodness every way correspondent to the wants and cravings of indigent and thirsty souls. The *former* notion of him intimates to us our obligation of duty to him: the *latter* prompts to an expectation of benefit from him. But now because by the apostacy we have injured his right in us, as our lord; forfeited our own right in him, as our Portion; and lost our immediate capacity or disposition, both to serve and enjoy him; this great breach between him and us was not otherwise to be made up but by a mediator. Unto which office and undertaking his own son, incarnate, the Word made flesh (being only fit) was designed. By him, dealing between both the distanced parties, satisfying the justice of God, overcoming the enmity of man, the difference (so far as the efficacy of his mediation doth extend) is composel. And to the reconciled, God becomes again their acknowledged both Lord and portion. His right is vindicated, theirs is restored; and both are established upon new grounds, added to those upon which they stood before. And so, as that now our actings towards God, and expectations from him, must be through the mediator. Whereupon this object of our delight, considered relatively unto us, is entirely God in Christ;—being reconciled;—“We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. Rom: 5. 11.

In these several ways that have been thus briefly mentioned, may God come under our consideration. Nor are they, any of them, unapplicable or impertinent to our purpose, when we would design him the object of our delight. Yea, and surely God considered each of these ways ought to be looked on by us as a most delectable object. For it is pleasant to contemplate him, even most absolutely considered, as the most excellent Being, when we behold his glorious excellencies in themselves; that is (not with the denial, but) without the actual present con-

sideration of any advantage that may redound to us from them; as we are apt to find ourselves pleased and gratified in viewing an excellent object (suppose a stately edifice or beautiful flower), from which we expect no other benefit.

Again, if we consider him relatively; in the *former* capacity of a *Lord*, it is grateful to behold him decked with majesty, arrayed in glory, clothed with righteousness, armed with power, shining in holiness, and guiding himself with wisdom and counsel in all his administrations. Yea, and it is delightful to obey him; while we are most fully satisfied of his unexceptionable right to command us. For there is a great pleasure naturally arising to a well-tempered spirit, from the apprehended congruity or fitness of things, as that he should command and that we should obey. His right and our obligation being so undoubtedly clear and great: especially when we also consider what he commands, and find it is no hard bondage; that they are not grievous commands which he requires we be subject to; but such in the keeping whereof there is great reward; and that his ways are all pleasantness and peace.

And being considered as a *portion*, the matter is plain, that so rich and abounding fulness, where also there is so communicative an inclination, cannot but recommend him a most satisfying object of delight.

And thus we are more principally to consider him, namely rather *relatively* than *absolutely*; and that relatedness (which the state of the case requires) as now anew settled in Christ. And so, though it be very delightful to look upon him, as one that may, and is ready to become related to us, (as he is to any that will consent and agree with him upon the mediator's terms) yet it adds unspeakably to the pleasantness of this object, when we can reflect upon such characters in ourselves, as from whence we may regularly conclude, that he is actually thus related unto us. That is, that we have consented; that our relation to him immediately arises from the covenant of life and peace; that he hath entered into covenant with us, and so we are become his. It is pleasant thus to behold and serve him as *our* Lord. How great is the emphasis of these words, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus *my* Lord!" To consider not only how well he deserves the acknowledgments and subjection of all; but also to find ourselves under the chosen and gentle bonds of perpetual service, and devotedness to him, is certainly matter of very high delight and pleasure.

But how infinitely delightful is it, to view and enjoy him as *our* Portion! And this seems very pertinent to the design of this scripture; which aiming to recall and draw in the hearts of

godly persons from too earnest, and from envious lingerings after the enjoyments of worldly men (their enemies and oppressors,) propounds what may be an over-balance to the (imagined) felicity of their state; and wherein they should more than equal them in point of enjoyment. And should we single out this, as the object to be considered, God as a portion; that it might be more distinctly represented, we should have two things to take notice of that would render it most delectable, and such as wherein holy hearts may acquiese, and rest with fullest satisfaction,—the sufficiency—and the communicableness of it.

(1.) The sufficiency of it. Which cannot but be every way complete and full; it being the all-comprehensive good, which is this portion.—God all-sufficient.—The most eminent and known attributes of his Being, wherein by any issues of them they can be communicated, having an ingrediency and concurrence to the happiness of his people therein.

(2.) The communicableness thereof. Which proceeds from his bounty, more peculiarly, and his gracious inclination to do good, and make his boundless fulness overflow to the replenishing of thirsty, longing souls, whom first it had allured and caused so to long. But though the scope and order of the discourse in this psalm, did not directly seem to import more than a design of calling off the persons here spoken to, from one sort of enjoyment to another, from a meaner and more empty to a better: yet it is to be considered, that true, and the best enjoyment cannot be unaccompanied with duty; and that God is not otherwise to be enjoyed than as he is obeyed, nor indeed are the notions of him, as a Lord to be obeyed, and as a good to be enjoyed, entirely distinct; but are interwoven and do run into one another. We obey him, even in enjoying him; it being part of our enjoined duty, to set our hearts upon him, as our best and highest good. And we enjoy him in obeying him; the advantage and benefit of his government, being a real and most momentous part of that good which we enjoy from him, and in him. He is our benefactor even as he is our ruler; and is therein our ruler, as he proposes to us benefits, which he thereby binds us to accept; for even his invitations and offers, are also laws and formal bonds of duty upon us. Yea, and even the act of delight itself pitched upon him, is an act of homage, as there will be occasion hereafter to take notice.

Wherefore it will be fit to steer a larger course, than merely to consider him as a good commensurate to our partial appetites. Which are apt to prescribe to, and limit our apprehensions to this or that particular sort of good, and tincture them with such a notion of delight, as which, if it be not false and grossly carnal,

may yet be much too narrow and unproportionable to the universal, all-comprehending good. And though we shall not here go beyond the compass of delectable good; yet as there is no good, truly so called, which is not in or from the first goodness; so indeed, nor is there any capable of being gathered up into that sum which is not delectable.

Nor therefore can the usual distribution of goodness into profitable, honest, and pleasant, bear a strict test. Only the false relishes of vitiated appetite in this corrupted state of man, have given ground for it. Otherwise to a mind and will that is not disordered, the account would be much otherwise. To a prudent mind, profitable good would be pleasant, even as it is profitable. To a just and generous mind, honest, comely good would be pleasant, even as it is honest. Nor would there need another distinction, but into the goodness of the end, which is pleasant for itself, and the goodness of the means, which is pleasant as it is honestly and decently profitable, (and otherwise it cannot be) thereunto.

III. That we may here therefore with the more advantage state the delectable good we are now to consider, it will be requisite to premise two things.

First, That all delightful enjoyment of God, supposes some communication from him. Nothing can delight us, or be enjoyed by us; whereof we do not, some way, or by some faculty or other, partake somewhat; either by our external sense, sensitive appetite, fancy, memory, mind, will; and either in a higher or lower degree, for a longer or a shorter time, according as the delight is for kind, degree or continuance which is taken therein. This is plain in itself. And in the present case therefore of delighting in God or enjoying him, some communication, or participation there must be one way or other according as the enjoyment of him is. And as the case with man now is, it is necessary he do with clearest and the most penetrative light and power, come in upon his mind and heart, scatter darkness, remove prejudice, abolish former relishes, and transfuse his own sweet savour through the soul. Proportionably therefore, to what is to be done, he communicates himself, as the event constantly shews, with all them that are ever brought to any real enjoyment of him. For we plainly see, that the same divine communication which being received, doth delight and satisfy, doth also procure, that it may be desired and received; makes it own way, attempers and frames the soul to itself; and gives it the sweet relish and savor thereof, wherein God is actually enjoyed.

Secondly, That however God himself, is truly said to be enjoyed or delighted in by holy souls; yet this communication is

also a sort of mediate object of this delight or enjoyment. These things being forelaid, it is now needful to inquire somewhat more distinctly, what that communication or communicable good is, which is the immediate matter of proper, spiritual enjoyment unto holy men in this world. Because many have that phrase of speech *enjoying God* often in their mouths, that well understand not what they mean by it; yea even divers of them that have real enjoyment of him. Unto whom, therefore though they possibly taste the thing which they cannot express or form distinct conceptions of; it might be somewhat to their advantage to have it more cleared up to their apprehension, what it is that they immediately enjoy, when they are said to enjoy God; or by what he is to be enjoyed. It is not a mere fancy (as too many profanely think, and are too apt to speak) that is the thing to be enjoyed. There have been those, who, comparing their own experience with God's promises and precepts (the rule by which he imparts and according whereto men are to expect his gracious influence) were capable of avowing it, rationally, to be some very substantial thing they have had the enjoyment of. The sobriety of their spirits, the regularity of their workings, their gracious composure, the meekness, humility, denial of self, the sensible refreshing, the mighty strength and vigour which hath accompanied such enjoyments, sufficiently proving to them that they did not hug an empty cloud, or embrace a shadow, under the name of enjoying God. Such expressions as we find in the book of Psalms (the 16. and many other) with sundry parts of scripture besides, leave us not without instance, that import nothing like flashy and flaunting bombast, no appearance of affectation, no pompos shew of vain-glory, no semblance of swelling words of vanity, but which discover a most equal, orderly, well-poized temper of mind, in conjunction with the highest delight and well pleasedness in God. That rich and unimitable fulness of living sense, could not but be from the apprehension of a real somewhat, and that, of a most excellent nature and kind, whatsoever be the notion, that may be most fitly put upon it. Nor yet is it the mere essence of God which men can be said to enjoy. For that is not communicated nor communicable. Enjoyment supposes possession. But it would be a strange language to say we possess the essence of God otherwise than relatively; which is not enough unto actual enjoyment. His mere essential presence is not enough. That renders him not enjoyed by any, for that is equally with all and every where; but all cannot be said to enjoy him.

As therefore it is a *real*, so there must be some *special* communication, by which, being received, we are truly said to en-

joy him. A *special* good it must be, not such as is common to all. For there is a communication from him that is of that extent, in as much as all live and move and have there beings in him and the whole earth is full of his goodness. But this is a good peculiar to them that are born of God : and suited to the apprehension and sense of that divine creature which is so born.

What this good is, how fully sufficient it is, and how or which way it is communicable, may be the better understood when we have considered what are the wants and cravings of this creature, or of them in whom it is formed and wrought. For when we have pitched upon the very thing itself, which they most desire (and which they can tell is it, when they hear it named, though their thoughts are not so well formed about it, as to give it the right name before) we shall then understand it to be both what will be sufficient to satisfy, and what may be communicated to that purpose. But now before that new birth take place in the spirit of man, it wants but knows not what ; craves indeterminedly (who will shew us any good ?) not fixing upon any particular one that is sufficient and finite, and labouring at once, under an ignorance of the infinite ; together with a disaffection thereunto. Its wants and cravings are beyond the measure, of all finite good ; for suppose it to have never so large a share, nay could it grasp and engross the whole of it, an unsatisfiedness and desire of more would still remain. But that *more* is somewhat indeterminate and merely imaginary : an infinite nothing : an idol of fancy : a God of its own making. God it must have, but what a one he is it misapprehends, and wherein it rightly apprehends him likes and loves him not ; will by no means choose, desire, or take complacency in him. So that an unregenerate soul is, while it is such, necessarily doomed to be miserable. It cannot be happy in any inferior good, and in the supreme, it will not. What the real wants and just cravings of a man's spirit therefore are, are not to be understood by considering it in that state. And if the work of the new creature were perfected in it, it would want and crave no more ; but were satisfied fully and at perfect rest. Nor is that state so known to us as yet. Therefore they are best to be discerned in the state wherein that work is begun and hitherto unfinished ; in which it therefore desires rightly, and still continues to desire ; a state of intermingled motion and rest ; wherein delight is imperfect, and allayed by the continual mixture of yet unsatisfied desire. And yet it may be collected what it is that would be sufficient to satisfy ; because their desire is still determined to one thing, (Ps. 27. 4.) is not vagrant, wanders not after things of another kind, but is intent only upon more of the same.

Now let it be inquired of such a one what that is. We are generally told there, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord, &c. And it may be many would more shortly tell you it is God they desire, whence it would only be concluded it is God they aim to enjoy or delight in. But because this brings us but where we were; let it be further inquired, what then is your business with God, or what would you have of him? It is not, sure, to be God that you expect or seek, or to enjoy God in that sense wherein he possesses and enjoys himself. No, not by any means. It is then some communication from God, diverse from what all men have (for that they do not find apt to satisfy) which they desire and crave. And what is that? It is somewhat, as possible to be apprehended, and as distinguishable both from his incommunicable Being, and his so generally communicated bounty towards all. As if the inquiry were, what it is that I desire really to enjoy when I desire to enjoy a friend? (namely as the notion of a friend or friendship doth most properly import). That is neither to desire the impossible thing, of possessing his being as my own; nor the unsatisfying thing, the mere partaking some part of his external goods and wealth; whereof it may be he daily imparts somewhat to every beggar at his door. But it is to have his intimate acquaintance, his counsel and advice, the advantage of improving myself by his converse, and of conforming myself to his example in his imitable perfections; the assurances of his faithful, constant love and friendship, in reference to all future emergencies. A friend is really to be enjoyed in such things as these.

And in such-like is God to be enjoyed also. But with this difference, that God's communications are more immediate, more constant, more powerful and efficacious, infinitely more delightful and satisfying, in respect both of the good communicated, and the way of communication. In short then, the wants and desires of a renewed soul, the supply and satisfaction whereof it seeks from God, would ye summed up in these things.—That it may know him more fully, or have clearer apprehensions of him.—That it may become like to him, and framed more perfectly after his own holy image.—That it may be ascertained of his love and good will, that he hath those favourable inclinations towards it, which shall certainly infer his doing all that for it which its real necessities (to be estimated by his infinite wisdom) can call for. These are the things *in kind* which would satisfy it. And answerably to these we may conceive the communicable good which is the immediate object of

their enjoyment. So that, as God himself is the object which is enjoyed; this is the object by which, or in respect whereof he is enjoyable.

IV. Therefore the divine communication, or that which is communicated from God to regenerate souls wherein they are to delight themselves is now to be considered. It contains,

First, An inwardly enlightening revelation of himself to them, that they may know him more distinctly. This is a part of the one thing, would be so highly satisfying, and delightful. Shew us the father and it sufficeth us, (Joh. 14. 8.) When their desires are towards God only, it is with this aim in the first place, that they may know him, which is supposed, when that is given as an encouragement to the pursuit of this knowledge. We shall know if we follow on to know the Lord, (Hos. 6, 3.) As if it had been said; this is a thing not doubted of but taken for granted, that we would fain know the Lord; we shall, if we follow on to know the Lord. This is a dictate of pure and primitive nature to covet the knowledge of our own original, him from whom we and all things sprang. Men are herein become most unnaturally wicked when they like not to retain God in their knowledge, (Rom. 1. 28.) The new and divine nature once imparted, that is, primitive nature renewed and restored to itself, revives the desire of this knowledge. And in compliance with the present exigency of the case hath this inclination ingrafted into it, to know him (as he is now only to be comfortably known) namely, in the Mediator. I determined to know nothing among you (saith S. Paul) but Jesus Christ and him crucified, (1 Cor. 2. 2.) that is, to glory in, to make shew of, to discover myself taken with no other knowledge than this, or with none so much as this. To which purpose, he elsewhere professes to count all things loss for the excellency of this knowledge, (Phil. 3. 8.) So vehemently did desire work this way. And proportionably as it is apprehended desirable, must it be esteemed delightful also. Nor are we here to think that this desired knowledge was intended finally to terminate in the Mediator, for that the very notion of mediator resists. The name Christ is the proper name of that office, and the desire of knowing him under that name imports a desire to know him in his office, namely, as one that is to lead us to God, and restore our acquaintance with him, which was not to be recovered upon other terms. So that it is ultimately the knowledge of God that is the so much desired thing, and of Christ, as the way and our conductor to God. That is, the knowledge of God not absolutely considered alone, (though he is, even so, a very delectable object (as hath

been said;) but as he is related to us, and from whom we have great expectations, our all being comprehended in him. It cannot but be very delightful (answerably to a certain sort of delectation of which we shall have occasion to speak in its proper place) to have him before our eyes represented and revealed to us, as the all-comprehending good, and that (in the way and method whereinto things are now cast) may, at least, become our portion. He is some way, to be enjoyed even in this view. It is a thing apt to infer complacency and delight thus to look upon him. They who place felicity in contemplation, especially in the contemplation of God, are not besides the mark; if they do not circumscribe and confine it there, so as to make it stand in mere contemplation, or in an idle, and vainly curious view of so glorious an object, without any further concern about it. They will then be found to speak very agreeably to the language of holy Scripture which so frequently expresses the blessedness of the other state by seeing God. And if the act of vision be delicious, the representation of the object must have proportionable matter of delight in it. It cannot but have so, if we consider the nature of this representation; which, answerably to the sensible want and desire of such as shall be delighted there-with, must have somewhat more in it than the *common* appearances of God which offer themselves equally to the view of all men. Though it is their own as common fault, that they are destitute of the more grateful and necessary additions. That it hath more in it, is evident from God's own way of speaking of it. For we find that his revealing himself in this delectable way,

1. Is attributed to the Spirit. And as a work to be done by it when it shall be given (supposing it therefore, yet not given, and that all have it not) yea that such have it not, in such a measure as they may have it, unto this purpose; who yet truly have it, in some measure already: even as a thing peculiar to them from the unbelieving world. For it is prayed for to such as concerning whom it is said that after they believed (not before) they were sealed by the Spirit of promise, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of glory would give it them; and it is mentioned by a name and title proper to the end and purpose for which it is desired to be given them, namely: as the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that end and purpose being immediately expressed in or as that particule is some time used for the knowledge of him, Ephe: 1. 13. 17. 18. The eyes of their understanding being enlightened by it (which are supposed blind before) for the same purpose. By which prayer it is supposed a communicable thing; Yea and that these had some way

a right to the communication of it, or that it was a thing proper to their state, fit to be prayed for, as some way belonging to them, they being in a more immediate capacity of such revelation than others. But how incongruous had it been with such solemnity of address to make request on their behalf for that which they already sufficiently had as a thing common to all men.

2. It is spoken of as a reward of their former love, loyalty, and obedience. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me: shall be loved of my father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him: *Jeh. 14. 21.* Therefore is such manifestation no more to be accounted common, than the love of Christ is and keeping his commandments. It is spoken of as given discriminatingly and the grace of God admired upon that account. In the next words, Judas saith unto him, (not Iscariot, it being well understood how little covetous he was of, or qualified for such manifestations) Lord how is it, that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world? *v. 22.* What it hath more than common light, external or internal, answerable to the deeply resented wants, and the hearts desires of the regenerate, by which it becomes so highly pleasant and delectable to them, though it is rather to be felt than told (as it is hard to describe the very things we have only immediate sensible perception of) may yet in some degree be understood by considering.

3. It is much more distinct and clear. They are confused and dark glimmerings which other men have of the blessed God, so that the light which is in them is darkness. *Mat. 6. 23.* It is true that an unregenerate person may possibly have clearer acquired notions of God, and of the things of God, than those may be which are of the same kind only in some who are regenerate. So that he may, by the advantages he may have above some of the other in respect of better natural abilities, more liberal education, such circumstances of his condition as may more engage him to study and contemplation and befriend him therein, be capable of finding out more, of making fuller discoveries, and more evident deductions, and be able to discourse thence, more rationally and satisfyingly to others, even concerning God, his nature, attributes and works, than some very pious persons destitute of those advantages may be able to do. But these, though their candle give a dimmer light, than the other's, have the beams of a sun raying in upon them, that much outshines the other's candle. And though they know not so many things, nor discern the connections of things so thoroughly; yet as they do know what is most necessary to be known, so what they do know, they know better, and with a more excellent sort of know-

ledge, proportionably as whatsoever is originally and immediately divine cannot but much excel that which is merely human. *Those* do but blunder in the dark, *these* in God's own light do see light. Psal. 36. 9. And his light puts a brighter hue and aspect upon the same things, than any other representation can put upon them. Things are by it represented to the life, which to others carry with them but a faint and languid appearance, and are all covered over with nothing else but a dark and dusky shadow, so as that may be hid from the wise and prudent which is revealed to babes. Mat. 11. 25. How bright and glorious things, are divine wisdom, love, holiness, to an enlightened mind! which is therefore supposed to have a clearer discovery of them.

But it may be said, "Is there any thing apprehensible concerning these or any other matters which may not be expressed in some proposition or other? And what proposition is there which a regenerate person can assent to, but one who is not regenerate may assent to it also? what definition, so truly expressive of the natures of these things, can be thought of unto which a carnal mind may not give its approbation? what can be said or conceived so fully and truly tending to describe and clear them up but an unrenewed understanding may have the representation of the same truth so as to give entertainment to it? It is answered there are many things, to which somewhat may belong not capable of description, and whereof we have yet a most certain perception. As the different relishes of the things we taste. There are no words that will express those many peculiarities. And as to the present matter: there is somewhat belonging to the things of God (those for instance that were mentioned, his wisdom, holiness, &c.) besides the truth of the conceptions that may be formed about them; which is more clearly apprehensible to a divinely enlightened understanding than to one that is not so. As,

(1.) The beauty of those truths; which it is most delightful to behold, their lively sparkling lustre, by which they appear so amiable and lovely, to a well-tempered spirit; as to transport it with pleasure and ravish it from itself into union with them. There was somewhat else apprehensible no doubt, and apprehended by them, the inward sentiments of whose souls those words so defectively served to express, "Who is like unto thee O Lord, among the Gods, who is like thee, glorious in holiness! &c." besides the mere truth of any propositions that those words can be resolved into. And so in those, O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! &c. And those, God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten

son, that, &c. or those: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, whereof I am chief:" or the strains of that rapturous prayer,—that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith: that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height: and to know the love of Christ, that passeth knowledge that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. There is a certain acceptableness in some truths, necessary to their being received in the love thereof, which is peculiarly so represented to some, as that their apprehension is clear and vivid, beyond that of other men; who, however they have the representation of the *same things*, yet have not the *same representation*. Though if they be things of necessary and common concernment, it is (as was said) their own fault that they have it not. And to have yet clearer apprehensions of this sort, is what the renewed soul doth most earnestly crave, and would be proportionably delighted with.

(2.) The tendency of such truths, is much more easily conceivable to a holy soul, than another; what their scope and aim or aspect is, which way they look, and what they drive at or lead to. I mean not what other truth they are connected with and would aptly tend to infer; but what design God hath upon us in revealing them, and what impression they ought to make upon us. To the ignorance or disregard of which tendency and design of God's revelation, it is to be attributed, that many have long the same notions of things hovering in their minds, without ever reflecting with any displeasure upon the so vastly unsuitable temper of their spirits thereto. They know it may be, such things concerning God, the tendency whereof is to draw their hearts into union with him, to transform them into his likeness, to inflame them with his love. But they still remain notwithstanding at the greatest distance, most unsuitable, averse, coldly affected towards him, yea utterly opposite and disaffected; and fall not out with themselves upon this account, have no quarrel nor dislike, take not any distaste at themselves for it. They take no notice of an incongruity and unfitness in the ill temper of their own spirits; but seem as if they thought all were very well with them, nothing amiss; and apprehend not a repugnancy in their habitual dispositions towards God to their notions of him. For a vicious prejudice blinds their eyes; their corrupt inclinacions and rotten hearts send up a malignant dark and clammy fog and vapour, and cast so black a cloud upon these bright things, that their tendency and design are not per-

ceived: that prejudice not being conceived so much against the abstract notions of the things themselves, (whence they are entertained with less reluctance) but only against the design and scope of them. Against which poisonous cloud God's own glorious revelation directs its beams, dissolves its gross consistency, scatters its darkness, as to them to whom he by special grace affords it. Whereupon, observing any remainders of the same distemper in their spirits, though it be in a considerable degree abated and lessened, they are ashamed of themselves for it, filled with confusion, yea and indignation; do loath and abhor, and could even be ready, if it were possible, to run away from themselves. And what is the reason of this so great difference? Surely somewhat appears discernible to these in God's revelation of himself which to the other doth not. They have then before their eyes a more clear prospect of the aim and scope of it. Which so far as they have it pleases them, for they like the design well, only they are displeas'd at themselves that they comport no more with it. And as the end therefore aimed at is desirable to them, and would be delightful (as will be shewn in its proper place) so is it to have that representation immediately offer'd to the view of their souls, which hath so apt and comely an aspect thereon, not merely for its own sake, but for the sake of the end itself.

Wherefore there is somewhat to be apprehended by God's representation of himself to the minds of this regenerate people, at least more clearly than by other men. Whence the work of regenerating or converting them itself, is expressed by opening their eyes, (Act. 26, 18.) For the divine communication makes its own way and enters at the eye, the soul's seeing faculty, which it doth find (as opening the eyes imports) and not now create: but finding it vitiated, and as to any right seeing of God, shut and closed up, it heals, opens and restores it as it enters. It is expressed, by turning them from darkness, to light; and from the power of Satan, (the prince of that darkness, the God of this world; who had blinded their eyes—) unto God. Which (because they cannot turn and move towards God blindfold, and that this opening their eyes is in order to their turning to God) implies, that their eyes were so distemper'd, blinded and sealed up, chiefly towards him. So that, though they could see other things, him they could not see; but he was invisible to their intellectual, as well as their bodily eyes. Hence also is that understanding said to be given (that is, as rectified and renewed) by which we know God; which implies it to be (wherein it is now given) somewhat superadded to the whole natural being and powers of the human soul, as in its present corrupted

state,—He hath given us an understanding to know him that is true, (1 Joh. 5, 20.) And that given recitude of understanding is by such a communication from God, as hath that aptitude and power in it to infer so happy a change. The same renewing-work is also said to be a calling of men out of darkness into his marvellous light, (1 Pet. 2, 9.) As if they were brought by it into a new world, wherein they found themselves beset with wonders, and all things were surprising to them. To which purpose is that prayer of the Psalmist (out of a just consciousness, that this work was not perfect in him, but might yet admit great additional degrees,) open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Psal. 119, 18. He supposed many undiscovered wonders, which eyes more open might yet behold in that external revelation of God's mind, which was then afforded (and which was wont in those days to go under the name of his law, though it contained histories, prophecies, and promises, as well as precepts) although he was no stranger to those records, nor little insighted into them, he yet apprehended a need of more light and better eyes; which he therefore desires. Not that God would cause a new revelation to be written, (though that he vouchsafed to do, and partly by himself, but that he might learn more out of that already extant; and that the wonderful things contained in it might be made more clear to him. Nor can we suppose him, herein, to desire to be gratified and delighted by the communication of an incommunicable thing.

4. It is more powerfully assuring, and such as is apt to beget a more certain operative belief of the things revealed. That is, being added to the means of faith men may be supposed so to have had before, it adds much to their assurance of the same things, so as to make it efficacious upon their spirits. And as well cures the doubtfulness, irresolution, and way-wardness of their minds and hearts, as the confusion and darkness of them.

It is very possible those things may be distinctly understood, which the more we understand, the more we disbelieve them through their apprehended inconsistency with themselves or or some certain truth. The delectable things of God, his own discovery procures at once, by one and the same radiation of light, both to be clearly understood, and effectually believed. Others have the word of faith without the spirit of faith. The faith therefore which they have is a carcase; not a weak only (which imports but diminished power) but a dead thing. And which hath no power at all to determine the soul and compose it to that delightful rest which such things, duly believed, would certainly infer. The most delectable truths of God and

such as most directly tend (in this apostate lapsed state of man) to give us the sweet and refreshing relishes of a just and rational joy and pleasure, are such are contained in the gospel of Christ; the things that concern our reconciliation, friendship and communion with God in him. And which are therefore wholly of immediately divine and supernatural revelation, and to be received by faith. Therefore one apostle prays for some that they might be filled with joy and peace in believing. Rom. 15,3. And another says of others that believing they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. 1 Pet. 1, 8. The external revelation in the gospel is an apt means, to beget that faith which it is said comes by hearing. But the very notion of means importing what intervenes to the effect, between that and the principal agent, necessarily supposes such an agent; and that what is only means, cannot work the effect alone. That Agent, namely, (in this case) God himself or the Spirit, besides the means which he uses and makes effectual, must have his own influence whereby he makes them so. If a pen be a fit means or instrument to write with, it doth not therefore follow that it can write alone without a hand to move and guide it, in order whereto a motive and directive influence is imparted. In the present case, the influence is the inward enlightening overpowering communication, whereof we speak. The efficacy whereof is such, as to give the soul that peaceful rest in believing which is also most pleasant and delightful, according as the things are found to be so, which are believed. Nor doth it in order hereto work by way of enthusiastical impulsion, without any reference to the external revelation, which is rationally and aptly suitable to the working of the effect. For then, that should no way have the place so much as of means. But there being sufficient inducement to persuade that this external revelation is divine so as to procure a rational assent to the things revealed, with any man, that, having that revelation, with the account of its first confirmations, shall but use his understanding in reference thereto, and is not besotted to a party of sworn enemies to the Christian name. This inward revelation then falling in, captivates his heart to an entire unitive closure, with the great things contained in the outward one; and principally with the son of God himself, unto which union, that whole revelation is most directly subservient. Therefore it was, that when divers others (of whom it is said, and particularly of Judas, that they believed not) forsook Christ, Peter and the other apostles stuck so resolutely to him, because, we believe (say they) and are sure that thou art Christ the son of the living God; Joh. 6, 64, 69, which assurance we may then conclude was

much of another sort than that of Judas; though we cannot suppose him to have wanted a rational certainty of the same truth, sufficient to have overcome objections in his judgment: but not sufficient to overcome the contrary corrupt inclinations of his wicked heart. Therefore as the inward revelation uses not to do its work without the outward, (for I suppose we have not heard of many Christians where the gospel hath not been,) so nor is the outward revelation able, alone to beget that which, in the more eminent sense, goes in Scripture under the name of faith. It may beget that merely intellectual certainty which may prevail against all doubts and objections in a man's mind to the contrary; but not the contrary inclinations of his corrupt will. Most men's faith is but opinionative, and many men's never reaches so high as to a *rational* opinion; for *that* proceeds upon having ballanced considerations on both sides, and inclines to that part on which there seems to be the most weighty; whereas the faith (as they call it) of too many is no other thing than a merely blind and sequacious humour, grounded upon nothing but a willingness to be in the fashion; or the apprehension of disgrace with other inconveniencies, if where that is the common profession one should profess to be any thing but a Christian; or a lazy indifferency easily determinable to that part which is next at hand to be chosen; or it may be, they never having heard of another profession; which precludes any choice at all.

But admit it did arrive to a rational certainty, as it easily might with them that have with the external requisite advantages, competent understanding, patience, diligence, and impartiality to consider: that is, suppose it to proceed upon that abundant evidence which the case will admit, that the Christian doctrine hath been testified by God; and that God's testimony cannot deceive: there needs more to win and overcome men's hearts; which must be done before the things revealed in the gospel can be apprehended delectable. What can any man have greater certainty of, in a mere human way, than all men have that they must die? And yet how few are there whose spirits are formed hereby to any seriousness agreeable to that persuasion? Whatever way a man comes to be certain of any thing that hath a contrary tendency to the bent of his habitually wicked heart, he needs more than the evidence of the thing, to make it efficaciously determine his will against his former vicious course. If the matter be such as properly falls under faith; that faith grounds upon the authority of God apprehended as avouching the truth of that revelation to which we subscribe our assent. But then it is lively or languid, according as the apprehension is which we have of that avouchment.

But the apprehension which is only the product of the external revelation, even recommended by the most advantageous and convincing circumstances, is too faint to command the soul. Who amongst all the people of the Jews at Mount Horeb, could have any doubt, but the authority that avouched the law there given them was divine? And yet how boldly do they rush into idolatry, against the express letter of that law; while the sound of that dreadful voice of words which delivered it, could hardly, one would think, be well out of their ears! And though they could not doubt of God's authority, yet for all that, their frequent rebellions are plainly resolved into their infidelity. How long will this people provoke me? (Num: 14. 11.) And how long will it be before they *believe* me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? Yea they despised the pleasant land: they *believed not* his word. (Psalm 106. 24). Or what place could be left for rational doubt, with the multitudes that beheld the miracles of our Lord Jesus, but that they were God's own seal affixed purposely to the doctrine taught by him? Yet how few (though we must suppose many convinced) did heartily believe in him? A great many more did so upon a less-advantageous-external revelation after his ascension. And the reason is plainly told us, the Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7. 39. And how expressly have we it from his own mouth, (after he had interpreted coming to him by believing on him. (John 6. 35.) No man can come unto me, except the father that hath sent me draw him. (ver: 44.) And afterwards having said, it is the Spirit that quickeneth; (ver: 63.) he adds, but there are some of you, that believe not, (ver: 64 :) So that no man's professed assent, though as forward a professor as Judas was, there referred to, will in strict account entitle him a believer, if it be not produced by the quickening influence of the Spirit. And then repeats, therefore I said unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given him of my father. (ver: 65.) And what provocation the father had to withhold that quickening Spirit, so generally, from that people, any one may see that reads their story. Upon which, by the recess of that Spirit, they are hardened to as great a miracle as formerly their Egyptian oppressors were many ages before; there being indeed no greater miracle as was said of old, than that men should not believe upon the sight of so many miracles. And this dreadful dereliction, and consequent obduration we see is referred to primitive justice as a vindictive dispensation. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him. That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled which he spake, Lord who hath believed our report? and to whom is

the arm of the Lord, revealed? (John 12. ver: 37. 38. Isai. 53. 1.) where it is obvious to observe, that the believing of the gospel-report owes itself to the revelation of God's arm; or requires the exerting of his power, agreeable to that of the apostle, that ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, &c. (Eph. 1. 19.) And how the arm of the Lord came not not to be revealed, or that power not to be put forth, is intimated in what follows. Therefore they could not believe because (for which Isaiah is again quoted,) he had blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, &c. (Isa. 6. 9. 10.) Which shews, that as that blinding and hardening of eyes and hearts, in some superadded degrees thereof, is the effect of a penal dereliction or retraction of God's arm for former obstinate opposition to the external revelation of the gospel; so that there is a precedent blindness and hardness, not otherwise vincible than by the arm of the Lord; and which, it being penally withheld, will naturally grow worse and worse. And certainly that, upon the withholding whereof, such things certainly ensue as are inconsistent with believing, must needs itself be necessary to it. All which things considered, do so plainly speak the insufficiency of a mere external revelation, and the necessity of an internal besides, unto that faith, which is the immediate spring of delight in God; that it is not needful to insist upon many plain texts of scripture besides, that fully say the same thing. As that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. (Cor. 12. 3.) And again, whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. (1 John 4. 15.) And whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. (ch. 5. 1.) Upon which words with many more of like import in the sacred volume, no sense can be put which is tolerable, and not the same with what we have above asserted.

In short, faith is a part of homage paid to the authority of the great God; which is to be estimated sincere, according as it answers the end, for which the things to be believed were revealed. That end is not to beget only the notion of those things, as truths that are to be lodged in the mind, and go no further; as if they were to be understood true only that they might be so understood; but that the person might accordingly have his spirit formed, and might shape the course of his whole conversation; therefore is it called the obedience of faith: and the same word which is wont to be rendered unbelief, signifies disobedience, obstinacy, unpersuadableness; being from a theme which (as is known) signifies to persuade. So that this homage

is then truly given to the eternal God, when his revelation is complied with and submitted to, according to the true intent and purpose of it. Which that it may be, requires that his Spirit urge the soul with his authority, and overpower it into an awful subjection thereto. The soul being so disjointed by the apostacy that its own faculties keep not (in reference to the things of God) their natural order to one another, further than as a holy rectitude is renewed in them by the Holy Ghost. Therefore is it necessary, that the enlightening communication which he transmits into it, be not only so clear, as to scatter the darkness that beclouded the mind, but so penetrating, as to strike and pierce the heart, to dissolve and relax its stiff and frozen rigour, and render it capable of a new mould and frame. In order whereto, "God that (at first) commanded the light to shine out of darkness, is said to have shined into the hearts" of them, namely, whom he renews, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2. Cor. 4. 6.) And as they to whom this communication of God is in some degree afforded, do hereupon apprehend how necessary it was to them that it should be afforded; and be such as they now find it, (which they apprehended not before), so they perceive it to be delightful also, as well as necessary. And finding it yet given into them but in an imperfect degree, their continual cravings are still for more. And having tasted hereby, how gracious the Lord is; as new-born-babes, they desire it, as sincere milk, that they may grow thereby. (1. Pet. 2. 2. 3.) They hereby come to know God and the things of God with savour. And wisdom having entered into their hearts, knowledge is pleasant to their soul. (Prov. 2. 10.) Whereby, as every renewed taste provokes in them new desire, all such renewed desires dispose them unto further and more satisfying delight. They sensibly discern the difference between their former dry and sapless notions of God, and the lively-spirited apprehensions which they now have. They can in some measure understand the reason why the apostle should in such a rapture speak of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord; and why he should so triumphingly give thanks to God for the manifestation of the savour of his knowledge in every place. (2. Cor. 2. 14.) They can perceive there was good sense in those words, as they have a more quick and judicious perception of the fragrancy of that knowledge; it is to them a refreshing, vital, quickening perfume, (v. 16.) as the word there, and before imports, most cheerfully odoriferous, the savour of life to life, lively in itself, and to them. So full of life, as to beget and transmit it; and replenish their souls therewith: so as they might feel

life thence working in all their powers. A revelation of God, that is of such a nature, cannot but be highly delectable ;

(1.) In respect of the matter revealed, God himself especially (if not yet testifying himself to be, yet at least willing in Christ to become) our God ; in such a way, and upon such terms as is expressed in the Gospel. A more particular mention of the things (contained in this revelation) that are more apt to beget delight and feed it, is purposely deferred till we come to press and enforce the duty itself.

(2.) In respect of the immediate way and manner of revelation, with so much facility continually coming in from time to time, upon the soul, according as it is found ready by a dutiful compliance to admit it, and doth lie open to it. For otherwise, a fatherly severity, is most fitly expressed in with-holding it at some times.

(3.) In respect of the life and vigour which it carries with it, whereby it is experienced to be a vital light : and that it is indeed (as is said) life, which is the light of men. (Joh. 1. 4.) Dull, sluggish, ineffectual notions of such things can have little, comparatively, of delectation in them.

(4.) In respect of the design and tendency of the revelation, discernible at the same time, to draw the soul into union with God ; and that there may be a continual intercourse between him and it. Not that it might have a transient glance of so lovely an object, and no more. When once it apprehends God hath made this light shine in upon me, not to amuse me, but here he fixes it as a lamp to guide me, in a stated course of communion with him. How pleasant is it to think he will be known for this blessed purpose ! Now a communication of God including a revelation of him apt to beget such a knowledge, cannot be without much matter of delight.

CHAP. II.

I. The subject of communication from God continued, which is shewn to contain in it. *Secondly*, A transforming impression of his Image; by the removal of such dispositions as are corrupt, and the settling of such as are gracious. II. This communication of his Image shewn to be delightful as it rectifies the soul. *First*, Towards God himself, and towards Christ, *Secondly*, Towards men. *Thirdly*, Towards themselves. *Fourthly*, Towards this and the other world.

I. **T**HIS communication of God himself to his people shewn to contain in it.

Secondly, A transforming impression of his image. This yet more fully answers the inquiry when a person is said to enjoy God; what doth he immediately enjoy? or whereby is he said to enjoy God? what doth God communicate or transmit, by which he may be said to be enjoyed? He communicates his own living likeness, the very image of himself; not the idea or likeness only by which he is known, though it must be confessed that the knowledge of him if he be known to be what he truly is, must suppose a true likeness of him offered to the mind, and formed there. But this of which we now speak, is not a merely representative but a real image. The product of the former it is, as is sufficiently to be collected from what hath been said. For that appears to be not a mere airy, spiritless, ineffectual thing, as the notion of God, and of all divine matters is with the most, but as hath been said, operative, penetrating, efficacious, apt to beget suitable impressions upon the heart, and wholly transform the soul. The effect of it then is, this transformative impression itself; by which the soul becomes another thing than it was; a new creature; old things being done away, and all things made new. 2 Cor. 5, 17. In respect of this, it is said to be born of God. This is the new man which after God is said to be created in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness; the divine nature participated; the seed of God; the *απαρχή*, the prime and most excellent part of his creatures. Eph. 5. 2 Pet. 1. 1 Joh. 3. Jam. 1.

Concerning this likeness, and the satisfyingness of it, in its perfect state, though much hath been discoursed elsewhere; it will be requisite to say somewhat here also, that may bear a

more direct reference to the present imperfect state of the regenerate in this world. That communication of God which must be supposed afforded them, in order to their delighting in him, could signify little to that purpose, if with deformed and diseased souls they were only to look upon a very lovely object; still themselves remaining what they were. Nor doth it delight them only as it is apprehended apt and aiming to work a happy change in them; but as it doth it or hath in part done it. As like an active, quick flame it passes through their souls, searches, melts them, burns up their dross, makes them a new lump or mass, and forms them for God's own use and converse.

God is proposed unto our communion and fellowship under the name of light. But such a light (it appears) as whereby we that were darkness do also become light in the (Lord, 1 Joh. 1, 5, 6,) as elsewhere it is expressed. That, as he is the Father of lights, we may appear the children of such a Father, and walk accordingly, that is, as children of light. (Eph. 5, 8.) For we are presently told that if we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we have a mutual fellowship, (1 Joh. 1. 6. 7) that is, God and we. It is needful then, that we have that apprehension of him. And he therefore by solemn message makes that declaration of himself that he is light, this then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and with him is no darkness at all, that is, the most pure, holy, excellent, glorious Being. But for what purpose are we to have that apprehension? We are told by the apostle for what; he there makes that declaration with that design, that we might be entered into the same fellowship in which he was already: for that end therefore we are to have this apprehension. But inasmuch as he immediately adds, that yet while we converse in darkness, we lie, if we pretend to that fellowship: it is manifest, that this discovery of God and our suitable apprehension are no further serviceable to their end, than bringing us into fellowship with him; than as by his beams in begets us into his own likeness herein: and that, so far as our capacity and present state admit, we be truly in a degree made pure, bright, shining, excellent creatures, resembling our maker, and being a second time formed after the image of him that created us.

The gospel is the formative instrument in this work, as it was said to be the instrument or means of our intellectual illumination. The new creature is said to be begotten of the word of God; and the divine nature to be communicated through the exceeding great and precious promises, which discovering God's gracious nature and favourable inclination towards us,

are an apt means (but no more than a means) to render us well-natured (not cross, thwarting, contrary) unto him. Faith admits the gospel-discovery into the soul, and of an external word without, makes it become an ingrafted word; the word of Christ dwelling richly in us: and so gives it the advantage of becoming thus mightily operative; for unto them only who believe is it the power of God to salvation. And being received, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, it works effectually in them that believe. To them who believe it not, it signifies nothing; it is to them an empty sound, or only as a tale that is told. And inasmuch as the gospel-revelation is the instrument of this impression; by it the impression must be measured, with it must it agree. Which revelation being expressive of the nature of God, and of his mind and will in reference to us; the impression cannot but be agreeable to that revelation; but it must also carry in it the resemblance and likeness of God himself; for the gospel-revelation is God's seal; the stamp upon it is a model of his image. Whence therefore the soul sealed therewith, bears on it at once the signature both of the author and the instrument. But because our best and surest way of forming true and right apprehensions of God, is to attend and guide ourselves by the representation that is there made of him (for it were useless and in vain, if letting our thoughts work at random without reference to it, we might conceive as fitly of God and his mind concerning us, as by the direction and guidance of it;) therefore are we to aim at conformity to God as he is there represented. For that is the proper likeness to him we are to inquire after (and which only could be impressed by his gospel) that is expressed and represented there. We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory. (2 Cor. 3, 18.) It is by the glory of the Lord shining through that glass, that we are changed. And the image whereinto we are changed is the same image that is to be seen in that glass. For there God hath provided, that such a representation of himself and of his mind should appear, as is most suitable to our case and state, and which it most concerned us to have the view and the image of. That represents him in his imitable excellencies; and shews what he is towards us, what his counsels, determinations, and constitutions are concerning us, and hereupon shews, what we should be, or what temper of spirit becomes us in reference to such a revelation. And such, when we receive this his impressive communication, he really makes us thereby become. And then is it that it will be found most highly delectable. A heart formed according to the revelation of God in Christ, and cast into the mould of the gospel (as is the import of the apostle's

words, Rom. 6, 17,—Ye have obeyed from the heart the doctrine, into the type or frame whereof ye were delivered) hath a spring of pleasure in itself. Not of perfect unmixed pleasure; for there is much yet remaining, that cannot but be very displeasing and offensive to such as have learned no longer to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, and have senses exercised to discern betwixt good and evil. And indeed by the same vital principle the soul is made capable both of the sweetest delights and the quickest sense of pain; while it was dead it was sensible of neither.

Nor is it an original spring. Whatever it hath that is good and pleasant comes from a higher head and is communicated. But the communication remains not in this heart as in a dead receptacle, but creates the soul where it is a living spring itself. The Lord shall satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and as a spring of water whose waters fail not. (Isa. 58, 11.) After which it follows, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, &c. v. 14. So though the waters that are so pleasantly refreshing to holy souls are given by Christ; yet he himself tells us, they shall be in him to whom they are given a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Joh. 4. 14. Whence also the good man is said to be satisfied from himself, (Pro. 14, 14.) And the mouth of the righteous to be a well of life, (Pro. 10, 11.) that is, to others, much more must his heart be so to himself. Nor indeed can there be a vainer or more absurd design and expectation, than to aim immediately at delights and joys, without ever looking after that transforming, purifying, quickening communication from God, in which he is to be enjoyed; which is apparently, the most prejudicial and dangerous mistake, the practical error (and so much the worse therefore) of many persons of much pretence to religion, that dream and boast of nothing less than raptures and transports, having never yet known or felt what the work of regeneration or the new creature means. And having only got some notions of God and Christ, that tickle their fancies without ever changing their hearts, these go for divine enjoyments. Others somewhat awakened and convinced but not renewed, though they do not pretend already to have, yet do (from the same mistaken apprehension) as vainly seek and catch at joys and sweetnesses; while their unsanctified hearts do yet lie steeped in the gall of bitterness. And they wonder and complain, that they feel not in themselves the delights whereof they find Scripture sometimes make mention, while in the mean time they expect and snatch at them in that preposterous impossible way, as to abstract them

from the things themselves, wherein the pleasure and delight lie. They would have delight without the delectable good, that must immediately afford and yield it; or without foregoing noisome evils that resist and hinder it; which therefore makes it necessary to treat the more largely of the delightful communication, by which only intervening souls are capable of delighting in God.

And as to this branch of it, the vital sanctifying transforming influence, whereby the soul is wrought to a conformity to the gospel; if we take a somewhat more distinct view of it, we shall find, it cannot but have in it abundant matter of delight. In the general, the thing here to be communicated, is a universal rectitude of temper and dispositions, including—the removal of such as are sinful and corrupt; and—the settlement of such as are holy and gracious;—both to be measured and estimated, as to their good or evil, by the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now surely that must be a blessed and delightful state (and it is that towards which this divine communication gradually tends) wherein a wretched soul, that was lost in the impurities of sin, shall be stripped and unclothed of all the pravity, perverse inclinations, corrupt affections which the gospel of Christ condemns; and invested with all the parts of that purity, that gracious and holy frame which that gospel recommends. For as the former carry in them matter of certain vexation and anguish which it is hereby freed from; so the latter manifestly carry in themselves matter of unspeakable delight and pleasure, which it hereby partakes. And by the same degrees by which this divine communication infers the latter of these, it expels the former. By the same degrees by which any are made partakers of the divine nature, they escape the corruptions which are in the world through lust. And that we may be here a little more particular, without descending into the innumerable particulars which might be severally spoken of upon this occasion; we shall only consider this heart-rectifying communication, in reference to some of the more principal things, towards which the spirit of man may be either perversely, or duly and aright inclined; that we may see what matter of delight it infers and brings with it. In order whereto it must be considered, that wherein it is transforming, it is also enlivening; and therefore furnishes the soul, with the power of spiritual sensation; whereby it comes to apprehend its former temper, as very grievous and detestable; not only being entire and undiminished, but even the relics of it which do yet remain; and proportionably, the holy frame to be introduced as highly covetable and to be infinitely desired.

II. Which being supposed, it must needs be very delightful to such a soul, to feel itself in part rectified, and to expect it further in its temper and inclinations,

First, Towards God, towards whom it was most disinclined: that is, both towards him as its end, and towards Christ as its way to him.

1. As to himself its end. It finds upon reflection, it was dead towards God, without motion towards him, without inclination, all its powers bent and set quite another way; so that to persuade it to begin a course of holy motion towards God, was a like thing as to persuade a stone to fly upwards, It could not trust the original truth, nor love the sovereign good, nor obey the supreme authority. Its course was nothing else but continual recession from him, towards whom it should have been continually pressing forward with all its might. It was wont to say to him, in whom was its life and all its hope, "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" was utterly alienated from the life of God, and did choose to live as without him in the world. And although it still remain thus in too great a degree, yet as it abhors this as a hateful way of living, and desires it may be otherwise; so is it sensibly delightful that it doth in some degree perceive a change; that now it can find itself returning into its right and natural state of subordination to God. Which while it was out of it, laid that claim to it, that its dislocation was uneasy, and it could have no rest; though it was not aware what the matter was with it, and could never thoroughly apprehend, that it ought (much less could desire or aim) to return. And if in returning, and its continual course afterwards (which ought to be but a continuing return and moving back towards God,) there be much cause for the exercise of repentance; the disposition whereto is a part of that new nature now communicated; yet even such relentings as are due and suitable upon this account are not unpleasant. There is pleasure mingled with such tears, and with those mournings which are not without hope, and which flow naturally and without force, from a living principle within, as waters from their still-freshly springing fountain. When the soul finds itself unbound and set at liberty; when it can freely pour out itself to God, dissolve kindly and melt before him; it doth it with regret only at what it hath done and been, not at what it is now doing, except that it can do it no more; affecting even to be infinite herein, while it yet sees it must be confined within some bounds. It loves to lie in the dust and abase itself; and is pleased with the humiliation, contrition and brokenness of heart which repentance towards God includes in it. So that as God is delighted with this sacrifice, so it is with the offering of it up to him.

Many men apprehend a certain sweetness in revenge; such a one finds it only in this just revenge upon himself. How unexpressible pleasure accompanies its devoting itself to God, when bemoaning itself, and returning with weeping and supplication, it says, "Now lo I come to thee, thou art the Lord my God. I have brought thee back thine own, what I had sacrilegiously alienated and stolen away, the heart which was gone astray, that hath been so long a vagabond and fugitive from thy blessed presence, service and communion. Take now the soul which thou hast made; possess thy own right; enter upon it, stamp it with the entire impression of thine own seal, and mark it for thine. Other Lords shall no more have dominion. What have I to do any more with the idols wherewith I was wont to provoke thee to jealousy? I will now make mention of thy name, and of thine only. I bind myself to thee in everlasting bonds, in a covenant never to be forgotten." In doing this the soul finds great delight, for

(1.) The self-denial which is included in this transaction, hath no little pleasure in it. When the soul freely quits all pretence to itself, and by its own consent passes into his, now acknowledged right; disclaims itself, and all its own former interests, inclinations and ends, and is resolved to be to him and to no other. When this is done *unreservedly*, without any intention of retaining or keeping back any thing from him; *absolutely*, and without making any conditions of its own, but only agreeing to and thankfully accepting his; *peremptorily* and without hesitation, and without halting between two opinions, "Shall I? or shall I not?" (as if it were ready in the same breath to retract and undo its own act) how doth it now rejoice to feel itself offer willingly! They that have life and sense about them, can tell there is pleasure in all this. And the oftner repetition is made hereof (so it be done with life, not with trifling formality) they so often renew the relishes with themselves of the same pleasure.

(2.) Continued commerce with God, agreeable to the tenour of that league and covenant struck with him, how pleasant and delightful is it! to be a friend of God, an associate of the most high, a domestic, no more a stranger, a foreigner, but of his own household, to live wholly upon the plentiful provisions, and under the happy order and government of his family, to have a heart to seek all from him, and lay out all for him! How great is the pleasure of trust, of living free from care; that is, of any thing, but how to please and honour him in a cheerful unsolicitous dependence, expecting from him our daily bread, believing he will not let our souls famish; that while they hunger and thirst after righteousness they shall be filled; that

they shall be sustained with the bread and waters of life; that when they hunger, he will feed them with hidden manna, and with the fruits that grow on the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God; that when they thirst he will give water, and add milk and honey without money; without price. And for the body not to doubt, but he that feeds ravens and clothes lilies will feed and clothe them. To be so taken up in seeking his kingdom and righteousness, as freely to leave it to him to add the other things as he sees fit; to take no thought for tomorrow; to have a heart framed herein according to divine precept; not to be encumbered or kept in an anxious suspense by the thoughts and fears of what may fall out, by which many suffer the same affliction a thousand times over, which God would have them suffer but once; a firm repose on the goodness of providence, and its sure and never-erring wisdom; a steady persuasion, that our heavenly Father knows what we have need of, and what it is fittest for us to want, to suffer or enjoy; how delightful a life do these make! and how agreeable to one born of God, his own son and heir of all things; as being joint heirs with Christ, and claiming by that large grant, that says all things are yours; only that in minority it is better to have a wise father's allowance, than be our own carvers.

[1.] To live in the fear of God, is not without its pleasure. It composes the soul, expels the vanity which is not without vexation, represses exorbitant motions, checks unruly passions, keeps all within in a pleasant peaceful calm; is health to the navel, and marrow to the bones.

[2.] To live in his love, is delight itself, or a tendency towards it. The disposition whereto being communicated from God, and a part of the holy new creature derived from him; is also part of the (secondary or subservient) delectable object. As the light that serves unto vision is partly (as the mediate object) somewhat of what I see, and doth partly, as a principle, actuate and concur with the faculty in the act of seeing. And as the blessed God himself is both the first principle and ultimate object of that and other gracious acts*: therefore it cannot but be pleasant to the soul, to perceive that powerful influ-

* And how rationally men may be said at the same time to love, delight in and enjoy the amiable or delectable object, and therewith also love their own love, enjoy their own fruition, or delight in their own delight; enough is said by some school-men. Nor indeed can it be conceived how the soul can continue to love or delight in any thing but it must be so. For while it perseveres, every latter act justifies the former, and takes complacency therein, but all as directed towards such an object.

ence from God stirring in it, by which it is disposed to design and pitch upon him as the great object of its highest delight, unto whom it laboured under so vile and wicked an aversion heretofore. Yea though it yet have no certain persuasion of a present interest in him, yet this disposition of heart towards him, and that it finds it could satisfyingly rest in him as its best good upon supposition it had such an interest, the very strivings and contentions of the soul towards him upon this account, are not without a present pleasure: as we behold with an intermixed desire and delight a grateful object which we would enjoy, but do not yet know whether we can compass or not. To be in that temper of soul, as to resolve, "Him I will seek and pursue, him I will study to please and serve, and spend my strength and life in serving him (which is to live in his love) though I yet know not whether he will accept, or how he will deal with me!" this cannot but have a certain sensible delectation in it.

[3.] To live in a stated habitual subjection to him as the Lord of our lives, how pleasant is it! to have learned to obey; to be accustomed to the yoke; to taste and prove the goodness and acceptableness of his will through an effectual transformation in the renewal of our minds; to be by the law of the spirit of life made free from the law of sin and death; to be able to speak it as the undisguised sense of our hearts, "Because thy law is holy, therefore thy servant loveth it; to reckon it a royal law of liberty, so as to account ourselves so much the more free, by how much we are the more thus bound;" when we affect to be prescribed to, and are become patient of government, not apt to chafe at the bridle, or spurn and kick at the boundaries that hem us in: this is a temper that hath not more of duty in it than it hath of delight. There is such a thing as delighting in the law of God, according to the inward man, when there is yet a difficulty in suppressing and keeping under inordinate rebellious workings of corrupt nature; unto which there is no desire an indulgence should be given, by having the law attempered to them, but severity rather used to reduce them to a conformity to the law: so will it be, if the law become a heart impression; when it can once be truly said, thy law is in my heart, it will be also with the same sincerity said, I delight to do thy will, O God. (Ps. 40.)

[4.] The continual exercise of good conscience towards God, hath great pleasure in it. Hereby our way and course is continually reviewed, and we pass censures upon ourselves, and upon that account survey our own works. And by how much the more carefully and often this is done, so much the more delectable it will be: that is, the more approvable we shall find them upon review. For we shall order our course

the more warily, as we reckon upon undergoing an inquisition and search; wherein an apprehensive serious heart well understands it is not itself to be the supreme judge. How blessed an imitation might there here be of the blessed God himself, who we find beheld his six days works, and lo they were all very good; whereupon follows his delightful day of rest; so we shall, in some degree of conformity to him, finding our works to be in that sort good, as that he will by gracious indulgence accept them as such, have our own sabbath, a sweet and peaceful rest in our own spirits. Though we can pretend no higher than sincerity only, yet how sweet are the reflections of a well-instructed conscience upon that! when our hearts reproach us not, and we resolve they shall not as long as we live; we are conscious to ourselves of no base designs, we propose nothing to ourselves wherein we apprehend cause to decline God's eye; we walk in the light, and are seeking no darkness or shadow of death, where (as workers of iniquity) we may hide ourselves from him; can implore him as an assistant, and appeal to him as a judge in reference to our daily affairs and wonted course; is this without pleasure! This is our rejoicing, saith the apostle, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation, &c. (2. Cor. 1. 12.) And thus to converse with God, and him whom we daily design to glorify and serve, and whom we expect daily in some measure, and fully and finally before it be long, to enjoy, is certainly throughout a way of pleasantness and peace. How delectable then is the soul rectifying communication from God, whereby, being before so disaffected, it becomes now so well inclined towards him in all these respects. But because the exigency of the case did require (by reason of sin that had cut off the intercourse) that there should be a mediator to open the way and renew the former out-worn friendship; therefore it was also necessary that so the soul might duly move towards God, it should be rightly framed and disposed also towards him.

2 We are therefore to consider too, how delectable this communication must be, as it aright disposes the heart towards Christ, our way to God. For towards him we must understand it to have been most obstinately and inflexibly averse; and that, therefore a mighty communication of power was necessary to set it right here. Unto that part of religion which is natural; there was so much of an advantage before-hand, as that there was an old foundation to build upon. There are some notions of God left, not only concerning his existence, but his nature and attributes, many of them: and from the apprehension what he was, it was in some measure discernible what we should have been,

and ought yet to be towards him; and from thence many checks and rebukes of conscience wherein it was found to be otherwise: so that here was somewhat in nature to be wrought upon, as to this part of religion. But as to that part which respects the Mediator, this was a frame wholly to be raised up from the ground. There were no principles immediately and directly inclining to take part with the gospel; but all to be implanted anew. The way that God would take to bring back souls to him being so infinitely above all human thought. And therefore, though to a considering Pagan it would not sound strangely, that God ought to be trusted, feared, loved, &c. yet even to such the gospel of Christ was foolishness. Besides, that this way of dealing with men was not only unknown and unimaginable to them, not so much as once thought of, or to be guest at; but the tendency and aspect of it (when it should come to be made known) was such as that it could not but find the temper of men's spirits most strongly opposite, not merely ignorant, but prejudiced and highly disaffected. For this course most directly tended to take men quite off from their old bottom; to stoop and humble, and even bring them to nothing; to stain the pride of their glory, and lay them down in the dust as abject wretches, in themselves fit for nothing, but to be trampled on and crushed by the foot of divine revenge. Suppose a man to have admitted a conviction from the light of his own mind or conscience that he was a sinner, and had offended his maker, incurred his just displeasure, and made himself liable to his punishing justice; It would yet have been a hard matter to make him believe it altogether impossible to him, to do any thing to remedy the matter, and restore himself to divine favour and acceptance. He would naturally be inclined to think; why admit the case be so, he should easily find out a way to make God amend. He would recount with himself all his own natural excellencies, and think himself very capable of doing some great thing, that should more than expiate his offence, and make recompence abundantly for any wrong that he had done. But when the gospel shall come and tell him he hath deserved eternal wrath, that his sin is inexpiable, but by everlasting sufferings, or what is of equal value; that here is one (the eternal Son of God) who became a man like himself, and thereupon a voluntary sacrifice, to make atonement for the transgression of men; that God will never accept another sacrifice, for the sins of men than his, nor ever any service at their hands, but for his sake; that him now revealed to them they must receive, rely upon, and trust to wholly, or perish without mercy; yea, and that he hath put the government over them, into his hands, laid it on his shoulders, and to him they must subject themselves as their Ruler and Judge the great

Arbiter of life and death to them and all men ; that they are to be entirely devoted to him as long as they live, as their Redeemer and Lord ; in him as they are to have righteousness and strength so to him they must pay all possible homage and subjection, to him their knees must bow, and their tongues confess ; they must receive the law from his mouth ; be prescribed to by him, comply with his will, though never so much to the crossing of their own ; and though notwithstanding, they must know they can deserve nothing by it ; that so vile and worthless miscreants they are become that God will never have to do with them upon other terms.

When this shall appear the state of the case, and it comes to be apprehended, "Then must I yield myself a greater transgressor than ever I thought, and an undone, impotent, helpless wretch? I shall thus make nothing of myself ; and what must all my natural or acquired excellencies go just for nothing? and a person of such worth and accomplishments as I, be thus brought down into the dust? yea and besides, to be brought under such bonds, and profess to owe myself so entirely to a Redeemer, that I must for ever live after his will and pleasure, and no more at my own; and can never hope, if I take a liberty to indulge myself besides the allowance of his rules, that I can ever make any amends for such transgression by any thing that I can do. So that by taking his gift (of my pardon and life) upon such terms, I shall sell my liberty, and render myself a perfect slave to his will and pleasure for ever." Here now cannot but be a strong stream to be striven against and most vehement counter-strivings of the haughty and licentious spirit of man. So that it is not strange it should be said by our Saviour, no man can come to me except my father draw him. And that the exceeding greatness of my power, according to the workings of the mightiest power in any case, should be put forth upon them that believe. Therefore are men in Christ by creative power only ; if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. (2. Cor. 5. 15.) He is new made, if he be in him. And this aversion being so deeply natural, will still in a degree remain (while any thing of corrupt nature remains) in the hearts of even the regenerate themselves.

Therefore a continual exertion of the same power will be ever requisite to hold souls to Christ, and retain them in their station in him. He that establisheth us with you in Christ, is God (2. Cor. 1. 21.) as though he had said it is only a God that can do this. Therefore how is God admired and adored upon this single account. Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, Rom. 16. 25. (this was indeed a great secret to

the lapsed world.—To God only wise be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. ver. 27. But as the heart-rectifying communication from God, in this matter, is such as carries mighty power with it, so it doth proportionable pleasure, when it hath overcome, and (to the pitch of sincerity) set the soul right in this thing. How delectable is it to receive the Son of God, when the heart is made willing in the day of power! when his cords take hold of the soul, and draw it to him! what pleasure is there in the consenting, self-resigning act and disposition!

(1.) It is most highly delightful to receive him, and give up ourselves to him as our full suitable good, so exactly answering all the exigencies of our distressed case; when sensibly apprehending the true state of it, the soul cries out, "None but Christ", and finds him present, waiting only for consent, readily offering himself, "Here I am, take me, thy Jesus, thy help, thy life" How overcomingly pleasant is this to a soul that feels its distress, and perceives itself ready to perish; yea and that daily sees itself perishing, were it not for him. How pleasant, when in the time of love he finds the poor soul in its blood, and says to it, live; clothes it, decks it, makes it perfect through his own comeliness tenders himself to it, unto it taken off the dunghill, cast out in the most loathsome deplorable plight; and enters the marriage covenant with it, (we need not be squeamish or shy to speak after God himself, so representing this matter) overcomes by his own mercy and goodness, and prevails with a sinful creature to accept him. How gladly doth it throw off every thing of its own, that it may entirely possess him and be possessed by him. Here is the joy of a nuptial solemnity, or the joy of espousals. "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." While as yet this transaction is not distinctly reflected on, (as when possibly afterwards it is, there may great difficulties and doubts arise, whether all were rightly done, or yet be on its own part, yea or no) if however it be truly done, in the very doing itself and the same continuing disposition there is a sensible and inseperable delight. I say in the same disposition as often as by any repeated acts of the same kind, it expresses and shews itself: that is, as often as this covenant is renewed (whether with solemnity or more occasionally) though the relation arising thence be not in the same instant considered or reflected on, nor the sincerity of the act itself, which is necessary thereto: yet that very consent itself, if it be sincere, hath a secret joy accompanying it; and the soul feels the gratefulness and pleasure of its own act, though it do not for the present examine and take a view of it. For it is now from a principle of life, embracing and drawing into union with itself an object that is all life and good-

ness, and sweetness; which therefore sheds its own delightful savour and fragraney through the soul, while it is in the mean time acting only upon the object directly, and not reflecting upon its own act, or considering in that very instant what will be consequential thereupon. But if withal it do consider, (as that consideration cannot be far off, though it cannot consider every thing at once) that it is receiving him that is to bring it to God, who is able to do it, (even to save to the uttermost all that will come to God by him) who is intent upon that design, and did in the midst of dying agonies breathe forth his soul in the prosecution of it, and with whom God requires it to unite for this very purpose; this cannot but add unspeakably to the delightfulness of this transaction, and of this effusion of the Holy Ghost, in the virtue whereof the thing is done, how often soever it be seriously done; as our case and state require that it be very often.

(2.) And to receive him as our Lord, (which is joined with that other capacity wherein we receive him, namely, of a Jesus or Saviour; as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, (Col. 2. 6.) This also, and the heart subduing influence that disposes to it, is most highly delectable. When the soul, that was so stoutly averse, and that once said within itself, "I will not have him to reign over me," is brought freely to yield; and with sincere, loyal resolutions and affections devotes itself to him, consents to his government, submits its neck and shoulder to his yoke and burden; says to him with an ungainsaying heart, as its full sense, "Now thou Lord of my life and hope, who hast so long striven with me, so often and earnestly pressed me hereto, so variously dealt with me, to make me understand thy merciful design, and who seekest to rule with no other aim or intent, but that thou mightest save; and who hast founded thy dominion in thy blood, and didst die and revive and rise again that thou mightest be Lord of the living and dead, and therefore my Lord: accept now a self-resigning soul; I make a free surrender of myself, I bow and submit to thy sovereign power, I fall at the footstool of thy throne, thou Prince of the kings of the earth, who hast loved sinners, and washed them from their sins in thy blood; glory in thy conquest, thou hast overcome, I will from henceforth be no longer mine own, but thine; I am ready to receive thy commands, to do thy will, to serve thy interests, to sacrifice my all to thy name and honour; my whole life and being are for ever thine." I say (as before) there is pleasure in the very doing this itself, as often as it is sincerely done; and it adds hereto, if it be more distinctly considered, it is no mean or any way undeserving person to whom this homage is paid, and obligation taken on unto future obedience. "He is the brightness

of the Fathers glory, the express image of his person, the heir of all things, and who sustains all things by the word of his power: it is he whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace: it is he to whom all power is given both in heaven and earth, and (more especially) power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as were given him; it is he who spoiled principalities and powers and made an open shew of them; he whom because when he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, he humbled himself, made himself of no reputation, took on him the form of a servant, became obedient to death, the Father hath therefore highly exalted, and given him a name above every name, that at his name every knee should bow; and of whom, when he brought him (his first-born) into the world, he said, "Let all the angels of God worship him."

And such a one he is, whose temper is all goodness and sweetness. Tell Sion, thy King cometh meek and lowly. He came into this world drawn down only by his own pity and love, beholding the desolations and ruins that were wrought in it every where. Sin universally reigning, and death by sin, and spreading its dark shadow, and a dreadful cloud over all the earth: In which darkness the prince thereof was ruling and leading men captive at his will; having drawn them off from the blessed God their life, and sunk them into a deep oblivion of their own original: and disaffection to their true happiness that could only be found there. This great Lord and Prince of life and peace came down on purpose to be the Restorer of souls, to repair the desolations and ruins of many generations. He came full of grace and truth, and hath scattered blessings over the world wheresoever he came; hath infinitely obliged all that ever knew him; and is he in whom all the nations of the earth must be blessed, Who then, would not with joy swear fealty to him, and take pleasure to do him homage? Who would not recount with delight the unexpressible felicity of living under the governing power of such a one?

And if the tenour and scope of all his laws and constitutions be viewed over, what will they be found, but obligations upon men to be happy; how easy his yoke, how light his burden; what is the frame of his kingdom, or whereof doth it consist but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost? And who would not now say, "This Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. (Psal. 97.1.) Why should it not be triumphingly said among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth, that the world also shall be established, that it cannot be moved: let the heavens rejoice,

and the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; let the fields rejoice and all that is therein, and all the trees of the wood rejoice! It is plain, that be the matter of joy here what it will, be there never so much cause of exultation and glorying in him, the righteousness and peace which his kingdom promises, never actually take place, nor the joy that is connected therewith, till the Holy Ghost dispose and form men's spirits thereto. (Rom. 14. 17.) For all this is but mere dream and idle talk to those who hear only of these things, and feel not that vital influence insinuating itself, that may give the living sense and savour of them. And we may rather expect seas and fields, beasts and trees, to sing his triumphant song, and chant his praises, than those men whose hearts are not attuned to his government, and who are yet under the dominion of another Lord, not being yet by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, made free from the law of sin and death. (Rom. 8. 2.) But where this is effectually done, how large matter of most rational pleasure do they find here; while there is nothing in that whole system of laws by which he governs, that is either vain, unequal or unpleasant, or upon any account grievous? only this is not the estimate of distempered spirits, or of any other than them in whose hearts his law is written, and who because they love him, keep his commandments. (John 15. 10.) Unto love his commands are most connatural; for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; they are not grievous, (John 5. 3.) that is, by the *meiosis* which some do reasonably enough apprehend in those words, they are joyous, delightful, pleasant, but to them only who being born of God, have overcome the world. This holy influence and communication of God, is therefore grateful, and contributes not a little to delight in this respect, that thereby men's spirits are rectified and set right towards God, namely, both towards the Creator and Redeemer.

Secondly. As hereby they are rectified towards men, having the universal law of love wrought deep into their hearts; being filled with all goodness, righteousness, meekness, mercifulness; apt to do no wrong, to bear any, to pity and help the distressed, to love enemies, and as there is opportunity, to do good to all, especially to them that are of the household of faith. We must understand in this, as well as in the other parts of that stamp which the spirit of God puts on the souls of men, that the impression corresponds and answers to the seal, (as hath been said) the inward communication to the outward revelation of God's will; and so we find the matter is: for as divine precepts require this should be the temper of men's spirits, so the very things that compose and make up that blessed temper, are said to be the

fruits of his own Spirit; the fruit of the Spirit is peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, &c. (Gal. 5. 22. 23.) And again, the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness and truth. (Eph. 5. 9.) Now hath not that as God would of pleasure within itself, that is in these respects soul a spring have it be? that is conscious to itself of nothing but righteousness, goodness, benignity, candour towards any man, and is in all things acted by a spirit of love, that suffereth long, and is kind, that envieth not, that vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, and never faileth (1. Cor. 13. 4-8.) That so equally poises and acts a man's spirit, that he carries seemly and suitably towards all men, takes pleasure in the best; in the saints and excellent ones of the earth hath all his delight; and is no worse affected, than to wish them better, even towards the very worst; neither envies the greatest, nor despises the meanest; neither is revengeful towards them that injure him, nor unthankful to them that oblige him; that is apt to learn of good men, and to teach the bad, by observing and giving the most imitable example; that is not undutiful to superiors, nor morose and unconvertible towards equals; that lives not to himself; is a common good to all within the sphere through which his activity can extend itself; that doth good with inclination, from the steady propension of his own will, and an implanted principle of goodness. It is evident, God hath formed such a man's spirit unto delight of the purest kind, and the best sort of pleasure; unto which they who are strangers, banish it from their own breasts, by the resistance and grief they give his blessed spirit, thereby making it a stranger there; and by harbouring in their own bosoms their own tormentors, the pride, the wrath, the envy, the malice, the revengefulness, the bitterness of spirit, which as they render them uneasy and intolerable to all that are about them, so most of all to themselves; and which while they prey wherever they range abroad, yet still bite most keenly and tormentingly that heart itself wherein they are bred; as poisonous vipers gnawing the bowels which inclose them.

Thirdly. Towards themselves: which also may be considered distinctly; for though all the good qualifications we can mention or think of, do redound to a man's self, and turn to his own advantage, repose and delight, (which it is the design of all this discourse to shew,) yet there are some that more directly terminate on a man's self, wherein the rectitude we now speak of doth in great part consist. When we are obliged to love others, as ourselves, it supposes not only an allowable, but a

laudable self-love. Men shall praise thee when thou dost well to thyself. Before this right spirit be renewed in a man, he doth not only wound himself, by blows that are reflected on him, and hurt at the rebound, but by many a direct stroke; or he lets the wounds fester and corrupt, to the cure whereof he should with all diligence directly apply himself. How unpropitious and cruel to themselves are unholy persons! what wastes and desolations do they commit and make in their own souls, by breaking the order God and nature did at first set and establish there? dethroning their own reason and judgment, which ought to bear sway and govern within them. This banishes delight, and drives it far away from them. They see what is fittest for them to do and seek, and run a quite counter-course. What storms do they hereby raise in their own bosoms! What a torture is it, when a man's own light and knowledge bear a standing testimony against him, and hold him under a continual doom! How ill-disposed are men towards themselves, when they wholly neglect themselves in one kind, when they too much mind and seek themselves in another; when they too little understand themselves, so as not to put a true value on themselves, but do either disesteem themselves, as to their more noble part, in respect of that common excellency which belongs to them with all other men; or do over-magnify themselves, and are conceited and too well opinioned of themselves, in respect of any peculiar excellency wherein they imagine they outstrip others? how ill do they treat themselves in their self-indulgence, their gratifying their own sensual inclination, with the greatest danger and damage to their souls: when they care not at what expence they make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof; what unkind usage do they find at their own hands, when they cherish and countenance desires which they cannot gratify and raise to themselves expectations of things not within their own power, which being disappointed turn into so many furies, and in that shape take a sharp revenge upon their own hearts? when they exercise no authority and dominion over themselves, preserve not the liberty due to what should both be itself free, and should command the rest in them; enslave themselves to vile and ignominious lusts and passions, put out their own eyes, and grind blindfold to the basest and most tyrannical lords, their own sordid humours and base, mean appetites; when though they serve more rigorous task-masters than the Israelites in Egypt did, and are more sorely beaten by them when their tale is not fulfilled for want of materials, yet groan not because of their hard bondage, nor affect liberty? This gracious communication from God, sets all things in a good degree right within: so that where there was nothing before, but hor-

rid and hellish darkness, disorder and confusion, there now shines a mild, pleasant, cheerful light, that infers regularity, purity and peace.

1. How great is the pleasure that arises from self-denial (wherein we do, duly and as we ought, deny ourselves) not only as it is an act of duty towards God (of which before) but as it is an act of justice and mercy towards our own souls! That is; wherein we make a just and true estimate of ourselves, do esteem basely of ourselves; wherein we are become base and vile: and wherein there is any thing of real value and excellency in our own beings, we value it only upon that account, and in that subordination wherein it is truly valuable! How pleasant, when we have learned to forsake and abandon ourselves, when we are not apt to magnify and applaud, to trust or love, to seek and serve ourselves unduly, and are only inclined to own, to cleave and stick to ourselves, wherein and so far as we ought! when that idol self is no longer maintained within us, at the dear expence of our peace, comfort, safety, and eternal hope; an idol that engrossed the whole substance of our souls, that exhausted and devoured the strength and vigour of our spirits, which it doth not maintain, and cannot repair; which consumes our time, which keeps all our powers and faculties in a continual exercise and hurry, to make a costly, a vain, an unlawful provision for it! How great is the ease and pleasure which we feel, in being delivered from that soul-wasting monster, that was fed and sustained at a dearer rate, and with more costly sacrifices and repasts than can be paralleled by either sacred or other history; that hath made more desolation in the souls of men, than ever was made in their towns and cities, where idols were served by only human sacrifices, or monstrous creatures satiated with only such refections; or where the lives and safety of the most were to be bought out by the constant successive tribute of the blood of not a few! that hath devoured more, and preyed more cruelly upon human lives than Moloch, or the Minotaur! When this monstrous idol is destroyed and trodden down, what a jubilee doth it make, what songs of triumph and praise doth it furnish, and supply to the poor soul, now delivered and redeemed from death and bondage! How much more easy and reasonable a service is it (when once the grace of God and their own experience give men to understand it) to study to please him than themselves? when they feel themselves dead to their former Lord and service, and only alive to God, through Jesus Christ! when sin no longer reigns in their mortal bodies, that they should obey it in the lusts thereof; when they no more yield their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but have yielded themselves unto God, as those that are alive from

the dead, &c. when being made free from sin, they are become servants unto righteousness! (Rom. 6. 11. 12. 18.) The law of the Spirit of life of Christ Jesus having made me free from the law of sin! (Rom. 8. 2.) What an ease is it to the spirit of a man, when he hath not himself to seek and serve and care for in any unlawful disallowed sense; when he finds not himself necessitate^d or urged by his own imperious fleshly inclinations so to do; when he perceives himself by a prevailing better principle counterpoised, and the weight and bias of his own spirit incline him quite another way; when he finds he hath nothing left him to do, but to serve God, to know his will and do it, and is disburdened of all unnecessary care for himself: that which is necessary being part of his duty, and is therefore done on purpose only for God: and that which is unnecessary and forbidden (which part only was burdensome) being supplied by (what hath the greatest ease and pleasure in it imaginable) trust and self-resignation to his pleasure and will whose we wholly are? what life is pleasant, if this be not! surely wherein it is attained to, it is most pleasant; and hither this gracious heart-rectifying communication is gradually tending.

2. How great is the pleasure that arises from self-government! when that governs in us which should govern, and that is subject and obeys which should obey; when a man's mind is completely furnished with directive practical principles, and his heart is so framed that it is capable of being prescribed to, is patient of restraints and direction, easily obeys the reign and follows the ducture of an enlightened well-instructed mind; when the order is maintained between the superior faculties and the inferior, and there are no contentious murmers of ungovernable appetitions and passions against the law of the mind. It is true, that where this holy rectitude doth but in a degree take place, there will be many conflicts, but those conflicts are in order to victory: and how joyful and glorious is the triumph upon that victory! when the soul enters upon its *ἑπισημασίον*, its thanksgiving song, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" how happy a state is that (wherein at some times it is here attained) when there are now no tumults within! The wicked (which is the very import of their name) are as a troubled sea, that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Here is no governing principle in any power; no sceptre, no trident to check and allay the rage of those waters. But when his power goes forth in the soul, whose very word, winds and seas obey, how peaceful and pleasant a calm doth ensue! Now is a man restored to himself, and is again in his right mind. He is truly now said to enjoy himself, and upon the best terms; that is, he enjoys himself in and under God. He

is (in a due subordination) **master** of himself. He possesses his own soul; that one piece of holy rectitude, patience, enables him to do so. In your patience possess ye your souls. (Luk. 21. 19.) Patience is a part of fortitude, an ability to suffer. He that is in this respect impotent of himself, not able to suffer, is a perfect slave; not a slave only to the vicious wills and humours of other men, in whose power he apprehends it is to befriend or hurt him; but first and chiefly to his own; he is not master of his own judgment, reason, and conscience; but he prostitutes all in the first place, to his own inordinate self-love, his avarice, his fear, and consequently to the pleasure of other men, (which upon no other terms and inducements is base and vile towards any man, were the matter in itself never so right, and the obedience as due to them as can be supposed) whereas if he could suffer, he retained his mastery over himself, and were, under God, within his own power. Upon this with other grounds, is joyfulness (Col. 1. 11.) a companion of patience; how much more is it so (if to this one part) to the whole frame of that holy rectitude whereby a man's spirit is composed to a due order within itself; when there is a universal sobriety (or soundness of mind, as the word that uses to express sobriety signifies) a continency and dominion of one's self; and the soul is no longer hurried to and fro, and even outed of itself, by undue desires, fears, angers, sorrows, &c. nor vexed by the absence of and its perverse inaptitude and indisposition to those which it well knows are due; when it finds itself at liberty from the exactions of an unsubdued flesh, and for the kindly and genuine operations and exercises of the divine life. When it is in good measure freed from the rackings and tortures that naturally accompany the habitual contrariety of an ungovernable heart to a convinced judgment and conscience; and is no longer held in pain, by such continual self-upbraidings; **thou art**, and affectest to be, what thou knowest thou shouldest not; and neither **art**, nor doest, nor canst desire or endure to be, or do, what thou very well knowest thou shouldest. In that case the soul is throughout disjointed, and continually grating upon itself. And the ease and pleasure which it finds by this happy change much resembles that which a man's body, being in such a case, feels, when every dislocated bone is brought back and well settled in its own proper place and order again. How resentingly doth the Psalmist acknowledge divine goodness in this! He restoreth my soul: and leadeth me in paths of of righteousness, for his names sake; (Ps. 23. 3.) as if he had said, "Now I can walk and act as a sound man, and the paths of righteousness are become pleasant and delectable to me, which before I declined, or wherein my halt and maimed

soul was unable to move a step." Now is heard the voice of joy and gladness when the bones which were disordered and broken rejoice. (Psal. 51. 8.)

3. How great is the joy and pleasure of self-activity! when the soul is not moved by foreign, improper motives, but finds itself to move freely from an implanted principle of life, that acts it forward in right and plain paths; when it doth, with its own full consent, what it is convinced it ought without being forcibly dragged or violently imposed upon; and is (not a weak, ineffectual, or only self-judging, but) a powerful governing vital law to itself.

4. How great pleasure arises from a constant, diligent self-inspection! when a man's spirit dwells within itself, resides at home, seeks not itself abroad; remains within its own bounds, is intent upon itself; watches over its own motions as its proper charge; is formed to a compliance with that precept, keep thy heart with all diligence. (Prov. 4. 23.) And upon that consideration, as seriously weighing that thence arise the issues of life, all vital acts and operations whatsoever will savour of the root and principle from whence they proceed, and be as the heart is; good and pure if that be so; if otherwise corrupt and naught. To have a spirit habituated to the business of its own province and territory; its eyes, not with the fools in the ends of the earth, but inward upon itself. Hence his own vineyard is best kept; when the sluggard's (that neglects himself) is wholly over-run with thorns and briars, that cover the face thereof. How forlorn and comfortless a spectacle hath such a man of his own soul! The horror whereof is only avoided by (the more hopeless course of) turning off his eye; as conscious how ill entertainment is there to be met with. Therefore are such, strangers at home; and are afraid to converse with themselves; are better acquainted with the affairs of France and Spain, or at least of this and that and the other neighbour, than those of their own souls. And the more things at home are neglected the worse they grow. Poverty and desolation come upon them as an armed man; that (in this case) waste and make havock without resistance. And herein lies much of the heart-rectifying work and power of grace, in disposing and setting the heart so far right towards itself, as that it may first have the patience to look inward, and then the pleasure which will afterwards arise, most naturally, thence. The great aversion hereto of misgiving hearts is not otherwise overcome. But when it is; how do all things flourish under such a one's careful, self-reflecting eye! That soul is as a watered garden. Thither it can invite his presence who is altogether made up of delights, to come and eat his pleasant fruits. And now, retirement and

solitude become delectable : and a man delightfully associates with himself; singles out himself to be his own companion, as finding another always stepping in ; so that he is never less alone than when alone. How unspeakable a happiness is this, when the great Mediator that undertook to reconcile God to the soul, shall thus have also reconciled it to itself! When it shall be considered, how dreadful the case is, when a man's wickedness hath transformed him into a Magor-Missabib, compassed him with affrightments, made him a terror to himself; it may then be understood how grateful a change it is when he is reformed into a son of peace, and made a delight to himself; when he can recreate himself, and refresh his tired eye, overcharged with beholding the sad things that every where come in view from a world lost in wickedness, by looking into God's own plantation within himself; and considering it under that notion only, he doth not look upon himself with an eye of pride; as he doth not upon others with that of disdain. He beholds with a sort of self-complacency what God hath wrought and done there, not with self arrogance; as knowing there is a self too, upon which he hath still reason to look with abhorrence and self-loathing. And though there be now incorporated with him a better self, yet that was not of himself. He well understands who made him differ, not only from others but from himself; and put him into that capacity of saying that I am not I, I am not who or what I was before. And the more he is used to such self reflection, the more pleasant it becomes to him; that is, if he confine not his eye too much, to the dark side of his own soul; and do look to the more lightsome side with that remembrance (as before) that whatsoever he is, that is good and grateful to behold, he is by grace. He thus grows familiar with himself, and the sight mends as it is oftener beheld; and while it is not observed always to do so. Yea, though things look many times sadly and sometimes dubiously; that however, doth but occasion the accomplishment of a more diligent search, which engages to more earnest labour and strugglings with God and with himself, which labour is recompenced with a following fruit and pleasure: yea, and God is invocated not only for redress, but for further search. When such persons fear lest they have been too indulgent and partial towards themselves, and lest they have not made so strict a scrutiny as the case may possibly require; then the request is, "Search and try me, O Lord, see if there be any way of wickedness in me." And here the sincerity which appears in that self-suspicion, and jealousy, over their own souls, is not without its grateful relishes, and a secret delight insinuates and mingles with the appeal which such a soul makes to him, whose eye is

a flame of fire, searches hearts and tries reins. Add it is some pleasure, however, to find that disposition in their own souls, that they are thoroughly willing to know themselves, and desire not to shun and decline the search of that fiery flaming eye. Thus then upon all accounts this divine communication is delectable, as it tends to rectify men's dispositions towards themselves, and to set them right in their inclinations and posture in reference to their own souls. We may add,

Fourthly. It contributes much to the matter of delight, as it sets men's spirits right in their dispositions towards this and the other world; the present and future state of things. How great a work is necessary to be done in this respect, wherein things are so monstrously out of course; and men become thereby not strangers only to true delight and pleasure, but even incapable of any such relishes till the matter be redressed! How vitiated and unexercised are men's senses as to these things, and unable to discern between good and evil! Their grosser sense is utterly incompetent, and a spiritual more refined sense is wanting; therefore do they judge and choose and love, and pursue only as that most incompetent and injudicious principle doth direct, that is appealed to in all cases: all their measures are taken from thence; and that only is called good, which to their sensual imagination, tinctured by the earthiness and carnality of their hearts, appears so; that evil, of which the same principle doth so pronounce; according hereto is the whole bent and inclination of their souls. And they are only influenced and governed by the powers of this sensible world; this present evil world, the fashion whereof (yea it and the lusts thereof together) are passing away. And the things of the world to come have no power with them; no motives from thence signify any thing. They are only steered in their whole course by the apprehension they have of advantages or disadvantages in reference to their present secular concerns. They love this world, and the things of this world; mind earthly things, and are not startled when they are so plainly told, that men of this character have not the love of the father in them, and are enemies to the cross of Christ, and that their end will be destruction. It is a death to them to think of dying; not from the fear of what may ensue (they have adicism enough to stifle such fear), but from the love of their earthly stations, and that vile earthly body in which they dwell.

But how delightful a thing is the change which this rectifying communication makes! how pleasant to live in this world as a pilgrim and stranger, seeking still the better, the heavenly cuntry! to behold the various inticements which are here offered to view, at sometimes without inclination towards them;

the frightful aspect and appearance of things at other times without commotion; is not this delectable? to dwell apart from this world in the midst of it; in the secret of the almighty (Psal. 91. 1). under his pavillion, (Psal. 27. 6.) as one of his hidden ones, with-drawn from the communion of this world to his own communion; so severed and cut off from this world, as not to partake in the spirit of it, or be acted thereby: but by another, a greater and more mighty, as well as a purer and more holy Spirit; greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. (1. Joh. 4. 4.) And again, we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God. (1. Cor. 2. 12.) Which things the divine Spirit disposes the soul to, and unites it with, when it disinclines and disjoins it from this world and the things thereof; and thereby discovers this soul to be quite of another community from that of this world, namely, of a heavenly community, unto which those better and more excellent things do lie in common, as their portion and inheritance. What matter of joy and glorying is it, when one is crucified to this world, and this world to him; (Gal. 6. 14.) when the world appears to him a crucified thing, that is, an accursed, hateful, detestable thing, (which is one notion of crucified) such a thing as he can despise and hate; which he is as little apt to be fond of, as one would be of a loathsome carcase hanging upon an ignominious cross: and when he can feel himself crucified towards it, that is dead (another notion of it) disinclined without sense, breath, pulse, motion, or appetite; not so dead as to be without any kind of life, but without that base, low, sordid kind of life by which he lived to it, and in its converses and embraces. So much of delectation doth this infer, as even to endear the very cross itself (that hateful horrid thing) by which it is effected. But that carries a farther signification with it, to be fetched more expressly from other scriptures; the cross is itself rendered amiable, and a thing to be gloried in, to be looked on with delight and pleasure, upon the account of the design and end of that tragedy which was acted thereon; within which design (being executed and accomplished) this happy effect is included. We elsewhere find the apostle expressing his vehement desire to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and (in order thereto) the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death. (Phil. 3. 10.) But what did he lastly aim at in this? the next words more fully speak out (what he first mentioned) the power of his resurrection to be the thing chiefly in his eye, and that he desired (what he adds) the fellowship of his sufferings &c. as a means unto that end, though it seemed a

sharp and painful means ; if by any means I might attain the resurrection of the dead ; (ver. 11.) as if he should say, I care not what I undergo, not the sufferings even of a painful crucifixion itself, or that my worldly earthly self do suffer conformably to the sufferings of my crucified Lord ; I matter not by what so severe method the thing be brought about, if by any means it may be brought about, that I may know the power of his resurrection so feelingly, as to attain also the resurrection of the dead. And what was that ? No doubt to attain a state (which he confesses he had not yet perfectly attained, but was in pursuit of) suitable to his relation and union with a risen Jesus : union with him supposes a being risen with him ; if ye then be risen with Christ. (Col. 1. 3.) It is taken as a granted thing, that they that are his are risen with him. And what state and temper of spirit would be suitable to that supposition, the next words shew, "Seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection (or mind) on the things above, not on the things on earth." Then follows the method in which they were brought to the capacity of doing so ; for ye are dead. Their professed relation to Christ did suppose them risen, and did therefore first suppose them dead. Now if they would do suitably to what their profession imported, this was it they had to do ; to abstract their minds and hearts from the things of this earth, and place them upon the things of a higher region. And (as it is afterwards expressed in this same context which we were considering before) to have our conversation, or citizenship, in heaven, whence we look for the Saviour, (Phil. 3. 20.) This is, as our chief interests and priveleges are above, to have our thoughts and the powers of our souls chiefly exercised upon that blessed and glorious state, which state is the prize (mentioned above) of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (ver. 14.) It being the scope and import of his call unto us, and the very design of his sufferings on the cross, to draw up a people from earth to heaven ; whence therefore they that under this call do still mind earthly things, are said to be enemies to the cross of Christ ; (ver. 18. 19.) the great incongruity whereof the apostle even resents with tears as he there testifies. And it was in this, that he was for his part so willing to comply with the design of the cross, that he made do difficulty to endure all the hardship and dolour of it, that he might attain this glorious fruit and gain which he reckoned should accrue to him from it ; even more of a raised heavenly mind, which signified it to be strongly bent that way already ; when no mortifications were reckoned too severe to be undergone in order thereto.

And here therefore this, soul-rectifying influence must be understood to have been proportionably strong.

Hence also it was that we find him groaning as one under a pressure or heavy weight to be clothed upon with the heavenly house : and to have mortality swallowed up of life (2. Cor. 5. v. 4. 5.) because God had wrought him to this self same thing so bent and determined his spirit was towards the blessedness of the future state (which seems the most natural contexture of discourse here, though some others have understood it otherwise) as that, though he could bear patiently the delay, he could not but desire most earnestly to be there. And we see how the temper of the primitive Christians was, as to this, and the other world, in those days when the Spirit was plentifully poured out. They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods knowing in themselves, they had in heaven a far better and an enduring substance. Heaven signified much with them, and this world very little. They looked not to the things that were seen and temporal, but to the things unseen and eternal. (2. Cor. 4. 18.) as those former worthies did, whose minds and hearts, being set right by faith; which is the substance of the things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. 11.) They lived as pilgrims and strangers on earth, despised the pleasures, riches and honours of it ; endured all manner of hardships and tortures in it, not accepting deliverance, because they were taken up in the pursuit of the better country ; had respect to the recompence of reward ; and expected a part in the better resurrection. And is it not a delightful thing to the spirit of a man when he is sensibly disentangled, and at liberty from the cares, desires, griefs and fears that were wont to enwrap his heart ? when he finds his weights and clogs fallen off, that depressed him, the bonds and snares loosed which bound him down to this earth ; and feels himself ascending and moving upwards ; out of that darkness, stupidity and death that possessed his soul, into that upper region of light, purity and peace, unto which his spirit is still gradually more and more connaturalized day by day ? When heaven in respect of the pure holiness, the calm serenity the rest and blessedness of it, is now grown familiar to him, and his very element ?

We see then, that in all these mentioned respects this gracious communication, wherein it is rectifying, and tends to settle the soul in that frame which it ought to be in, and which is most proper and natural to it ; therein it is also most delightful. and carries highest matter of pleasure in it.

CHAP. III

I. The Characters of divine communication ; which are, *First*, Generative. *Secondly*, Nutritive. *Thirdly*, Sanative. *Fourthly*, Corroborative. II. A twofold mistake arising from not knowing or not considering this way of enjoying God. III. Doubts or objections to which this discourse is liable, considered and answered. IV. The subject resumed, and divine communication shewn to contain in it, *Thirdly*, A manifestation of God's love to the soul in particular. 1. What it is not. 2. Remarks on the manner of its communication. 3. The necessity of seeking and attaining it. 4. The delight which it affords. 5. To be understood with caution.

I. **WE** proceed to sum up the whole account of this divine communication by shewing what are its peculiar characters.

First, It is generative, and begets the soul to a new, a divine life ; makes it of a sluggish, stupid, dead thing (as it was towards all heavenly and divine matters) living and sprightly, full of active life and vigour. Life we say is sweet, it is in itself a pleasant thing. This mean, bodily life itself is so ; if we do but consider it, and allow ourselves to taste and enjoy the pleasure of it. As for instance, that this and that limb and member is not a dead lump, that we feel life freshly sprouting and springing in every part, it not this delightful? How much more the life of the soul ! especially this so excellent and sublime kind of life ! And it is the radical principle of all other consequent pleasure, that by which we are capable thereof : every thing is sapless and without savour to the dead. How pleasant operations and fruitions doth the divine life render a person capable of !

Secondly, It is nutritive. Souls are nourished by the same thing by which they are begotten, by the same divine influence. As a generative virtue is wont to be attributed to the sun, so it cherishes also its own productions. The beams of that Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4. 2.) make them that fear God grow up as calves in the stall, fill them with marrow and fatness, cause them to flourish as the cedars of Lebanon. And is not that delightful to be increased daily with the increases of God ? fed with heavenly hidden manna, angels food ; and thereby

(though we need not here speak distinctly of these) to receive at once both nourishment and growth?

Thirdly, It is sanative, and virtually contains all the fruits in it which are for the healing of the nations; when the soul grows distemper'd, it restores it, and is both sustaining and remedying to it. How great is the pleasure of health and soundness! of ease to broken bones! of relief to a sick and fainting heart! so it is often (for in the present state the cure is not perfect, and relapses are frequent) with the soul in which the life of God hath begun to settle and diffuse itself, till his influence repair and renew it; and when it doth so, how pleasant is it to find a heart made sound in his statutes! and to perceive a new working in it, the Spirit of love, power and a sound mind! (2 Tim. 1, 17.) So pleasant that it occasions a triumph (even when the outward man is perishing) if it be found that the inward is renewed day by day.

Fourthly, It is corroborative and strengthening; confirms resolutions, and establishes the heart. Hereby they who have felt this quickening, cherishing, healing virtue are also strengthened with might (namely, by the Spirit) in the inner man; so that they hold on their way, and being of clean hands, grow stronger and stronger. (Job 17. 9.) They go from strength to strength; (Psal. 84, 7.) and do not so much spend, as increase it by going forward. For the way itself of the Lord is strength to the upright. (Prov. 10. 29.) He provides that fresh recruits shall still spring up to them in their way. For all their supplies are of him, and are acknowledged to be so; in as much as by waiting upon the Lord they renew strength and mount up with wings as eagles, run without weariness, and walk without fainting. (Isa. 40. 31.) And this increasing strength cannot be without a proportionably increasing delight. How pleasantly doth the strong man rejoice to run his race! and enterprize even difficult and hazardous things! By this strength doth the regenerate man perform the ordinary duties belonging to his holy profession; by it he encounters difficulties, combats and conquers enemies, bears heavy and afflicting pressures, and none of these without some intermingled pleasure. For even that exercise of this strength which is likely to be least accompanied with pleasure, the suffering of sharp and smarting afflictions, hath many times much of this grateful mixture; and can only be expected to have it in this way of gracious communication, as the depending sufferers shall be strengthened with all might according to the glorious power of God, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness. (Col. 1. 11.)

God is therefore to be enjoyed and delighted in by this

delectable communication intervening, by which he now frames the soul according to his own image, and gives a heart after his own heart, that is, such as is suitable to him, and as he would have it be. And this way only is any one in a possibility to delight in God, by having a good frame of spirit communicated to him, and inwrought in him; I mean never without this, and in a great measure by it. Then is he in a happy state, when God hath by his own Spirit made him what by his word he requires him to be. Now is he composed to delights and blessedness, being by the same workmanship created in Christ Jesus both to good works and to the best of enjoyments. How happy is that soul in whom the true matter of delight is become an implanted thing! that is what it should be, and should be nothing (such is the constitution of gospel-rules and precepts) but what most truly makes for its own content, delight, and rest! whose own temper is now in some sort become to it both a law and a reward! Surely this is one great part of what an enlightened apprehensive soul would most earnestly desire and crave, or would be the genuine breathings of a sincerely gracious heart. "O that I were more like God! more perfectly framed according to his holy will!" And must therefore be, in great part, a thing apt to afford it delight and rest; as hath been already inculcated before.

II. But yet this natural consequence is little understood. And the common ignorance or inadvertency of this, hath made it necessary to insist the more largely (though but little hath been said in respect of what might) on this part of the delectable communication wherein God offers himself to his people's enjoyment. For from the not-knowing, or not considering of this way of enjoying him, this twofold mistake (the one of very dangerous, the other of uncomfortable importance and tendency) hath arisen.

First, That some have thought they have enjoyed God when they have not; have only had their imaginations somewhat gratified, by certain, either false or ineffectual notions of him. In which they have rested, and placed the sum of their religion and happiness. Never aiming, in the mean time, to have their spirits reformed according to that pure and holy image and exemplar which he hath represented in the gospel of his Son; the impression whereof, is Christ formed in us.

Secondly, That others have thought they have not enjoyed God when they have; supposing there was no enjoyment of him, but what consisted in the rapturous transporting apprehension and persuasion of his particular love to them; and slightly overlooking all that work he hath wrought in their

souls, as if it were nothing to be accounted of, not allowing themselves to reflect on any thing in themselves, but what was still amiss; and vainly seeking with much anxiety and complaint what they have, while they will not take notice that they have it, nor apply themselves to improve the already implanted principles that are, in themselves, apt to yield fruits of so pleasant relish. It was upon this account requisite to discover and labour somewhat to magnify the intrinsical delightfulness of religion itself; and to put the more of note and remark upon a well tempered spirit, even in point of delectableness and the matter of pleasure it hath in it, by how much it is with too many, on one account or another, a neglected thing.

III. There is only somewhat of doubt, or objection that may possibly lie in the minds of some against the scope and drift of this discourse; which it will be needful we endeavour to remove before we proceed to what is further contained in this gracious communication: As,

First, It may be said, “Doth not all this tend to bring us, instead of delighting in God, to delight in ourselves? to make us become our own center and rest? And how can the relishable sweetness of gracious principles and dispositions signify God’s being to be enjoyed or delighted in? For what, are these things God?” To this I only say:

1. That such holy dispositions as they are not God so nor are they, in strictness of speech, ourselves. And how absurd were it, to call every thing ourselves that is in us! And how self-contradicting then were the very objection! for that would make delighting in God and in ourselves directly all one; and so the fault which it causlesly pretends to find, it would really commit. It is true, that improperly holy dispositions are said to make up another self in us, a new man, according as corrupt and sinful principles and dispositions do make also a self, the old man. But then it is also to be remembered that with no greater impropriety they are capable of bearing the name of God; as the image of any thing frequently doth the name of the thing which it represents, or the work of its author: and they are expressly called, Christ formed in us; and is not he God? They are called the Spirit; for when we are cautioned not to quench the Spirit, how can that be understood of the eternal uncreated Spirit himself? And the very thing produced (not merely the productive influence) in the work of regeneration is expressly called by that name (as it is no such strange thing for the effect to carry the name of its cause;) that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. (Joh. 3. 6.) There is Spirit begetting, and spirit begotten. And the spirit begotten, as it must be distinguished from its cause, the Spirit of God; so it

must from the subject wherein the effect is wrought, our own spirits; for they sure are not produced by the regenerating work. Yea, and when God is said to dwell in them that dwell in love, and that are humble and contrite; somewhat else is thereby signified to be indwelling there, than the mere being of God; for otherwise the privilege of such were no greater than of all other men and things. And what else is it, but somewhat communicated and imparted immediately from God to such? (else how by dwelling in love, do they dwell in God?) which because dwelling imports permanency, cannot be a transient influence only, but some settled abiding effect, a consistent frame and temper of spirit, maintained by his continually renewed influence; and therefore it would be very unreasonably said, that the representing this as delectable is a calling us off from God to delight in ourselves. For if this communication be not itself, in strict propriety, God, it were as great impropriety to say it were ourselves. Again,

2. It hath a great deal more affinity with God than with us. We are it is true, the subjects of it; but it is his immediate production and very likeness, a divine nature, no human thing. Therefore if here our delight were to terminate, it were more proper to call it delighting in God, than in ourselves; but

3. It is neither said nor meant, that here our delight is to terminate; but that hereby we are to delight in God, and so that our delight is to terminate in him.

4. When we are said to enjoy God, I inquire, is any thing communicated to us, or no? If not, we have no enjoyment; if any thing be, what is it? God's essence? that is impossible and horrid to think, as hath been said. And we need not repeat, that when we can tell what it is to enjoy a friend, without partaking his essence, whose communications are so incomparably more remote, mediate, resistible; it is less difficult to conceive, how God is to be enjoyed by his communications.

Secondly. It may be again said; "But if God be thus to be delighted in, how can delighting in him be upon such terms our duty? for is it our duty that he communicate himself in this way to us?" Let any that object thus, only study the meaning of those precepts; Keep yourselves in the love of God. Continue in his goodness. Be ye filled with the Spirit. Walk in the Spirit. And if they can think them to signify any thing they will not be to seek for an answer. But to this more hereafter; when from the delightful object, we come to treat of actual delighting in it.

Thirdly. But some may say, "It were indeed to be acknowledged, that such a temper of spirit once communicated, were indeed very delightful; but where is it to be found? And to

state the matter of delight so much in what is to be sought in ourselves, is to reduce the whole business of delighting in God, to an impossibility, or to nothing: so little appearing of this temper, and so much of the contrary, as gives much cause of doubt, whether there be any thing to be rejoiced in or no. And what then? Are we to suspend the exercise of this duty till we have gotten the difficult case resolved! (which may be all our time). Is there a real thorough work of God upon my soul or no? For how can I rejoice in that whereof I have yet a doubt, whether it be what it seems or no?" I answer,

1. It is plain, they that really have nothing of this communication from God, cannot take delight in it (otherwise than as hoped for). But,

2. Would we therefore have such to please themselves and be satisfied without it; and delight in their distance and estrangement from God; and while there is no intercourse between him and them? And shall this be called too delighting in God? Surely somewhat else than delight belongs to their states.

3. But for such as really have it, that which hath been designed to be evinced, is, that it is delectable in itself; and therefore they cannot be without any taste or relish of pleasure therein: while yet some doubt touching the sincerity and truth thereof doth yet remain; though such doubt (but more their imperfect reception of this communication, and neglect to look after further degrees of it) cannot but render their delight comparatively little. Nor hath it been designed to speak hitherto of what delight the regenerate in this way actually have, but what they may have; and what matter of delight God's heart-rectifying communication doth in the nature of it contain; that is, supposing it were imparted and received, so as actually to have formed the soul according to the gospel-revelation. And if it were so in a more eminent measure and degree, it were then in itself so delectable, as without the assurance of our future safe and happy state (though that, in that case, is not likely to be in a comfortable degree wanting), that is, not by it only, but by itself, without the present constant necessary concurrence thereof, to afford unspeakable pleasure to that soul in which it hath place. So that the getting of assurance is not the only thing to be done in order to a person's delighting in God; of which more hereafter is intended to be said in the directive part.

IV. But though that be not the only thing, yet it is a very great thing; and being superadded, makes a great addition to the matter of delight: therefore we further say, this divine communication is delectable as it includes in it,

Thirdly. The manifestation of God's love to the soul in particular : but it may be necessary here,

1. To inquire what it is not. We do not hereby intend an enthusiastic assurance ; or such a testification of the love of God to the soul, as excludes any reference to his external revelation and exercise of our own enlightened reason and judgment thereupon : or wherein these are of no use, nor have subservience thereto. But as in the other parts of the divine communication, his external revelation hath the place of an instrument whereby he effects the work inwardly done upon the mind and heart, and of a rule or measure whereby we are to judge of it ; so we are to account it is, as to this part of it also ; that is, he inwardly testifies and manifests the same thing which is virtually contained in his gospel-revelation, considered in that reference and aspect which it hath on the present state of the soul. For that outward revelation must needs be understood to signify diversly to particular persons, as their state may be diverse : as when it says the things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, God hath prepared for them that love him (1. Cor. 2. 9). To a person that doth indeed truly love God, it virtually says, " All these things are prepared for thee." To one that doth not love God, it can only be understood to say, " All these things may be thine, that is, if thou shalt love him ; if thou do not, thou hast no part in them." But in as much as a conditional promise when the condition is performed, is equivalent to an absolute ; these words do as truly import this sense to one that loves God, these things are thine, as if they were directed to it in particular : as truly, I say, supposing the person do truly love God, but not so clearly or with that evidence. For this truth, (supposing it a truth) I do sincerely love God, is not so evident as this, that such preparation is made for them that do : for this is expressly contained in the word of God ; the other is not so, but to be collected only by self-inspection, and observation of the bent and tenour of my spirit and way God-ward ; yet however, the evidence of truth admits of degrees, truth itself doth not. All things that are true, are equally true. And therefore, when it is said, so great things are prepared for them that love God ; it is as truly said, they are prepared for this man who loves God, as this or that particular lover of God is contained in the general notion of a lover of him. And then, as that public declaration says not to any, these things are prepared for you, whether you love God or no, or otherwise than as they come under that common notion of lovers of God ; this inward manifestation is also so accommodate to that, as that it says not another thing, but the same ; that is, nothing that contradicts (and indeed no more than is virtually contained

in) the other ; or it applies what is generally said of the lovers of God to this particular lover of him as such ; that is, enabling him to discern himself a lover of him, impresses this truth powerfully upon the heart, these great preparations belong to thee, as thou art such a one.

We speak not here of what God can do, but what he doth. Who can doubt but as God can, if he please, imprint on the mind the whole system of necessary truth, and on the heart the entire frame of holiness, without the help of an external revelation ; so he can imprint this particular persuasion also without any outward means ? Nor do we speak of what he more rarely doth, but of what he doth ordinarily ; or what his more usual course and way of procedure is, in dealing with the spirits of men. The supreme power binds not its own hands. We may be sure, the inward testimony of the Spirit never is opposite to the outward testimony of his gospel (which is the Spirit's testimony also) ; and therefore it never says to an unholy man, an enemy to God, thou art in a reconciled and pardoned state. But we cannot be sure he never speaks or suggests things to the spirits of men but by the external testimony so as to make use of that as the means of informing them with what he hath to impart ; nay, we know he sometimes hath imparted things (as to prophets and the sacred pen-men) without any external means, and (no doubt) excited suitable affections in them, to the import of the things imparted and made known. Nor do I believe it can ever be proved, that he never doth immediately testify his own special love to holy souls without the intervention of some part of his external word, made use of as a present instrument to that purpose, or that he always doth it, in the way of methodical reasoning therefrom.

Nor do I think that the experience of christians can signify much to the deciding of the matter. For besides that this, or that, or a third person's experience cannot conclude any thing against a fourth's ; and the way of arguing were very infirm, what one or two or a thousand, or even the greater part of serious christians (even such as have attained to some satisfying evidence of their own good estate) have not found, that nowhere is to be found : besides that I say, it is likely that few can distinctly tell how it hath been with them in this matter ; that is, what way or method hath been taken with them in begetting a present persuasion at this or that time of God's peculiar love to them. His dealings with persons (even the same persons at divers times) may be so various ; his illapses and coming in upon them at some times may have been so sudden and surprising ; the motions of thoughts are so quick ; the observation or animadversion persons usually have of what is trans-

acted in their own spirits is so indistinct; and they may be so much taken up with the thing itself, as less to mind the way and order of doing it, that we may suppose little is to be gathered thence towards the settling of a stated rule in this case. Nor is the matter of such moment, that we need either be curious in inquiring or positive in determining about it; that principle being once supposed and firmly stuck to;—that he never says any thing in this matter by his Spirit to the hearts of men, repugnant to what the same Spirit hath said in his word; or, that he doth not say a new or a diverse thing from what he hath said there for their assurance: that is, that he never testifies to any person by his Spirit that he is accepted and beloved of him, who may at the same time be concluded by his publickly-extant constitutions in his word to be in a state of non-acceptance and disfavour; or concerning whom the same thing (namely, his acceptance) might not be concluded by his word, if it were duly applied to his case. Hereby the most momentous danger in this matter is avoided; for if that principle be forelaid, enough is done to preclude the vain boasts of such as may be apt to pretend highly to great manifestations of divine love, while they carry with them manifest proofs of an unsanctified heart, and are under the power of unmortified, reigning sin. That principle admitted, will convince that their boasted manifestations, do only manifest their own ignorance, pride and vanity; or proceed only from their heated imagination, or (the worse cause) satanical illusion, designed to lull them asleep in sin, and the more easily to lead them blind-fold to perdition. And this is the main concernment about which we need to be solicitous in this matter: which being provided for; as it is difficult, so it is not necessary to determine, whether the Spirit do always not only testify according to the external revelation, but by it also; and so only as to concur in the usual way of reasoning from it.

No doubt but the same truth may be assented to upon divers grounds; sometimes upon rational evidence; sometimes upon testimony: and some truths may be seen by immediate mental intuition (as being self evident) which also may be capable of demonstration. And though this truth of God's particular love to such a man, be none of those that have self-evidence: yet God's Spirit, as it may by assisting the discursive faculty, help us to discern the connexions of some things which otherwise we should not perceive; so it may by assisting the intuitive, make things evident to us that of themselves are not. Nor yet, also, that it actually doth so, can any I believe certainly tell; for admit that at some times some have very transporting apprehensions of the love of God towards themselves, suggested to their

hearts by the holy Spirit; they having this habitual knowledge before that love to him (for instance) or faith in him, or the like, are descriptive characters of the persons whom he accepts and delightfully loves; how suddenly may the divine light irradiate, or shine upon those previously received notions (which were begotten in them by the interveniency of the external revelation before) and excite those before implanted principles of faith, love, &c. so as to give them the lively sense of them now stirring and acting in their hearts? and thence also enable them unwaveringly to conclude (and with an unexpressible joy and pleasure) their own interest in his special love, in this way shedding it abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given to them? (Rom. 5. 5.) This may be so suddenly done that they may apprehend the testimony to be immediate when indeed it is not. Nor are they able to prove from Scripture the immediateness of it; for as to what it doth to them in particular, Scripture says nothing, they not being so much as mentioned there: what it doth or hath done to this or that person there mentioned signifies nothing to their case; if any thing were said that must have that import (which will be hard to evince) and that it is any where in Scripture signified to be its usual way, in common, towards them on whose hearts it impresses this persuasion, to do it immediately; is much less to be evinced. For what scripture saith so? and that famous text that speaks so directly to this matter: the Spirit of God beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, seemeth rather to imply the contrary: in as much as the Spirit of God is there expressly said to co-witness with our spirit (as the word there used signifies) by which it should seem to take the same course in testifying which our spirit or conscience doth, that is, of considering the general characters of his children laid down in his word, reflecting upon the same in ourselves, and thereupon concluding we are his children: which if it were supposed the only thing the Spirit of God ordinarily doth in this matter, we may

2. With much confidence make the following remarks.

(1) That it doth herein no small thing; for is it a small thing to be ascertained of God's fatherly love to us as his own children?

(2.) That it doth not a less thing than if it testified the same matter in a way altogether immediate. For wherein is it less? Is the matter less important? that cannot be said; for the thing we are assured of is the same howsoever we be certified thereof. Is it less evident? that can with as little pretence be said; for doth any one account a thing not evident in itself, and that needs to be proved to him some way or other, the less evident

for being proved to him in a discursive way? What pretence can any one have to say or think so? Is it that reasoning is more liable to error and mistake? but I hope the reasoning of God's Spirit is not so, when it enables us to apprehend the general truth we should reason from; to assume to it; to collect and conclude from it, guiding us by its own light: in each of these surely we have as much reason to rely upon the certainty and infallibility of the Spirit's reasonings as of its most assertory dictates; otherwise, we would (most unreasonably) think the authority of those conclusions laid down in the epistle to the Romans, and other parts of scripture, invalidated by the Holy Ghost's vouchsafing to reason them out to us, as we know it most nervously and strongly doth: or, is it less consolatory? that cannot be, for that depends on the two former, the importance and evidence of the thing declared: the former whereof is the same; the latter not less.

(3.) Yea and supposing that the Holy Ghost do manifestly concur with our spirits in the several steps of that discursive way, so that we can observe it to do so (and there is little doubt but it may do so as observably to us, by affording a more than ordinary light to assist and guide us in each part of that procedure, as if it did only suggest a sudden dictate to us and no more) we may upon that supposition add, that it doth hereby more advantageously propose the same thing to us, than if it only did it the other way. It doth it in no way more suitable to our natures, which is not nothing, and it doth it in a way less liable to after-suspicion and doubt; for it is not supposed to be always dictating the same thing. And when it ceases to do so, howsoever consolatory and satisfying the dictate was at that instant when it was given, the matter is liable to question afterwards, upon what grounds was such a thing said? and though it cannot be distrusted, that what the Holy Spirit testifieth is true; yet I may doubt whether it was indeed the Holy Spirit that testified it or no. Whereas if it proceeded with me upon grounds, *they* remain, and I have no reason to suspect that which was argued out to me, upon grounds which I still find in me, was either from an ill suggestor, or with an ill design; whereas there may be some plausible pretence of doubt in the matter, if there was only a transient dictate given in to me, without any reference or appeal to that rule by which God hath not only directed me to try myself, but also to try spirits whether they be of him or no. Nor is there any imaginable necessity of assigning quite another method to the Spirit's work as it is a Spirit of adoption, from that which it holds as it is a spirit of bondage; for, as to this latter, when it convinces a person and binds down the condemning sentence upon him; this surely is the

course it follows, to let a person see (for instance) they that live after the flesh shall die; but thou livest after the flesh, therefore thou shalt die; or, all that believe not, the wrath of God abides on them; but thou believest not (as it is we know the Spirit's work, to convince of not believing) therefore the wrath of God abides on thee. And what need is there of apprehending its method to be quite another in its comforting-work? Nor is it surely a matter of less difficulty to persuade some that they are unbelievers, and make them apprehend and feel the terror suitable to their states; than others, that they are believers, and make them apprehend the comfort which is proper to theirs. Yea, and is not its course the same in its whole sanctifying-work, to bring home the particular truth, whose impression it would leave on the soul, with application thereof to it in particular; which (as generally propounded in Scripture) men are so apt to wave and neglect; for what is every one's concern, is commonly thought no one's: and what need that its method here should be wholly diverse? But in whichever of these ways the Spirit of God doth manifest his love, it is not to be doubted, but that

3. There is such a thing in itself very necessary, and to be attained and sought after, as a communicable privilege and favour to holy souls, this is evident enough from multitudes of Scriptures. Those that have been occasionally mentioned in speaking (what was thought fit to be said) of the way of his doing it, need not to be repeated, unto which we may add, what we find is added to those above-recited words, eye hath not seen, &c. the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, namely, but God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit. (1. Cor. 2. 9. 10.) And that Spirit not only gives those lovers of God above-mentioned, a clearer view of the things prepared for them, so as that the nature of them might be the more distinctly understood, (as is argued in the latter part of this, and in the following verse;) but also of their own propriety and interest in them; now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, that we may know the things that are freely given us of God. (ver. 12.) Whence therefore they are revealed by the Spirit, not as pleasing objects in themselves only, but as gifts, the evidences and issues of divine love; their own proper portion, by the bequest of that love to whom they are shewn. Nor is this the work of the Spirit only, as inditing the Scriptures, but it is such a work as helps to the spiritual discerning of these things; such as whereto the natural man is not competent, who yet is capable of reading the Scriptures as well as other men. And what will we make of those words of our saviour, when having told his

disciples, he would pray the Father, and he should give them another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, that he might abide with them for ever: even the Spirit of truth, &c. he adds, I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you; that is, (as is plain) by that Spirit. And then shortly after subjoins, he that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. (Joh. 14. 16.-21.) Here is an express promise of this love manifestation, whereof we speak, by the Spirit, (the Comforter mentioned above;) not to those particular persons only, unto whom he was then directing his speech, or to those only of that time and age, but to them indefinitely that should love Christ, and keep his commandments. Which is again repeated in other words of the same import; after Judas's (not Iscariot) wondering expostulation touching that, peculiarly of this loving manifestation; Jesus answered and said unto him, if any man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. (ver. 23.) So that such a manifestation as is most aptly expressive of love, such converse and cohabitation as imports most of kindness and endearedness, they have encouragement to expect that do love Christ and keep his words; the same thing no doubt with that shedding abroad of the love of God in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given to them, mentioned before. And whereas we have so plain and repeated mention of the seal, the earnest, the first-fruits of the Spirit, what can these expressions be understood to import (and they do not signify nothing) other than confirmation of the love of God, or assuring and satisfying evidences and pledges thereof.

And that there should be such an inward manifestation of divine love superadded to the public and external declaration of it (which is only made indefinitely to persons so and so characterised) the exigency of the case did require; that is, wherein it was necessary his love should be distinctly understood and apprehended, it was so far necessary this course should be taken to make it be so. A mere external revelation was not sufficient to that end; our own unassisted reasonings therefrom were not sufficient. As other truths have not their due and proper impression, merely by our rational reception be they never so plain without that holy, sanctifying influence before insisted on; so this truth also of God's love to this person in particular, hath not its force and weight, its efficacy and fruit, answerable to the design of its discovery, unless it be applied and urged home on the soul by a communicated influence of the Spirit to this purpose: many times not so far as to overcome and silence tormenting

doubts, fears and anguish of spirit in reference hereto, and where that is done, not sufficient to work off deadness, drowsiness, indisposition to the doing of God cheerful service, not sufficient to excite and stir up, love, gratitude, admiration and praise. How many (who have learned not to make light of the love of God, as the most do) who reckon in his favour is life, to whom it is not an indifferent thing whether they be accepted or no; who cannot be overly in their inquiry, nor trifle with matters of everlasting consequence who are not enough atheists and sceptics to permit all to a mad hazard, nor easy to be satisfied, walk mournfully from day to day with sunk, dejected spirits, full of anxiety, even unto agonies under the clear external discovery of God's love, to persons of that character, whereof they they really are? such as observe them judge their case plain, and every one thinks well of them, but themselves; yea their mouths are sometimes stopped by such as discourse the matter with them, but their hearts are not quieted: or, if they sometime are, in a degree yet the same doubts and fears return with the former importunity, the same work is still to be done, and it is but rolling the returning stone: and all human endeavours to apply and bring home the comforts proper and suitable to their case prove fruitless and ineffectual, nothing can be fastened upon them; they refuse to be comforted, while God himself doth not create (that which is the fruit of his own lips) peace, peace; while, as yet, they are not filled with joy and peace in believing, and made to abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. (Rom. 15. 13.) It is plain there needs a more learned tongue than any human one, to speak a word in season to such weary ones. (Isa. 50. 4.) How many, again, have spirits overcome with deadness and sloth under a settled (perhaps not altogether mistaken but mere notional) apprehension of the same love! they have only that assurance which arises it may be not from a false but the single testimony of their own spirits; at least unaccompanied with other than the ordinary help of the Spirit, not very distinguishable from the workings of their own; have reasoned themselves (perhaps regularly, by observing the rule and the habitual bent of their own spirits) into an opinion of their own good estate, so that they are not vexed with doubts and fears as some others are. But they do not discover to others, nor can discern in themselves any degree of life and vigour of heavenliness and spirituality, of love to God or zeal for him, proportionable to their high expectations from him, or the great import of this thing to be beloved of God: there is no discernible growth or spiritual improvement to be found with them; how remote is their temper from that of the primitive christians! It is appa-

rent what is yet wanting, they are not edified (as those were) walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 9. 31.) Wherefore the matter is plain, there is such a thing, as an effectual over-powering communication of the Holy Ghost for the manifesting of the love of God, of great necessity and importance to christians; that may be had and ought to be diligently sought after.

4. And if it be afforded: how infinitely delectable is that manifestation! the thing itself carries its own reason and evidence with it.

(1.) If we consider the matter represented to us thereby; the love of a God! How transporting would the thought of it be to an enlightened, apprehensive mind! No one whose nature is not over-run with barbarism would entertain the discovery of the harmless, innocent love (though it were not profitable to us) even of a creature like ourselves otherwise than with complacency; yea, though it were a much inferior (even a brute) creature. Men are pleased to behold love expressing itself towards them in a child, in a poor neighbour, in an impotent servant; yea, in their horse or their dog. The greatest prince observes with delight the affection of the meanest peasants among his subjects: much more would they please themselves if they have occasion to take notice of any remarkable expression of his favourable respect to them! But how unspeakably more, if he vouchsafe to express it by gracious intimacies, and by condescending familiarities? How doth that person hug and bless himself? How doth his spirit triumph, and his imagination luxuriate in delightful thoughts and expectations, who is in his own heart assured he hath the favour of his prince? yea, with what complacency are inward friends wont to receive the mutual expressions of each other's love! And can it be thought the love of the great and blessed God should signify less? How great things are comprehended in this, the Lord of heaven and earth hath a kindness towards me and bears me good will? How grateful is the relish of this apprehension, both in respect of what it, in itself, imports, and what it is the root and cause of?

True ingenuity values love for itself. If such a one will think of me, if I shall have a place in his remembrance, if he will count me among his friends; this we are apt to be pleased with. And tokens are sent and interchanged among friends, not only to express love, but to preserve and cherish it, and keep up a mutual remembrance among them. And as there is a great pleasure conceived, in receiving such expressions or pledges of love from a friend, not so much for the value of the thing sent, as of what it signifies, and is the token of his love, his kind re-

membrance; so is there no less pleasure in giving and sending, than in receiving: because that hereby, as we gratify our own love, by giving it a kind of vent this way; so we foresee how we shall thereby excite theirs; which therefore, we put a value upon, even abstracting from any advantage we expect therefrom. And this hath a manifest reason in our very natures; because we reckon there is an honour put upon us, and somewhat is attributed to us, when we are well thought of, and a kindness is placed upon us; especially by such as have themselves any reputation for wisdom and judgment. How dignifying is the love of God! How honourable a thing to be his favourite! The apostle seems to put a mighty stress on this, when he utters those so emphatical words, wherefore we labour (so defectively we read it, we covet, or are ambitious of it as our honour, as that word signifies) that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him; (2 Cor. 5, 9) as though he had said, neither life or death, neither being in the body or out of it, signify any thing to me, or they are indifferent things in comparison of this honour, that he may accept me, that I may be pleasing to him and gracious in his eyes, that I may stand well in his thoughts, and he bear a kind and favourable regard to me.

Yea and this is a thing in itself delightful not only as it is honourable, but as it is strange and wonderful. Things that are in themselves grateful, are so much the more so, for their being somewhat surprising, and above all our expectation. I say, supposing they have an antecedent gratefulness in them, for otherwise we know there are also very unwelcome wonders, and which are so much the more dreadful, because they are surprising and unexpected, it is greatly heightened by their being out of the road quite of all our thoughts,—great things that we looked not for. And who would have looked for such a thing as this, that the Lord of glory should place his love on such a worm as I! Which is set off with the more advantage, because the same light that represents to a soul God's love, doth also discover to it, at the same time, its own deformity and unloveliness. And then how taking and overcoming is the thought "I impure wretch! loathsome miscreant! that lost apostate creature, that made one with a race and crew of rebels, was confederate with rebellious men against him, yea in a combination with those revolted creatures the devils, and now taken, I know not why, into a state of acceptance and favour with him! and his love is declared to be towards me! And why towards me? in myself so vile! and such love! the love of a holy glorious God, towards one in whose very nature was such a horror and hell of wickedness! Why towards me rather than others, not naturally more vile than I?" How can this be thought on with-

out crying out, O wonderful ! O the depths, breadths, lengths and heights of this love, that so infinitely passeth knowledge ! and here the greater the wonder, the greater is also the delight.

And now also are the effects of this love great in the eyes of the soul, according to the apprehended greatness of their cause. If we indeed were to form conceptions of these things ourselves, by our own light and conduct, our way were to follow the ascending order, and go up from the effects till we reach the cause. But he can, if he please, in the cause present to us the effects and magnify them in our eyes, by giving us to see unto how great and magnificent a cause they owe themselves. Now shall we know whence all hath proceeded that he hath done for us. Wherefore again must the transported soul admiringly cry out, " I now see whence it was that he gave his Son, because he so loved the world ! why he came and bled and died, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood ! What a lustre doth that love cast upon those sufferings and performances ! I see why he sent his gospel to me, why so convincing awakening words were often spoken in my ear, (I see much in what once I saw but little) why he so earnestly strove with me by his Spirit, why he gave not over till he had overcome my heart, why he humbled, melted, broke me, why he drew so strongly, bound me so fast to himself, in safe and happy bonds ; why he shone into my mind with that mild and efficacious light, transformed my whole soul, stamped it with his holy image, and marked me out for his own. These are now great things when I behold their glorious mighty cause ! " And now also in this same cause are all the great effects to be seen which are yet to be brought about by it.

They are seen as very great. His continued presence and conduct, which he affords to his own through this world : that constant fellowship which they expect him to keep with them ; the guidance and support they look for ; in his love these appear great things. And now doth heaven sound no more as an empty name, it looks not like a languid faint shadow ; somewhat can be apprehended of it that imports substance, when it is understood to be a state of rest and blessedness in the communion of the God of love ; and intended as the last product and expression of his love !

They are seen as most sure and certain. Such love, now manifested and apprehended, leaves no place for doubtful thoughts and suspicious misgivings. There is no fear that this love intends to impose upon us, or mock us with the representation of an imaginary heaven ; or that it will fail to do what can be expected from it to bring us to the real one.

How pleasant is it now to behold the great and sure products of this mighty love! its admirable designs and projects, as they appear in the gospel-revelation (now illustrated and shone upon by divine light) to lie ready formed in the pregnant womb of this great productive cause. It cannot but be an unspeakable pleasure which such a discovery will carry with it; when we thus behold the matter itself that is discovered and offered to our view, unto which it must be a very considerable additional pleasure that will arise:

(2.) From the nature and kind of this manifestation. As being

[1.] In the general made by himself. It is a too plain and sad truth that men have unhappily learned to diminish God to themselves, and make every thing of him seem little. But when he represents his love himself (as who but God can represent the love of God? He only can tell the story of his own love) that evil is provided against. He will manifest it so as it shall be understood; and set it off to the best advantage. He will make it known how great a thing it is to be beloved of him. And when he gives that blessed salutation; "Hail thou that art highly favoured! O thou that art greatly beloved!" he will withal bespeak and procure a suitable entertainment of it. And hence particularly it will be,

[2.] Most incomparably bright and lightsome in respect of any representation we have had of the love of God any other way.

[3.] Most immediate, that is, (at least) so as not to be only made by some external testimony, given out many an age ago, out of which we are left to pick what we can, and to construe or misconstrue it as our own judgment serves us; but so, as that if he use such an instrument, he animates it, puts a soul into it, leaves it not as a dead spiritless letter: and applies it himself, to the purpose he intends by it, and immediately himself reaches and touches the heart by it.

[4.] Most facile and easily sliding in upon us; so that we are put to no more pains, than to behold the light which the sun casts about us and upon us. Whatever labour it was necessary for us to use before, in our searches and inquiries into the state of our ease, there is no more now than in moving, being carried; or in using our own weak hand when another that is sufficiently strong lifts and guides it for us.

[5.] Most efficacious and overcoming: that makes its own way, scatters clouds, drives away darkness, admits no disputes, makes doubts and misgiving thoughts vanish, pierces with a quick and sudden energy like lightning, and strikes through the mind into the heart; there sheds abroad this love, diffuses the sweet refreshing savour of it; actuates spiritual sense, makes

The soul taste how gracious the Lord is, and relish the sweetness of his love, puts all its powers into a suitable motion, and excites answerable affection, so as to make the soul capable of interchanging love with love. In all these respects, this manifestation of love cannot but be very delectable; and they who have not found it to be so, will yet apprehend that it must be so, if they have found and experienced the cravings of their own hearts directed this way, and can upon inquiry find this among the things they would fain have from God; O that I might be satisfied of his love! that I might know his good will towards me! for to such cravings must this delight at least be commensurate (as was formerly said.) But to them that are indifferent in this matter and unconcerned, to whom the love of God is a fancy or a trifle, no real, or an inconsiderable thing, all this will be as tasteless as the white of an egg.

5. Concerning which yet (before we pass from this head) it is needful to add some few things by way of caution.

(1.) That when we say this is of great necessity, we mean not that it is simply necessary; we think it not so necessary that a Christian cannot be without it; that is, as a Christian. But it is necessary to his well-and more-comfortable-being, and his more lively, fruitful walking and acting in his Christian course.

(2.) That therefore the way of God's dealing herein is with great latitude and variety; he having reserved to himself by the tenour of his covenant, a liberty to afford or suspend it, to give it in a greater or less degree as in absolute sovereignty, and infinite wisdom he pleases and sees fit to determine.

(3.) It may not therefore with so absolute and peremptory an expectation be sought after, as those things may that are necessary to the holding of souls in life; but with much resignation, submission, and deference of the matter to the divine good pleasure; such as shall neither import disesteem of it, nor impatience in the want of it.

(4.) That it ought to be less esteemed than the heart-rectifying-communication, that is impressive of God's image, and whereby we are made partakers of his holiness. This proceeds more entirely from pure love to God for himself, than from self-love; this tends more directly to the pleasing of us, than to the pleasing of God. This is necessary, as was said, but to our well or better being, that simply to our very being in Christ; this hath its greatest real value from its subserviency to the other. And what hath its value from its reference to another must be of less value than that.

(5.) That it is a great mistake to think God is not otherwise to be enjoyed than in this way of more express testification of his love : as if you could have no enjoyment of a friend, otherwise than by his often repeating to you ; I love you, I love you, indeed I love you.

(6.) That it is a much greater mistake, to place the sum of religion here; and that any should make it the whole of their business, to seek this, or to talk of it; or should think God doth nothing for them worth their acknowledgement, and solemn thanksgiving while he doth not this.

(7.) Most of all, that any should reckon it the first thing they have to do when they begin to mind religion, to believe God's particular love to them, and that he hath elected them, pardoned them, and will certainly save them. So too many, most dangerously impose upon themselves; and accordingly before any true humiliation, renovation of heart, or transaction and stipulation with the Redeemer, do set themselves thus to believe, and it may be thus seek help from God more strongly to believe it, when as the devil is too ready to help them to this faith. And when he hath done it, they cry to themselves peace, peace, and think all is well; take their liberty, and humour themselves, live as they list, and say that for so long a time they have had assurance of their salvation. The father of lies must needs be the author, (or the fautor, or both) of this faith: for it is a lie which they believe; that is, that they are pardoned and accepted of God is a downright lie, repugnant to his word and the tenour of his covenant. And for any thing else that may import their state to be at present safe, is to them no credible truth.

(8.) That for the most part, if christians, upon whom the renewing work of the Holy Ghost in that former communication hath in some degree taken place, do yet want that degree of this also, which is necessary to free them from very afflicting doubts and fears, and enable them to a cheerful and lively walking with God; it is to be reckoned their own fault; either that they put too much upon it (too little minding his public declarations in his word,) or do unduly seek it, or unseasonably expect it; or that they put too little upon it, and expect or seek it not; or that by their indulged carnality, earthliness, vanity of spirit, they render themselves incapable of it; or by their careless and too licentious walking, or their either resisting or neglecting holy motions, they grieve that Spirit that would comfort them. For though the restraint, of such more pleasant communications may proceed, sometimes, from an unaccountable sovereignty, that owes no reason to us of its arbitrary way of

giving or with-holding favours; yet withal, we are to know and consider, that there is such a thing as paternal and domestic justice proper to God's own family; and which as the Head and Father of it, he exerciseth therein; whereby (though he do not exercise it alike at all times) it seems meet to his infinite wisdom to awaken and rouse the sloth, or rebuke the folly, or check the vanity, or chastise the wantonness of his offending children; and that, even in this way, by retiring himself, becoming more reserved, withdrawing the more discernable tokens of his presence, and leaving them to the torture sometimes of their own conjectures, what worse thing may ensue. And herein he may design, not only reformation to the delinquents, but instruction to others; and even vindication of himself. For however these his dealings with men's spirits are in themselves (as they must needs be) secret, and such as come not under the immediate notice of other men; yet somewhat consequential thereto, doth more openly appear, and becomes obvious to the common observation of serious christians with whom such persons converse; that is, not only such as languish under the more remarkable terrors of their spirits, and are visibly, as it were, consuming in their own flame, (of which sort there occur very monitory and instructive examples, at some times;) but even such also as are deprived of his quickening influence, and have only somewhat remaining in them that is ready to die, that are pining away in their iniquities, and sunk deep into deadness and carnality (for his comforting communication is also quickening, and he doth not use to withhold it as it is quickening, and continue it as it is comforting, but if such have comfort, such as it is, they are their own comforters) do carry very discernable tokens of divine pleasure upon them; and the evils and distempers under which their spirits lie wasting, are both their sin and punishment. Their own wickedness corrects them, and their backsliding reproves them. And that reproof being observable, doth at the same time warn others, yea and do that right to God, as to let it be seen he makes a difference, and refuses the intimacies with more negligent, loose, idle, wanton professors of his name, which he vouchsafes to have with some others, that make it more their business and study to carry acceptably towards him, and are more manifestly serious, humble, diligent, obedient observers of his will. If therefore we find not what we have found in this kind, however the matter may possibly be resolvable into the divine pleasure, (as it is more likely to be in the case of such desertions as are accompanied with terror, when no notorious apostacy or scandalous wickedness hath gone before,)

it is both safe and modest, yea and obvious to suspect such delinquencies as were before-mentioned, are designed to be animadverted upon; and that the love hath been injured, which is now not manifested as heretofore.

(9.) That yet such a degree of it, as is necessary to a comfortable serving of God in our stations being afforded; such superadded degrees, as whereby the soul is in frequent raptures and transports, are not to be thought withheld penally, in any peculiar or remarkable respect, or otherwise than it may be understood some way a penalty, not to be already perfectly blessed. For it is certain, that such rapturous sensations, and the want of them, are not the distinguishing characters of the more grown, strong, and excellent christians, and of them that are more infirm, and of a meaner and lower pitch and stature. Yea those extatical emotions, although they have much of a sensible delectation in them (as more hereafter may be said to that purpose;) and though they may, in part, proceed from the best and most excellent cause, do yet, if they be frequent (which would signify an aptitude thereto,) import somewhat of diminution in their subject, and imply what is some way a lessening of it, that is, they imply the persons that are more disposed this way, to be of a temper not so well fixed and composed, but more volatile and airy; which yet doth not intimate, that the chief cause and author of those motions is therefore mean and ignoble; nay, it argues nothing to the contrary, but that the Holy Spirit itself may be the supreme cause of them. For admitting it to be so, it doth not alter men's natural tempers and complexions; but so acts them, as that they retain (and express upon occasion) what was peculiar to their temper notwithstanding. The work and office of the Holy Ghost, in his special communications, is to alter and new-mould men in respect of their moral dispositions, not those which are strictly and purely natural; the subject is in this regard the same it was; and whatsoever is received, is received according to the disposition of that; and it gives a tincture to what supervenes and is implanted thereinto; whence the same degree of such communicated influence will not so discernibly move some tempers, as it doth others; as the same quantity of fire will not so soon put solid wood into a flame, as it will light straw. That some men therefore are less sensibly and passionately moved with the great things of God (and even with the discovery of his love) than some others, do not argue them to have less of the Spirit, but more of that temper which better comports with deeper judgment, and a calm and sober consideration of things. The unaptness of some men's affections unto strong and fervent

motion, doth indeed arise from a stupid inconsiderateness; of some others, from a more profound consideration, by which the deeper things sink, and the more they pierce even into the inmost center of the soul, the less they move the surface of it. And though I do not think the saying of that heathen applicable to this case, "It is a wise man's part to admire nothing;" for here is matter enough in this theme, the love of God, to justify the highest wonderment possible; and not to admire in such a case, is most stupidly irrational; yet I conceive the admiration (as well as other affections) of more considering persons, is more inward, calm, sedate, and dispassionate, and is not the less for being so, but is the more solid and rational; and the pleasure that attends it, is the more deep and lasting. And the fervour that ensues upon the apprehended love of God, prompting them to such service as is suitable to a state of devotedness to his interest, is more intense and durable; of the others, more flashy and inconstant. As, though flax set on fire, will flame more than iron; yet withall it will smoke more, and will not glow so much, nor keep heat so long.

(10.) But to shut up this discourse. They that have more transporting apprehensions of the love of God, should take heed of despising them who have them not in just the same kind, or do not express them in the same seraphic strains. They that have them not, should take heed of censuring those that with humble modesty, upon just occasion, discover and own what they do experience in this kind: much less should they conclude, that because they find them not, there is therefore no such to be found, which cynical humour is too habitual to such tempers. If they do fancy such to be a weaker sort of persons they may be sincere for all that. And it ought to be considered of whom it was said, that he would not quench the smoking flax. The grace and Spirit of Christ ought to be revered in the various appearances thereof: whether we be sober or beside ourselves—the love of Christ constraineth us. (2 Cor. 5, 13, 14.) So diversely may the apprehensions of that love work in the same person, much more in divers. Christians should be shy of making themselves standards to one another; which they that do, discover more pride and self-conceit, than acquaintance with God, and more admiration of themselves than of his love.

Thus far we have given some account of the object to be delighted in; wherein, if any think strange that we have spoken so much of the delectable divine communication as belonging to the object (which how it doth hath been sufficiently shewn;) let them call it, if they please, a preparing or disposing of the subject (which it also, making its own way into the soul, as

hath been said, effectually doth;) and if the necessity of it be acknowledged upon that account, it equally answers the main purpose aimed at in all this; and had it been only so considered, would but have inferred some alteration in the frame and method of this discourse, but not at all of the substance and design of it.

CHAP. IV.

We proceed to what was next proposed in this First Part. That is, **SECONDLY**, To consider the delight itself to be taken in this delectable object, viewed generally as essential to love and specially as placed upon God. *First*, What this delight is, that we are called unto. 1. Human delight distinguished into that which is natural and that which is holy. 2. Holy delight more particularly explained, as either open and explicit, or latent and unobserved. 3. These two more particularly considered apart. (1.) That which is latent. [1.] Its nature explained. [2.] An objection answered. (2.) That which is open and explicit. [1.] Its nature [2.] Its modification. *Secondly*, How it is we are called to this delight- 1. As a privilege. 2. As a duty.

WE are next to say somewhat briefly of the delight itself to be taken therein. Nor shall we be herein so curious as to distinguish (which some do) delight and joy. The distinction wont to be assigned, cannot it is plain, hold here, so as to make the former of these signify a brutish affection only; and the latter proper to rational nature. Nor is there any such propriety belonging to the words, but they may be rendered (as indeed they are in Scripture) promiscuously, either in reference to the matter of intellectual or sensitive complacency, and either of a reasonable being, or an unreasonable. We take these therefore to signify substantially the same thing, and here delight to be intirely all one with joy: that is, there is not any the highest degree of joy which may not be fitly enough comprehended under the name of delight, when it is placed (as here it is required to be) upon the blessed God; whereof, that we may speak the more fully, it will be necessary to preface somewhat concerning its general nature; and more principally as it

is found in man, within which compass our principal business lies.

Delight, in the general, is most intimately essential to love; which imports a well-pleas'dness arising from the apprehended goodness or congruity of the thing loved; and it seems to be merely by accident, that there is any thing else in love besides that complacency of delight: that is, what there is else belonging to the nature of love arises from the mixture and variety which is to be found in the present state of things; which if it were at present universally and perfectly good, and as most rationally it might be wished; love could have no exercise but in delight. Not being so; desire that it may be so, in reference to ourselves and others whom we love, comes duly to have place; together with other acts or exercises of love, which it belongs not so much to our present purpose to mention.

For instance, whatsoever we can love, is either things or persons; whatsoever things we love, is for the sake of persons either ourselves or others; whom also we love either supremely or subordinately. And whomsoever we love supremely, as it is certainly either God or ourselves, we love whatsoever else, person or thing, either for God's sake or our own. Be it now the one or other, or wheresoever we can place our love, we find things in reference to any object of it, not yet as we would have them, and as they shall be in that settled state which shall be permanent and last always; wherunto this is but preparatory only, and introductive. The creation is indigent, every creature wants somewhat even whereof it is capable; and our own wants in many respects, we cannot but feel. Nothing is perfect in its own kind, in respect of all possible accessories thereto; even the state of glorified spirits above, is not yet every way perfect; much is wanting to their full and complete felicity: the body and community whereto they belong, the general assembly, is not yet entire and full; their common Ruler and Lord is not acknowledged and had in honour as he shall be. In the meanwhile, their consummate blessedness (which much depends on these things,) and the solemn jubilee to be held at the close and finishing of all God's work, is deferred. Yea, and if we go higher: the blessed God himself, the Author and Original of all things, although nothing be wanting to the real perfection of his Being and blessedness hath yet much of his right withheld from him by his lapsed and apostate creatures; so that, which way soever we turn ourselves, there remains to us much matter of rational (yea and holy) desire; and most just cause that our love (place we it as well and duly as we can) have its exercise that way; we have before us many desiderata, according as things yet are.

Desire is therefore love suited to an imperfect state of things wherein it is yet imperfect. And because it is suited to such a state of things, it cannot therefore but be imperfect love, or love *tending* to perfection. Pure and simple delight is love suited to a state of things every way perfect, and whereto there is nothing lacking. Wherefore delight appears to be the perfection of love, or desire satisfied. But now because this present state is mixed, and not simply evil, or such wherein we find no present good; therefore the love which is suited thereto, ought consequently to be mixed of these two especially (unto which two the present discourse is both extended and confined, because these two affections only are mentioned in the text) desire and delight. So far as things are otherwise than we practically apprehend, it is fit they should be with ourselves or others whom we love; our love is exercised in desire, wherein they are as we would have them, in delight; for then our desire is so far satisfied; and desire satisfied ceases, though love do not cease. Or, it ceases not by vanishing into nothing, but by being satisfied; that is, by being perfected in the delight which now takes place.

The one of these is therefore truly said to be love exercised upon a good which we behold at a distance, and are reaching at. The other, love solacing itself in a present good. They are as the wings and arms of love; *those* for pursuits, *these* for embraces. Or the former is love in *motion*; the latter is love in *rest*. And as in bodily motion and rest, *that* is in order to *this*, and is perfected in it. Things move, not that they may move but that they may rest (whence perpetual progressive motion is not to be found); so it is also in the motion and rest of the mind or spirit. It moves towards an object with a design and expectation to rest in it, and (according to the course and order which God hath stated and set) can never move forward endlessly towards a good in which it shall not at length rest; though yet desire and delight have a continual vicissitude, and do (as it were circularly) beget one another. And thus hath God himself been pleased to express his own delight, or the joy which he takes in his people, even by the name of rest, namely, that of love. He will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love. (Zeph. 3. 17. 18.) Wherefore delight hath not been unfitly defined—the repose or rest of the desiring faculty of the thing desired.

It is true, that love, as such, hath ever somewhat of delectation in it; for we entertain the first view of any thing we apprehend as good, with some pleasedness therein, (so far as it is loved,) it is grateful to us, and we are gratified some way by it; yea, there is somewhat of this before any emotion by desire to

wards it ; for we would not desire it, if it were not pleasing to us ; which desire is then continued (as far as love is in exercise) till it be attained for ourselves or others, according as the object of our love, (that is the object for whom as we may call it) is. Nor is that a difficulty, how yet there may be somewhat of delectation, and even of rest in this love of desire. For the soul doth in that case, while it is thus desiring, rest from the indetermination of desire : that is, if it have placed love upon any one (itself or another) upon whom therefore it doth with a sort of pleasedness stay and rest ; it doth first in the general desire it may be well with such a one ; and then, if anything occur to its notice, that it apprehends would be an advantage to the person loved ; though it cease not desiring it, yet it ceases from those its former hoverings of desire being pitched upon this one thing, as satisfied that this would be a good to him it loves. The appetite stays and insists upon this thing ; as the psalmist, one thing have I desired. (Psal. 27. 4.) It hath here as it were a sort of hypothetical rest ; as if he had said, how well pleased should I be if this were compassed and brought about ! or it hath an anticipated and pre-apprehended rest, a rest in hope (by which the object is some way made present) as it is said, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." For there is no rational desire which is not accompanied with hope. Despair stifles desire. That which appears simply impossible, passes for nothing ; and goodness goes not beyond the compass of being. But whatsoever appears to us a good (whether for ourselves or another) that is suitable and possible ; that, if love stir in reference to it, becomes the object of complacential desire ; that is, it pleases us first upon sight, or upon such an apprehension of it ; the appetite pitches, centers and rests upon it ; and then we pursue it with desire. But then our delectation therein grows, as our hope doth it will be attained ; and still more (if we find it to answer its first appearance) as by degrees, it is attained actually ; till being fully attained our desire (as to that thing) ends in all the delight and satisfaction which it can afford us. So that the delight and rest which follow desire in the actual fruition of a full and satisfying-good, is much more intense and pure, than that which either goes before, or doth accompany it ; and is indeed the same thing with fruition or enjoyment itself ; only that this term hath been, by some, more appropriated to signify the delectation which is taken in the last end, unto which yet it hath no more native designation than divers other words. We have then thus far some general notion of delight, and also of desire which is taken in here only on the bye, and as tending somewhat to illustrate the other, whereof yet what we now say may be of some use hereafter.

We are next to speak of this delight in special, which is here

to be placed upon God. About which we are to consider, both—What it is we are called to—and how we are to reckon ourselves called to it. And

First. That we may shew, what we are called to. Having in this general account spoken only of human delight, or of delight as it is to be found among men; it will now be necessary.

To distinguish this into merely natural and holy. And when we thus distinguish, it is to be understood, that by natural we mean what is within the sphere of nature in its present corrupted state; otherwise, what was natural to man did (taken in a larger sense) include holiness in it; and so the addition of holiness doth but make up purely natural delight, as it was at first—But as the case now is, the distinction is necessary. And the latter of these only will be the subject of our following discourse; as being only suitable to the blessed object whereon it must terminate, and only capable of being applied thereto. When therefore our delight is to be placed and set on God, this must be understood as presupposed, that it be purified, drained from the pollution and impure tinctures which it hath derived from our vitiated natures, and further contracted by our converse with impure, mean, and vile things. For only that delight is to be placed on God which can be so placed; and delighting in God being duly designed, that is, by consequence designed which is necessary thereto; and thereto is necessary, not merely the direction of one such particular act towards God, but a holy principle, as prerequisite to the right doing even of that also. Unholy love declines God; and indeed it is unholy in as much as it doth so. Whence therefore it is as impossible it should be set on God, remaining unholy, as that it should be another thing from itself, and yet be still wholly what it was. Although it cannot be another thing in its general nature (as it is not necessary it should) it must be a much altered thing, by the accession of holiness thereto. And this coming upon the whole soul, even upon all its faculties and powers, doth therein spread itself unto its delight also. Delight in God is not the work of an unholy heart. And (as may be collected from what hath been said) holiness consisting in a right disposition of heart towards God, a divine nature, participated from him, conformed to him, which works and tends towards him, and in itself so delightful a thing; it may thence be seen what holy delight is, or wherein the holiness of it stands.

It must to this purpose be considered, that this holy delight is twofold, according to a twofold consideration of the delectable object into which, what was formerly said about it may be

reduced. All delight in God supposes, as hath been said, some communication from him.

That communication is either of light, whereby his nature and attributes are in some measure known; or of operating influence, whereby his image is impressed and the soul is framed according to his will. And so it is partly mental or notional (I mean not merely notional, but that hath with it also an aptitude to beget a correspondent-impression on the soul, and not engage it in some speculations concerning him only) and partly real, that actually begets such an impression itself. It is partly such as may be understood, and partly such as may be felt; the manifestation of his love partly belongs to the one of these, and partly to the other.

2. Answerably hereto, the delight that is taken in him, is here more particularly considered either as open and explicit, and wherein a person reflects upon and takes notice of his own act and whereupon it is exercised—or, more latent, implicit and unobserved, when his delight lies folded up in other acts and dispositions which have another more principal design, though that also is involved in them. The *former* way, the soul delights in God more *directly*, applying itself thereto on purpose, and bending the mind and heart intentionally thereto: its present views of him having that very design and aim. The *latter* way, it delights in him rather *collaterally* when its present action (as well as the disposition leading to it) hath another more direct scope and aim. And the delight only adheres to the act, as being in itself delightful; as for instance, the acts of repentance, trust, self-denial, &c. which have another end than delight, though that insinuates into them. The former of these may be called *contemplative* delight: the soul solacing itself in a pleasant meditation of God, whereby its delight in him is excited and stirred up. The latter (understanding sense spiritually, as it belongs to the new creature, and is taken Phil. 1. 9. Heb. 5. 14.) may be called *sensitive delight*; whereby the soul, as it were, tastes how gracious the Lord is. Which though it doth by the other-also, yet the distinction holds in respect of the way wherein the delight is begotten and begun, if not in respect of the thing itself, begotten, or wherein the matter ends. In the former way, the soul more expressly reflects upon its own present exercise, which it directly intends. In the latter, it may not reflect expressly either upon its actual delight which it hath, nor actually consider God as the object that yields it that pleasure; as I may be delighted by the pleasant taste of this or that food, without considering what the thing is I am feeding on; nor have distinct reflection on the pleasure I take therein, having another and more principal design in eating, the recruiting of my strength, and that delight being only accessory and

accruing on the bye. The former is less durable, and sooner apt to vanish upon the cessation of the present act, like the delight of the eye. The latter is more permanent, as that of the taste, and habitual; such as is the pleasure of any thing whereof one hath a continued possession, as of a confirmed state and habit of health, or of the riches, dignities, pleasant accommodations which belong to any one's settled condition; of which he hath that continual enjoyment that insensibly forms his spirit, raises and keeps it up to a pitch suitable to his condition, though he have not every day or hour distinct formed thoughts of them, nor is often in that contemplative transport with Nebuchadnezzar.—Is not this great Babylon which I have built? &c.

Both these are holy delight, or delight in God. In both whereof may be seen, added to the general nature of delight, a holy nature as the principle, inferring a powerful steady determination of the heart towards God, as the object and end which it ultimately tends to, and terminates upon. Though in the former way of delighting in God, the soul tends towards him more directly: in the latter (according as the acts may be to which the delight adheres,) more obliquely, and through several things that may be intermediate unto that final and ultimate object.

3. And both these may fitly be understood to be within the meaning of this text; which therefore we shall now consider apart and severally; though both of them very briefly.

(1.) And we begin with the latter of them. For though the former hath, in some respect, an excellency in it above the latter; yet as the progress of nature in other creatures is by way of ascent, from what is more imperfect to what is perfecter and more excellent; so is it with the communicated divine nature in the new creature, which puts itself forth, first in more imperfect operations, the buddings, as it were, of that tree of life which hath its more florid blossoms, and at length its ripe and fragrant fruit afterwards; or (to come nearer the case,) inasmuch as the latter sort of delight (according to the order wherein we before mentioned them) hath more in it of the exercise of spiritual sense; the other more of spiritual reason; since human creatures, that have natures capable of both sorts of functions, do first exercise sense, and by a slower and more gradual process, come on to acts of ratiocination afterwards. So it is here, the soul in which the divine life hath taken place, doth first exercise itself in spiritual sensations: so that though, in the matter of delight, it is not destitute of the grateful relishes of things truly and spiritually delectable; yet the more formed and designed acts of holy delectation, in the highest

object thereof, distinctly apprehended and pitched upon for that purpose, do follow in their season; and these are preparations, and the essays of the new creature, gradually and more indistinctly putting forth itself in order thereto; the embryos of the other.

[1.] If therefore it be inquired, wherein the delight of this more imperfect sort doth consist? I answer, in the soul's sensation and relish of sweetness in the holy, quickening communications of God unto it, by which he first forms it for himself, and in the operations which it is hereby enabled to put forth towards him, while it is in the infancy or childhood of its Christian state. Nor, while we say the delight of this kind doth more properly belong to the younger and more immature state of Christianity, do we thereby intend wholly to appropriate or confine it to that state. For as when a child is grown up to the capacity of exercising reason, it doth not then give over to use sense, but continues the exercise of it also in its adult state, even as long as the person lives; only, in its infancy and childhood its life is more entirely a life of sense, though there are early buddings of reason, that soon come to be intermingled therein; notwithstanding which, the principle that rules and is more in exercise, more fitly gives the denomination. So it is in this case also; that is, though there are sensations of delight and pleasure in religion (yea, and those more quick, confirmed and strong in more grown christians,) yet these sensations are more single and unaccompanied (though not altogether) with the exercise of spiritual reason and judgment, and do less come in that way with christians in their minority, than with others or themselves afterwards. Therefore that which we are to understand ourselves called to under the name of delighting in God (thus taken) is,—the keeping of our souls open to divine influences and communications:—thirsting after them, praying and waiting for them:—endeavouring to improve them and cooperate with them, and to stir up ourselves unto such exercises of religion as they lead to, and are most suitable to our present state:—together with an allowing, yea, and applying ourselves to stay and taste in our progress and course, the sweetness and delightfulness of those communications and operations whereof we have any present experience. For instance; when we find God at work with us, and graciously dealing with our spirits, to humble them, break and melt them under a sense of sin, incline and turn them towards himself, draw them to a closure with his Son the Redeemer, to a resignation and surrender of ourselves to him, upon the terms of his covenant and law of grace: yea, and when afterwards we find him framing our hearts to a course of holy walking and conversation; to the

denial of ungodliness and worldly lusts; to a sober, righteous and godly life in this present world; to the exercises of piety, sobriety, righteousness, charity, mercy, &c. And now this or the like heavenly dictate occurs to us, "Delight thyself in the Lord;" what doth it import? what must we understand it to say or signify to us? Though this that hath been mentioned, and which we are now saying is not all that it signifies (as will be shown hereafter;) yet thus much we must understand it doth signify and say to us: "Thy only true delights are to be found if a course of religion, they are not to be expected from this world, or thy former sinful course; but in exercising thyself unto godliness, in receiving and complying with the divine discoveries, recommended to thee in the gospel, and (through them) the influences of life and grace, which readily flow in upon any soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness; and by which thou mayest be framed in all things after the good and holy and acceptable will of God. Herein thou shalt find such pleasures and delights entertaining thy soul, as that thou wilt have no cause, to envy wicked men their sensual delights which they find in their sinful way; if thou wilt but observe what thou findest, and exercise thy sense, to discern between good and evil; and set thyself to consider whether there be not as well more satisfying, as purer relishes of pleasure, in mortifying the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof, in denying thyself, in dying to this world, in living to God, in minding the things of another world, in giving up thyself to the several exercises of a holy life, watching, praying, meditating, &c. in trusting in the Lord with all thy heart, and in doing all the good thou canst in thy place and station, letting so thy light shine before men, that they seeing thy good works, may glorify thy Father which is in heaven; in contentment with what thou enjoyest, and patience under what thou sufferest in this world, in doing justice, loving righteousness, and walking humbly with thy God, than ever the vanishing pleasures of sin did or can afford." Thus into these two things may all be summed up, which delighting in God imports according to this notion of it.—The applying ourselves to those things by the help of God's own communicated influence (which in that case will not be withheld) where in the matter of delight lies, and—The reflecting upon the things themselves that are so delightful, and setting ourselves to discern, and tasting actually the delectableness of them. And surely, if such words, "Delight thyself in the Lord," do say to us all this, they do not say nothing; nor say any thing impertinent, either to their own native import, or our state and condition in this world.

(2.) But here it may be objected; if we so interpret de-

lighting in God, we shall by this means bring the whole of religion, and all sorts of actions that are governed and directed by it within the compass of this one thing; and make delighting in God, swallow up all that belongs to a christian, and be the same thing with repentance, faith, self-denial, humility, meekness, patience, &c. which would sure seem too much to be comprehended under the name of one particular holy action or affection; especially that they should be called delighting in God, when in the exercise of divers of these, God may possibly not be in that instant actually so much as thought on. To this it may be sufficiently answered:

First, That these things cannot be hence said with any pretence to be made the same thing with delighting in God; but only that there is a delight adhering to all these; no more than it can be said, when, at some splendid treat or entertainment, there is a great variety of delicious meats and wine, which do therefore all agree in this,—that they are delectable; that all these dishes and liquors are therefore one and the same. Or, if the master of the feast call upon his guests to delight themselves with him their friend, (as here the particle in the text, which we read delight thyself *in* the Lord, may be read delight thyself *with* him,) and he explains himself, that he means by tasting this and that and another sort of his provisions, and eating and drinking cheerfully thereof, surely his words could not with more reason, than civility be capable of that snarling reply; that, therefore, it seems, he thought the things themselves or their tastes and relishes were all one. For though they all afford delight, yet each of a different kind.

Secondly, But are not all these truly delectable? Is there not a real delight to be had in them? Let any man, that hath tried, consult his experience; yea, let any one that hath not besotted his soul, and infatuated his understanding, but seriously consider the very ideas of these things, and revolve the notions of them in his mind, and then soberly judge, whether they be not delightful? And if so, when there is an actual sense of pleasure and sweetness in the communicated power, and in the practise of them, why is not this delighting in God? Admit that he is not actually thought on in some of these exercises; as when I freely forgive a wrong, or relieve a distressed person, or right a wronged one: if yet I do these things, from the radical principle of the love of God deeply settled in my soul, and with a sensible delight accompanying my act, and the disposition I find in mine heart thereunto: here is not, it is true, the very act of delighting in God, formally terminated upon him as the Object, But it is he that gives me this delight, and

is the material Object (as well as Author) of it. The communication is from him, whereby I am delighted, and enabled to do the things that are further delightful. As if I converse with an excellent person, my intimate friend, who is at this time incognito, and by a disguise conceals himself from me, or I through my forgetfulness or inadvertency have no present thoughts of this person; but I hear his pleasant discourse, and am much taken with it, and the person on the account of it: it is my friend that I delighted in all this while though I knew it not.

Thirdly, And what fault can I find in the matter that divine delight thus runs and spreads itself through the whole business of religion, and all the affairs whercon it hath any influence? Is this the worse or the better? Have I any cause to quarrel at this? Sure I have not. But if I have not such actual thoughts of God, as may give me the advantage of terminating my delight more directly on him, that may be, very much, my own fault.

Fourthly, And what is that an absurdity that under the name of delighting in God, the several acts and exercises, of religion besides should be comprehended? How often in scripture are other (no-more-eminent) parts of religion put for the whole. The knowledge of God, calling upon God, the fear of God, &c. How commonly are these things acknowledged to be paraphrases of religion? And shall I not add the *love* of God? that most authentic and owned summary of all practical religion, and which ought to influence all our actions. And then how far are we from our mark? What is the difference between loving God, and delighting in him? But I moreover add, that delight itself in him, cannot but be so taken in that sharp passage, (though misapplied to the person of whom it was meant,) for Job hath said, what profit is it that a man should delight himself with God, (Job 34. 9.) that is, or be religious? It fitly enough signifies religion, as thus modified or qualified, namely, as having this quality belonging to it, that it is delightful, or is tinged with delight in God. But this (so large) is not the only sense, as we have said, wherein we are to take delighting in God. And when any part of religion casts its name upon the whole, it would be very unreasonable to exclude the part from which the denomination is taken, or not to make that the principal thing there meant. We therefore proceed to speak,

(2.) Of the more explicit delight in God: and shall therein consider,—the nature and modification of it.

[1.] Its nature; which from what hath been said of delight

in the general, with the addition of holiness thereto, (which is the work of God's Spirit, determining the act or faculty to which it adheres towards God,) may be conceived thus,—That it is the acquiescence or rest of the soul in God, by a satisfiedness of will in him, as the best and most excellent good. That it be the rest of the soul, belongs to its general nature. And so doth the mentioned kind of rest, more distinguishingly, by the will's satisfiedness in him, because the soul may be also said to rest satisfied (in respect of another faculty) by the mere knowledge of truth; but this supposes so much of that also as is necessary. And because the acts of the understanding are subservient and in order to those of the will, in the soul's pursuit of a delightful good; which is so far attained as it actually delights therein; therefore this may more simply be called the rest of the whole soul, whereas that other is its rest but in some respect only: especially when we add, as in the best and most excellent good; for this signifies the good wherein it rests to be ultimate, and its last end, the very period of its pursuits, beyond which it neither needs nor desires to go further, namely, as to the kind and nature of the good which it is now intent upon; though it still desire more of the same, till there be no place left for further desire, but it wholly cease and end in full satisfaction. And that we may speak somewhat more particularly of this rest in God; it supposes,

First, Knowledge of him. That the soul be well furnished with such conceptions of his nature and attributes, as that it may be truly said to be himself it delights in, and not another thing; not an idol of its own fancy, and which its imagination hath created and set up to it instead of God. Therefore his own representation of himself must be our measure; which being forsaken, or not so diligently attended to, he is either by some, misrepresented, (according as their own corrupt hearts do suggest impure thoughts) and made altogether such a one as themselves, and such as cannot be the object of a pure and spiritual delight; or by others (as their guilt and fear do suggest to them black and direful thoughts of him) rendered such as that he cannot be the object of any delight at all,

Secondly, It supposes actual thoughts of him; "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." (Psal 63. 5, 6.)

Thirdly, A pleasedness with even the first view or apprehension of him; which is most essential to any love to him, and which gives rise to any motion of

Fourthly, Desire directed towards him, upon the apprehen-

sion that somewhat is absent, either of what is due to him, or lacking to ourselves from him.

Fifthly, It includes the satisfaction or repose itself which the soul hath, so far as it finds its desire answered in the one kind or the other. Where we must more distinctly know, that the delight taken in him, is according as the desire is which works towards him, and that as our love to him is: now we love him either for himself, or for our ourselves.

For *himself*, ultimately, so as that our love periods in him, and stays there, namely, on him, as good in himself.

For *ourselves*; as when our love to him returns upon ourselves, apprehending a goodness in him which is suitable for our enjoyment. Loving him in the *former way*, we desire all may be ascribed and given to him, that possibly may or can. And because we know him to be every way perfect and full, and that nothing can be added to him of real perfection, and therefore nothing can be given him besides external honour and acknowledgments, we therefore desire these may be universally rendered him to the very uttermost. And as far as we find him worthily glorified, admired, and had in honour, so far we have delight in (or in reference to) him; consisting in the gratification of that desire. Loving him in the *other way*, (which also we are not only allowed, but obliged to do, in contradistinction to all creature good,) we desire his nearer presence and converse, more full communications of his light, grace, and consolations. And are delighted according as we find such desire is answered unto us.

Sixthly, The form of expression used in the text, implies also a stirring up ourselves, and the use of endeavours with our own hearts, to foment, heighten, and raise our own delight. The conjugation (as it is thought fit to be called) into which the word is put, importing, by a peculiarity of expressiveness belonging to the sacred language, action upon one's self; which must also be understood to have the same force, in reference to that former sense of delighting in God; that is, that we put ourselves upon these acts and exercises whereunto such delight is adjoined. These things are now more cursorily mentioned, because there will be occasion more at large to insist on them in the discourse of the practice of this duty, reserved to the Second Part.

[2.] We now proceed to the modification of this delight in God; or the right manner or measure of it. Concerning which it is apparent in the general, it can be no further right than as it is agreeable to its object. That our delight should ever be adequate, or of a measure equal to it, is plainly impossible: but it must be some-way suitable, or must bear proportion to it. I

shall here mention but two (and those very eminent) respects wherein it must do so; namely, in respect of the excellency and the permanency of the good to be delighted in.

First. The *excellency* of it. Inasmuch as it is the best and highest good; it plainly challenges our highest delight. That is, the highest delight *simply*, which our natures are capable of, is most apparently due to the blessed God, even by the law of nature itself, resulting from our natures, referred unto his. And as the case stands under the gospel; the highest delight *comparatively*, that is, higher than we take in any thing else; nothing must be so much delighted in as he. We do not otherwise delight in him as God, which is one way of glorifying him. And it is part of the apostle's charge upon the Pagan world, that knowing him to be God, they did not glorify him as God.

If we make the comparison between him and all the good things of of this world, the matter is out of question. It is the sense of holy souls, whom have I in heaven but thee? and whom can I desire on earth besides thee (Psal. 73. 25.) When others say, who will shew us any good? They say, Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance. And thereby he puts gladness into their hearts, more than when corn and wine increase. (Psal. 4. 6.) And whosoever love not Christ more than father, mother, wife, child; yea, and their own lives, cannot be his disciples. (Mat. 16. 37. Luke 14. 26.) Their present worldly life itself, if put in the balance, he must outweigh.

And if we put the comparison between our spiritual, eternal life and him; though he and that can never be in opposition, (as there may be often an opposition between him and this present life, so that the one is often quitted for the other,) yet neither is there a co-ordination, but the less worthy must be subordinate to the more worthy. We are to desire the enjoyment of him for his own glory. And yet here is a strange and admirable complication of these with one another. For if we enjoy him, delight and rest in him as our best and most satisfying good, we thereby glorify him as God. We give him practically highest acknowledgments, we confess him the most excellent one. It is his glory to be the last term of all desires, and beyond which no reasonable desire can go further. And if we seek and desire his glory supremely, sincerely and really beyond and above all things; when he is so glorified to the uttermost, or we are assured he will be; our highest desire is so far satisfied, and that turns to, or is, our own contentment. So that by how much more simply and sincerely we pass from, and go out of ourselves, so much the more certainly we find our own satisfaction, rest and full blessedness in him. As it is impossi-

ble the soul that loves him above itself, can be fully happy while he hath not his full glory: so it is for the same reason equally impossible, but it must be so when he hath.

Secondly. Our delight must be suitable to the object, (the good to be delighted in,)

In respect of the *permanency* of it, this is the most durable and lasting good. In this blessed object therefore we are to rejoice evermore. (1. Thes. 5. 16.) As in the matter of trust, we are required to trust in the Lord for ever, because in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. (Isa. 26. 4.) Everlasting strength gives sufficient ground for everlasting trust. So it is in the matter of delight. A permanent, everlasting excellency is not answered, but by a continual and everlasting delight. Therefore, is it most justly said, rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say unto you rejoice; (Phil. 4. 4.) always, and still on. If through a long tract of time you have been constantly always rejoicing in the Lord, begin again, I, again, say to you rejoice; or rather never give over. The object will warrant and justify the act, let it be drawn forth to never so vast a length of time. You will still find a continual spring, unexhausted fulness, a fountain never to be drawn dry. There will never be cause of diversion with this pretence, that now this object will yield no more; it is drained to the uttermost, and is now become an empty and gustless thing. With other things it may be so; and therefore our delight doth not answer the natures of such things, but when we rejoice in them as if we rejoiced not, (Cor. 7. 30.) they are as if they were not. All the things of this world are so. For even the fashion of this world passeth away; as it is afterwards added. (ver. 31.) Therefore no delight can fitly be taken in them, but what is volatile and unfixed as they are: lest otherwise it over-reach, and run beyond its object. And how absurd and vain is it to have our hearts set upon that which is not, that takes wing, and leaves us in the dirt? This object of delight is the "I am, yesterday and to day the same, and for ever; without variableness and shadow of change." Therefore the nature of it cannot allow us a reason; wherefore if we be delighted therein yesterday, we should not to day; or if to day, why not to morrow, and so on to-for ever. Whence then we may see no one can say he hath answered the import of this exhortation, "delight thyself in the Lord," by having delighted in him at sometime. It is continual, as well as highest delight we are here called to. We see then thus far what we are called to when we are here directed to delight ourselves in the Lord.

Secondly, We are next to shew how we are called to it.

And the matter itself will answer the inquiry. We are called to it, according to what, in itself, it is. Now it is both a privilege and a duty. We are therefore called to it and accordingly are to understand the words;

1. By way of gracious invitation to partake of a privilege which our blessed Lord would have us share and be happy in; no longer to spend ourselves in anxious pursuits and vain expectations of rest where it is not to be found; but that we retire ourselves to him in whom we shall be sure to find it. Pity and mercy invite us here to place our delight, and take up our rest. And concerning this, there is no question or imaginable doubt.

2. By way of authoritative command. For we must know, that delight in God is to be considered not only under the notion of a privilege unto which we may esteem ourselves entitled; but also of a duty whereto we are most indispensibly obliged. This is a thing (not so much not understood, as) not considered and seriously thought on, by very many; and the not-considering it proves no small disadvantage to the life of religion. It occurs to very many, more familiarly, under the notion of a high favour; and a great vouchsafement (as indeed it is,) that God will allow any of the sons of men to place their delights in himself: but they (at least seem to) think it is only the privilege of some special favourites; of whom, because they perhaps are conscious they have no cause to reckon themselves they are therefore very secure in the neglect of it. And thus is the pretence of modesty and humility very often made an umbrage and shelter to the vile carnality of many a heart; and a want of fitness is pretended and cherished at the same time, as an excuse. But whereas they do not delight in God, they never may; for he that is unfit to day, and never therewithal applies himself with seriousness, to the endeavour of becoming fit, is likely to be more unfit to morrow, and so be as much excused always as now; and by the same means at length excuse himself from being happy; but never from having been the author of his own misery. But what! is it indeed no duty to love God? Is that become no duty which is the very sum and comprehension of all duties? or can they be said to love him, that take no pleasure in him? that is, to love him without loving him. It is indeed, wonderful grace that there should be such a contexture of our happiness and duty; that, by the same thing wherein we are obedient, we also become immediately, in the same degree, blessed. And that the law of God in this case hath this very import, an obligation upon us to blessedness. But in the mean time we should not forget that God's authority and honour are concerned herein, as it is our duty; as well as our own

happiness, as it is our privilege, and that we cannot injure ourselves in this matter without also robbing God.

Delight in God is a great piece of homage to him, a practical acknowledgement of his sovereign excellency, and perfect all comprehending goodness. When we retire from all the world to him, we confess him better than all things besides: that we have none in heaven or earth that we esteem worthy to be compared with him. But when our hearts are averse to him, and will not be brought to delight in him, since there is somewhat in the meanwhile wherein we do delight, we do as much as say (yea, we more significantly express it than by saying) that whatever that is, it is better than he; yea, that such a thing is good, and he is not. For as not believing him is a denial of his truth, the making him a liar; not delighting in him is equally, a denial of his goodness, and consequently even of his Godhead itself. And since we find the words are here laid down plainly in a preceptive form: "delight thyself in the Lord;" can any think themselves after this, at liberty to do so or not? It is true that they who are in no disposition hereto have somewhat else to do in order to that (of which hereafter;) but, in the mean time, how forlorn is their case, who have nothing to excuse their sin by, but sin; and who, instead of extenuating their guilt do double it! yea, and we are further to consider, that it is not only commanded, by a mere simple precept, but that this precept hath its solemn sanction; and that not only by promise here expressly annexed (of which hereafter;) but also of implied threatening; that we shall not else have the desires of our hearts, but be necessarily unsatisfied, and miserable; which is also in many other places expressed plainly enough. Great penalty is due upon not delighting in God, even by the gospel-constitution itself; which is not so unreasonably formed as to require more in this matter, than is suitable to the object itself; and is framed so indulgently as to accept much less than is proportionable thereto; and yet within the capacity also of a reasonable soul. So that, though the very nature of the thing doth plainly dictate a rule, by which this matter is to be estimated and judged; yet this other rule gives considerable abatement and allowance. That is, It being considered what the *object* claims and challenges, as by its own proper excellency due to it; and what the *subject* is, by its own nature, capable of; not only doth it hence appear, that delight in God is a duty, but that the soul ought to rise to that highest pitch of delight in him, that is, unto the highest the soul is naturally capable of. The very law of nature, resulting from the reference and comparison of our nature unto God's own, requires so

much; that we love, or delight in him with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our might, and with all our strength. He deserves from us our very uttermost. Yet this is by the gospel constitution required with indulgence and abatement, not as to the matter required but as to the manner of requiring it. The matter required is still the same, so as that the purest and highest delight in God doth not cease to be a duty, or any gradual defect thereof cease to be a sin. The gospel doth make no change of the natures of things; makes nothing cease to be due to God from us, which the law of nature made due; nor renders any defect innocent, which is in its own nature culpable and faulty. Therefore the same pitch of delight in God is still due and required that ever was; but that perfection is not (finally and without relief) required in the same manner, and on the same terms it was; that is, it is not by the gospel required under remediless penalty, as it was. For the law of nature (though it made not a remedy simply impossible, yet it) provided none, but the gospel provides one.

Yet not so but the same penalty also remains in itself due and deserved, which was before. For as the gospel takes not away the dueness of any part or degree of that obedience which we did owe to God naturally, so nor doth it take away the natural dueness of punishment, for disobedience in any kind or degree of it. Only it provides that (upon the very valuable consideration which it makes known) it becomes to us a remissible debt, and actually remitted to them who come up to the terms of it. Not that it should be in itself no debt, for then nothing were remitted; nor yet, when it so provides for the remission of defects in this part of our duty, doth it remit the substance of the duty itself, or pardon any defects of it to any but such who are found sincere in this, as well as the other parts of that obedience which we owe. Others, who after so gracious overtures, remain at their former distance, and retain their aversion, enmity, and disaffection to God, it more grievously (and most justly) threatens and punishes as implacable; and who will upon no terms return into a state of friendship and amity with their Maker, whom they hated without cause, and do now continue strangers and enemies to him without excuse; so that the very blood of the reconciling sacrifice cries against them.

And surely since; (as was formerly said) it is God in Christ that is the entire object of this delight or love, it is a fearful penalty that is determined upon them that do not so place it; when it is said, if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha. (1 Cor. 16. 22.) And when also it is said grace be upon all them that do, (Eph. 6. 24.) it is

plainly implied, that the penalty belongs to all them that do not love him in sincerity. Of which sincerity therefore of delight in God, (to keep within the compass of our present theme,) it is necessary we be well informed; as we may be from what hath been said before; that is—that we delight in him *supremely*, and above all things else, namely with our highest and deepest complacency of will. For it is not necessary (nor ordinarily possible) that our delight in him should be ever accompanied with such sensible agitation of the corporeal spirits, as we find in reference to merely sensible objects. Which is not essential to such delight, but an accident that follows union with the body; and more frequently, and to a greater degree in some tempers of body than others. But it is necessary there be that practical estimation of him, and propension towards him, as the best and most excellent good; as that we be in a preparation of mind and heart to forego whatever can come into any competition with him for his sake. That though we do not thus delight in him so much as we should, yet we do more than in any thing else.—That we *continue* herein: that this be the constant habitual temper of our spirits towards him: that we cleave to him with purpose of heart, as not only the most excellent, but the most permanent object of our delight: having settled the resolution with ourselves, “This God shall be our God for ever and ever; he shall be our God and guide even to the death.” (Psal. 48.) and that there be frequent actual workings of heart towards him, agreeable to such a temper, though they are not so frequent as they ought. Which account we give of this sincerity of delight in God, not to encourage any to take up with the lowest degree of that sincerity; but that none may be encouraged, upon their own mistake in this matter, to take up with any thing short of it; and that we may see whence to take our rise in aiming at the highest pitch thereof. And that we may (understanding the highest intenseness and most constant exercise of delight in God that our natures are capable of, to be our duty) understand also, that in reference to our gradual defects and intermissions herein that we ought to be deeply humbled, as being faulty; not unconcerned, as though we were innocent in this regard, that we need continual pardon upon these accounts;—that we owe it to the blood of the Redeemer, that such things can be pardoned:—that we are not to reckon, or ever to expect that blood should stand us instead, to obtain our pardon for never delighting in God sincerely at all; but only (supposing we do it sincerely) that we do it not perfectly. For most certainly, they whose hearts are never turned to him as their best and most sovereign good or portion, and Ruler or

Lord ; but do still remain alienated in their minds, and enemies through wicked works, will perish notwithstanding. And that we might the more distinctly, together with the apprehension of what we are called to in this matter, understand also how we are called to, that is, not by an invitation only, that leaves us at liberty, whether we will or will not, as we think fit : but by express command, and that also backed with the severe determination of most dreadful penalty in case of omission. And thus we have in some measure shewn the import of the direction in the text,—that we delight ourselves in the Lord.

THE END OF THE FIRST PART.

A
TREATISE
OF
DELIGHTING IN GOD:

From Psalm xxxvii. 4.

DELIGHT THYSELF ALSO IN THE LORD, AND HE SHALL GIVE
THEE THE DESIRES OF THINE HEART.

In Two Parts.

PART II.

CONCERNING
SECONDLY—THE PRACTICE OR EXERCISE OF DELIGHT
IN GOD.

A
TREATISE
OF
DELIGHTING IN GOD:

From Psalm xxxvii, 4.

*Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee
the desires of thine heart.*

PART II.

THE DUTY ENFORCED; CONSIDERED

FIRST, AS ADHERENT TO THE OTHER DUTIES OF RELIGION.—SECONDLY, AS
A DISTINCT DUTY OF ITSELF.

CHAP I.

I. Introduction. II. The practice or exercise of delight in God considered. **FIRST.** As adherent to the other duties of religion. Here it is shewn. *First.* That we are not to rest in a practice of religion which is not naturally and in itself delightful. 1. What that religion is. (1.) Two cautions suggested. [1.] That even such a religion as is true and living and consequently in itself delightful may sometimes not appear, or be thought so. [2.] That a dead religion may be thought so, through the ill temper of the subject. (2.) A twofold general rule premised. [1.] That delight is unnatural which is taken in any thing not answering the end to which it serves. [2.] Such as is accompanied with a real hurt greater than the delight can countervail. Hence it appears, (3) That, that religion is undelightful which is not *chiefly* delightful. 2.—How unfit that religion is to be chosen and rested in. (1.) It is incapable of growth. (2.) Cannot be a lasting thing. (3.) It wants the fruits which should be sought by religion. (4.) It is foolish and unworthy of a reasonable creature. (5.) It will produce bitter reflections at death. (6.) It is offensive to God.

I. **WE** have in the Former Part extended the meaning of the words, “Delight thyself in the Lord,” beyond what they seem at first sight literally to signify: so as not to understand them merely as requiring, that very single act of delight to be

immediately and directly terminated on God himself; but to take them as comprehending also the sum of all holy and religious converse with God, that is, as it is delightful, or as it is seasoned (intermingled, and as it were besprinkled) with delight; and upon the same account, of all our other converse, so far as it is influenced by religion. And I doubt not, to such as shall attentively have considered what hath been said, it will be thought very reasonable to take them in that latitude; whereof the very letter of the text (as may be alleged for further justification hereof) is most fitly capable. For (as was noted upon another text where we have the same phrase) the particle which we read *in* the Lord, hath not that signification alone, but signifies also *with*, or *by*, or *besides*, or *before*, or *in presence of*, as if it had been said, "Come and sit down with God, retire thyself to him, and solace thyself in the delights which are to be found in his presence and converse, in walking with him, and transacting thy course as before him, and in his sight." As a man may be said to delight himself with a friend that puts himself under his roof; and besides personal converse with himself, freely enjoys the pleasure of all the entertainments, accommodations, and provisions which he is freely willing to communicate with him, and hath the satisfaction which a sober person would take in observing the rules and order of a well-governed house.

II. According to this divers import of the precept enjoining this duty, it will be requisite to speak diversly of the practice of the duty itself: that is, that we treat of the practice and exercise of delight; as a thing adherent to the other duties of religion, and as it is a distinct duty of itself.

FIRST, As to the former, our business will be, to treat of the exercise of religion as delightful. Now religion is delightful naturally and in itself; and makes a man's other actions, even that are not in themselves acts of religion, delightful also, so far as they are governed and influenced by it; if that religion be true, that is, if it be living, such as proceeds from a principle of divine life. Being therefore now to treat of the practice of this duty (whereof the account hath been already given,) our discourse must aim at, and endeavour these two things, the former as leading and subservient to the latter, namely—That we may not take up, and rest, or let our practice terminate in a religion which is not naturally and in itself delightful, and—That we seek after and improve in that which is.

First, That religion which is not delightful we have great reason not to acquiesce in, or be contented with, for it is plainly such as will not defray itself, or bear its own charges, as having only cumber and burden in it, no use or end; I mean the

dead formality of religion only. We find it natural and pleasant to carry about with us our own living body; but who would endure (how wearisome and loathsome a task were it?) to lug to and fro a dead carcase? It will be upon this account needful to insist in shewing more distinctly, what sort of religion it is, that is in itself wholly undelightful, and propound some things to consideration concerning it, that may tend to beget a dislike of it, and so incline us to look further.

1. That we may know what we are not take up with; because our present subject confines us to this one measure of religion, that it be delightful, it will be proper to limit our discourse to this character only of the religion we are to pass from as vain and worthless, namely, that which is without delight; which it also will be sufficient to insist on to our present purpose. For since (as hath been largely shewn) the delightfulness of the religion which is true and living is intrinsical, and most natural to it, it will therefore be certainly consequent, that which is not delightful is dead, and can serve for nothing.

(1.) But here it will be necessary, for caution, to insert two things.

[1.] That even such religion as is true and living, and consequently in itself delightful, yet may by accident sometimes, not appear or be thought so; because either variety of occasions may divert from minding, or some imbittering distemper of spirit may hinder the present relishing of that pleasure which is truly in it. As a man may eat and feed on that, which is very savoury and good; and yet, though his taste be not vitiated, but because he reflects not, may not every moment have that present apprehension that it is so; much more if the organs of taste be under a present distemper. But, if they be not so, any one's asking him how he likes that dish, (because that occasions a more express animadversion,) will also draw from him an acknowledgment that it is pleasant and savoury.

[2.] That a dead religion may be thought delightful; and through the ill temper of the subject, a pleasure may be apprehended in it, which doth not naturally arise from it; that is, the mere external part of religion may be flexible, and be accidentally perverted into a subserviency to some purposes which religion of itself intends not, in respect whereof a delight may injuriously (and as by a rape) be taken in it, as is said by the prophet of a hypocritical people: Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness; they take delight in approaching to God. (Isa. 58. 2.) Therefore, that which is here intended, is not, that the religion should

be rejected, in some present exercises whereof we have not the actual relish of a present pleasure (as that should not be embraced, wherein upon any whatsoever terms we find it;) but that which can rightfully, and upon just terms afford us none; and which upon our utmost inquiry and search, cannot in reason (as it is not unfit that spiritual reason should be employed in making a judgment what may) be thought spiritually delectable. We shall therefore in some particular heats, give a short account of such religion, as rationally cannot but be judged undelightful, or which hath not that in it which can yield pleasure to a sound and well-complexioned spirit; but that if any be taken therein, that very pleasure is so unnatural and out of kind, as to be the argument rather of a disease in the subject, than of any real goodness in the thing itself.

(2.) Whereunto we only premise this two-fold general rule, whereby an undue and unnatural delight may be estimated and judged of.

[1.] That such delight may be justly deemed unnatural which is taken in any thing besides and with the neglect of the proper use and end which it most fitly serves for.

[2.] Such as is accompanied with a real hurt, greater than the delight can countervail, or as is so far from taking in profit and benefit in conjunction with it, as that the damage and prejudice which it cannot recompence, is inseparable from it; which rules will be the more fitly applicable to the present case; for that (as hath been formerly observed) the delight which accompanies the acts and exercises of religion, or that flow from it, though it be natural thereto, yet is not the only or chief end of those acts; but they have another more important end, unto the prosecution whereof by such acts delight is only adherent: whence the delight cannot but be most preposterous and perverse, which is taken in such things as do either not serve the more principal design of religion; or much more that are repugnant and destructive of it. By these rules we may plainly see what delight in the general is to be accounted undue. As by the former rule we would justly reckon that an undue delight which a man should take in his food, if he only please himself with the looking on the handsome garnishing of the dishes, which he loaths in the mean time and refuses to taste; or which a covetous miser takes in having wealth hoarded up, which he is pleased often to view and cannot endure to use. And by the latter, that were most irrational delight, which in a fever one should take in gratifying his distempered appetite, whereby he doth not so much relieve nature as feed his disease.

(3.) And so we may say, that religion is undelightful, that is not duly delightful.

[1.] Which consists wholly in revolving in one's own mind the notions that belong to religion, without either the experience, or the design and expectation of having the heart and conversation formed according to them. So the case is with such as content themselves to yield the principles of religion true, and behold with a notional assent and approbation the connexion and agreement of one thing with another; but do never consider the tendency and aim of the whole; or that the truth of the gospel is the doctrine that is according to godliness; (1 Tim. 6. 3.) or such as is pursuant to the design of making men godly; of transforming them into the image of God, and framing them to an entire subjection to his holy and acceptable, will; that bethink not themselves the truth is never learned as it is in Jesus, except it be to the renewing the spirit of the mind, the putting off the old man, and the putting on of the new. (Eph. 4. 22.) When this is never considered, but men do only know, that they may know; and are never concerned further about the great things of God, than only to take notice that such things there are offered to their view which carry with them the appearance of truth, but mind them no more than the affairs of Eutopia, or the world in the moon; what delight is taken in this knowledge is surely most perverse. There is a pleasure indeed in knowing things, and in apprehending the coherence of one truth with another; but he that shall allow himself to speculate only about things wherein his life is concerned, and shall entertain himself with delight in agitating in his mind certain curious general notions concerning a disease or a crime that threatens him with present death, or what might be a remedy or defence in such a case, without any thought of applying such things to his own case, or that the case is his own, one may say of such pleasure it is mad; or of this delight, what doth it? or he that only surfeits his eye with beholding the food he is to live by, and who in the mean time languishes in the want of appetite, and a sickly loathing of his proper nutriment; surely such a one hath a pleasure that no sober man would think worth the having.

And the more any one doth only notionally know in the matters of religion, so as that the temper of his spirit remains altogether unsuitable and opposite to the design and tendency of the things known; the more he hath lying ready to come in judgment against him; and if therefore he count the things excellent which he knows, and only please himself with his own knowledge of them, it is but alike case as if a man should be much delighted to behold his own condemnation

written in a fair and beautiful hand: or, as if one should be pleased with the glittering of that sword which is directed against his own heart, and must be the present instrument of death to him: and so little pleasant is the case of such a person in itself, who thus satisfies his own curiosity, with the concerns of eternal life and death, that any serious person would tremble on his behalf, at that wherein he takes pleasure, and apprehend just horror in that state of the case whence he draws matter of delight.

[2.] It is yet a more insipid and gustless religion which too many place in some peculiar opinions, that are either false, and contrary to religion, or doubtful and cumbersome to it, or little and inconsiderable, and therefore certainly alien to it, and impertinent. For if that religion only be truly delightful which hath a vital influence on the heart and practice, as that must needs be indelectable, which is only so notionally conversant about the greatest truths, as that it hath no such influence; much more is that so, which is so wholly conversant about matters either opposite or irrelative hereto, as that it can have none. It must here be acknowledged that some doctrines not only not revealed in the word of God, but which are contrary thereto, may (being thought true) occasion the excitation of some inward affection, and have an indirect influence to the regulating of practice also, so as to repress some grosser enormities: as the false notions of pagans concerning the Deity, which have led them to idolatry, have struck their minds with a certain kind of reverence of invisible powers, and perhaps rendered some more sober and less vicious than had they been destitute of all religious sentiments. And yet the good which hath hence ensued, is not to be referred to the particular principles of idolatry which were false; but to the more general principles of religion, which were true. Yea, and though such false principles viewed alone, and by themselves, may possibly infer somewhat of good; yet that is by accident only, and through the short-sightedness and ignorance of them with whom they obtain; who, if they did consider their in-coherence with other common notions and principles most certainly true, would receive by them (if thought the only principles of religion) so much the greater hurt, and become so much the more hopelessly and incurably wicked. As most manifestly the principles which (looked upon by themselves) while they are reckoned true, do lead to idolatry, and consequently, by that mistake only, to some religion; do yet, being really false, lead to atheism, and of themselves tend to subvert and destroy all religion. Therefore such doctrines as cohere not with the general frame of truth, whatever their particular aspect may

be, considered apart and by themselves, are yet in their natural tendency opposite and destructive to the true design of religion, and the pleasure which they can any way afford, is only stolen and vain; such as a person takes in swallowing a potion that is pleasant, but which, if it perform what belongs to it, he must with many a sickly qualm refund and disgorge back again.

We also acknowledge some truths of less importance, may be said to concern practice, though not so immediately. Nor is it therefore the design of this discourse to derogate from any such, that are of apparently divine revelation or institution; which, however they justly be reckoned less than some other things, yet for that very reason as they are revealed by God for such an end, are by no means to be esteemed little, or inconsiderable; be their subserviency to the great design of religion never so remote. Upon the account of which subserviency, they are also to be esteemed delectable, that is, in proportion thereto; but when they are so esteemed beyond that proportion, and are exalted, into an undue preference to their very end itself; so as that, in comparison of them, the great things of religion are reckoned low, frigid, sapless things; when men set their hearts upon them abstractly, and without consideration of their reference and usefulness to the greater things of religion; the delight that is so taken in them, argues but the disease of the mind that takes it, and so great a degree of dotage, that a serious person would wonder how men can please themselves with such matters, without considering, and with the neglect of so great things they have relation to.

[3.] And hither is to be referred the much less rational pleasure which is taken by some in the mere dress wherewith such notions and opinions may be artificially clothed by themselves or others; rhetorical flourishes, a set of fine words, handsome cadences and periods, fanciful representations, little tricks and pieces of wit, and (which cannot pretend so high) pitiful quibbles and gingles, inversions of sentences, the pedantic rhyming of words, yea and an affected tone, or even a great noise, things that are neither capable of gratifying the christian nor the man; without which even the most important weighty matters do to so squeamish stomachs seem gustless and unsavoury, and are reckoned dull and flat things. And most plain it is, (though it is not strange, that so trifling minds should impose upon themselves by so thin a sophism,) that such are in a great mistake, whose delight being wholly taken up in these trifles, do hereupon think they taste the delights of religion; for these are nothing of it, are found about it only accidentally: and by a most unhappy accident too, as ill (for the

most of those things) agreeing to it and no more becoming it than a fool's coat doth a prudent grave person; and the best of them agreeing to it but in common with any thing else, about which such arts may be used; so that they are no way any thing of it, or more peculiarly belonging to it, than to any theme or subject besides, unto which such ornaments (as they are thought) can be added. How miserably therefore do they cheat themselves, who, because they hear with pleasure a discourse upon some head of religion thus garnished, according to their idle trifling humour; and because they are taken with the contrivance of some sentences, or affected with the loudness of the voice, or have their imagination tickled with some fantastical illustrations, presently conclude themselves to be in a religious transport when the things that have pleased them have no affinity or alliance with religion, befall to it but by chance, and are in themselves things quite of another country!

[4.] Of the like strain is the religion that is made up all of talk. And such like are that sort of persons, who love to discourse of those great things of God wherewith it was never their design or aim to have their hearts stamped, or their lives commanded and governed: who invert that which was the ancient glory of the Christian Church, "We do not speak great things, but live them." And are pleased with only the noise of their own (most commonly insignificant senseless) words; unto whom how ungrateful a relish would that precept have, "Be swift to hear, slow so speak!" And how much to be regretted a thing is it, that the delights of practical living religion should be so lost, and vanish into a mere lip-labour! things of this nature are to be estimated by their end, and the temper of spirit which accompanies them; which unto a serious and prudent observer, are commonly very discernible and easy to be distinguished. It is an amiable, lovely thing to behold those that are intent upon the great business of religion themselves, provoking others also with serious gravity unto love and good works. And it will ever stand as a monumental character of them that feared the Lord, that they spake often one to another, (Mal. 3. 16.) upon this account. But the pretence of this is odious, when the thing designed is nothing but self-recommendation, and the spirit of the pretenders is visibly vain and empty; and when it is apparent they take delight, not in the things they speak of, but only in this thing itself, speaking much. No breath is then more fulsome; and the better the things are, the worse it is to have no more savour of them. Again

[5.] The religion is a kin to this, which stands all in hearing. It is as remote (at least) from the heart, when it is wholly placed in the ear, as when it is all in the tongue. As it is with

them that are hearers only, not doers of the word, deceiving their own souls. (Jam. 1. 22.) When the preacher is to them as a very lovely song, of one that can play well on an instrument, and they hear his words, but do them not. (Ezek. 33. 32.) And it is natural to the same sort of persons to be pleased indifferently with either of these, as the Athenians were in hearing or telling some new thing. Only that this difference most commonly appears with the persons we intend, that when the things they delight to hear, must be ever new, or at least new dressed, the things they speak, shall be everlastingly the same. How perverse a delight is that? Whereas it is the glory of substantial religion, that the principal things of it can never grow old, or be dry. Their ears still itch after novelties; a plain argument that it is not religion itself that pleases them (which cannot change) but the variable accessory modes of representing it. However, there is certainly very often a distemper appearing among those that profess religion, in coveting to hear unto excess, and beyond what is either suitable or designed unto use and profit. When the pleasure of a delightful revolving of the ever fresh and fragrant truths of the gospel, and reducing them to answerable practice, is lost and stifled, by heaping on of more than can be digested. And many a hopeful birth of pious and holy dispositions, affections, and good works, is suppressed or enfeebled by an untimely superfetation.

[6.] It is a most undelightful religion, which consists entirely in the external additaments and forms of worship, which this or that party have chosen to affix to it. Yea, though those forms be never so certainly of divine prescription; which, however God hath appointed them, were never appointed or intended by him to be our religion, but to be subservient helps and means to it. Being enlivened by it, they are comely and delightful; but severed and cut off from it, or the course of vital spirit that should flow into them being obstructed and repressed they have no more pleasure in them than a dead arm or finger. Such divine appointments themselves, severed from the things wherein substantial religion consists, have been an abomination to the Lord, your new moons and sabbaths, &c. (Isa. 1. 14.) my soul hates, and then sure there is little reason they should be a delight to us. If they be, it is as fond and trifling a delight, as when one hath the opportunity of conversing with some excellent person, to neglect all his wise sayings, and pleasant instructive discourses, and only to please one's self in viewing his handsome apparel; yea, though I should know at the same time, that I thereby greatly displease him whom (as is also supposable) I were greatly concerned to please. Thus it is with them that mind only the solemnity

of God's worship, not the design. And more gross the matter is, with such as by their observance of the external modes of religion, think to expiate the badness of their most vicious conversation; that will steal, and murder and commit adultery, oppress the stranger, the fatherless and the widow; and yet presume to stand before the Lord in his house, and cry, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these, (Jer. 7. 4.) This is the pharisaical religion, that is scrupulous in tything mint, annise, and cummin, and neglects the weighty things of the law, justice, judgment, and truth. These men delight in what not only is dead in itself, but will be mortal unto them. And if the divine institution of the things wherewith they so vainly please themselves, will not bear them out, much less their own; be their discriminating denomination or profession what it will. And now all these things (whether severally or together) and whatever else of like kind do at the best make but a dead, and consequently an undelightful religion, such as hath no pleasure in it, because it hath no life; it remains therefore,

2. To shew, how unfit such a religion is to be chosen or rested in. And surely since (as appears from what was formerly said) the persuading of men to become religious or godly, is but an inviting them to a state and course wherein they may delight themselves with God; or to a life of pure and heavenly pleasure; that is only the vain shew of religion, which affords nothing of that pleasure. And how unreasonable and foolish is it when religion itself is the thing we pretend, to let ourselves be mocked (as we mock others, and vainly attempt to mock him also, who is not to be mocked) with the mere empty shew and appearance of it! that we may be here somewhat more particular, let it be considered.

(1.) That the religion which is in itself undelightful, is, for the same reason for which it is so, incapable of growth; that is, because it is a dead thing. For that reason it is without delight; and for the same reason admits not of improvement. It wants the self-improving principle. He that drinks of that water (saith our saviour) which I shall give him, it shall be in him as a well of water springing up in him unto life eternal. (Joh. 4. 14.) That only principle of all true religion and godliness, the divine nature, the seed of God, is of that heavenly tendency, it aims and aspires upward; and will never cease shooting up till it reach heaven; and the pleasure and delightfulness of it stand much in its continual springing up towards a perfect state, from a grain of mustard-seed to the tallness of a cedar. It is pleasant to behold its constant undecaying greenness and verdure; such as renders its subject like a tree planted by the

rivers of water that brings forth fruit in season, whose leaf also doth not wither, and whatsoever he doth prospers, (Psal. 1. 3.) Or as plants set in the house of the Lord, that flourish in the courts of their God: that shall still bring forth fruit even in old age, and be fat and flourishing. (Psal. 92, 13, 14.) The dead, dry forms, or other appendages of religion, that have no communion with a living root, or the religion that is only made up of these, gives no such hope of improvement. A great and most considerable prejudice against any thing that pretends to the name of religion; which being at first an imperfect thing (as that especially which itself is but pretence and shadow cannot but be) if it shall never be expected to be better, can have little claim or title to any excellency. The value even of true religion, though it be of an excellent nature and kind; stands much in the hopefulnes and improveableness of it; and is not so much to be considered in respect of what it is, as what it shall come to. This lank, spiritless religion as soon as you assume and take it up, you know the best of it. It is not of a growing, thriving kind; never expect better of it. It is true, the notional knowledge, opinionativeness, and external observances, which we have spoken of, may be so increased, as a heap of sand may be; but the religion of such grows not as a thing that hath life in it, by vital self-improvement.

(2.) Nor for the same reason can it be a lasting thing. For it wants what should maintain it. It will, as a vesture, wear and grow old; or, being as a cloak put on to serve a present turn, is when that turn is served, as easily thrown off, that is, being found to be more cumbersome than useful. What hath living union with a man's own self, it is neither his ease nor convenience; he neither affects, nor can endure to lay it aside. It is given as a character of a hypocrite (one who therefore must be understood to carry with him some shew and face of religion, and to want the living root and principle of it) that he is inconstant in his religion; Will he at all times call upon God? (Job. 27. 10.) or will he be constantly religious? The interrogative form of speech implies more than a mere negative. That is, doth not only say that he will not at all times call upon God, but that it is absurd to say or think that he will. For it is an appeal to common reason in the case; as if it had been said, "Can any man think that such a one's religion will be lasting? It imports a disdain it should be thought so. What! he call upon God at all times; a likely thing! no; the matter is plain, his religion is measured by his secular interest, and he will only be so long religious as will serve that purpose. And the reason is plainly assigned in the foregoing words, "Will he

delight himself in the Almighty?" His religion hath no delight with it; it is a languid, faint, spiritless thing, a dead form. If it had life, it would have pleasure in it; and then the same vital principle that would make it pleasant, would make it lasting and permanent also.

(3.) While it doth last, it wants the fruit and profit, which should be designed and sought by religion; even for the same reason for which it is without delight, it is also fruitless and vain, that is because it hath no life in it. So that all that is done in this way of religion is only labour and toil to no purpose. And what do or can we propose to ourselves from religion, as the proper design of it, but to have our spirits fitted to the honouring and enjoying of God, unto service to him, and blessedness in him; and that we may hereupon, actually both serve and enjoy him? both these chiefly depend upon his favourable acceptance of us. He will neither reckon himself served by us, nor allow himself to be enjoyed, if he be not pleased with us. And how shall we expect to please him with that, wherewith, the more our minds come to be rectified and made conformable to the rule of righteousness and life, the more impossible it is that we can be pleased ourselves? Can we please him by a religion that is in itself unsavoury, spiritless and dead; and that affords not to ourselves the least relish of true pleasure? And partly the success of our religion in the mentioned respects, depends upon the due temperament our spirits receive by it; but what good impression can that light, chaffy, empty religion that hath been described, ever be hoped to make there? Is it a likely means of refining and bettering our spirits? Even as it is void of spiritual delight it is also of spiritual benefit; for certainly our spirits are like to embrace and retain nothing in which they can take no pleasure. How vain then is that religion by which we can neither please God nor profit ourselves?

(4.) It ought to be considered how foolish a thing it is, and unworthy of a reasonable creature to do that in a continued course and series of actions wherein we can have no design, and do aim at nothing. Even they that place their religion in things so remote and alien to the spirit and power of it, do yet spend a considerable part of their life's-time in those things. And how becoming is it of a man to have spent so much of his time in doing nothing? and that from week to week, or from day to day, the seasons should return, of which he hath constantly this to say, "Now comes the time of doing that whereof I can give no account why I do it! that there should be so constant a defalcation of such portions of time for that which a man can neither call business nor recreation, which tends to no

advantage in any kind. For it tends not to promote his secular interest but in so indirect and by-a-way, and with so sinister and basely-oblique respects, as an honest man would abhor, and an ingenuous man be ashamed to profess; and his spiritual and eternal interest much less. This were therefore the same thing as to proclaim one's self a fool or a vain trifler. The things that have been instanced in, (considered so abstractly from the substance of religion as we have considered them,) being such, some of them, as carry not with them so much as that very shew of wisdom, (Col. 2. 23.) of which the apostle speaks; and others of them, so faint a shew, as it ill becomes a wise man to be pleased with, while they do his better part no good, and carry not that shew in any provision (as that word *τιμή* sometimes signifies) for the satisfying of the flesh.

And yet it is to be withal remembered that this (waste and lost) time of their life, is all that such persons allot to their everlasting concerns; and that the things which have been mentioned (some or other of them; for all do not always concur with the same persons) are not made subservient to; but are substituted in the room and stead of the religion by which those concerns should be provided for. And is this a wise provision for eternity? What man! A few empty unimproved notions! a by-opinion or two! the flourishes of a little pedantic art tickling thy toyish fancy! the motion of thy only busy and labouring tongue! or the thirst and satisfaction of thy vain ear! the bowing of thy hypocritical knee! Are these all that thou designest, or wilt mind to do for thy soul? Are these like well to supply the place of living religion? to serve thee instead of inward acquaintance with God? of being really and habitually good and holy? of doing good and walking in the path of life? What a soul hast thou that can live upon chaff and air, and be sustained by the wind? Hast thou no need of quickening influence from God? no hunger after the heavenly, hidden manna, and the fruits of the tree of life? What use makest thou of thy understanding, or of the reason of a man, when thou thinkest such empty vanities as thou trustest in can do the office, or attain the ends of true religion? How much more rational were it to pretend to nothing of religion at all, than to think such a one will serve the turn!

(5.) Consider, what reflections are likely to be made upon this matter hereafter, when thy short course in this world is run out. Will it be a grateful remembrance to thee that thou wast so long hovering about the borders of religion? and wast at the very door and wouldest not enter in? that thou didst so often think and speak, and hear of the things wherein religion stood,

but wouldest never allow thyself to taste the pleasant relishes thereof? to have been so nigh to the kingdom of God, and yet an alien to it, to the righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost wherein it consists! That thou didst only please thyself with the painted casket (made fine, as thou thoughtest, but only with thine own pencil) wherein so rich a jewel was; and retaining that, threwst away this as thing of nought! will not these be wounding thoughts?

(6.) Let it be seriously pondered how offensive it must be to the jealous God that any should thus trifle with him and his holy things, under a shew and pretence of religion and devotion to him. Not to please him by the sincerity and truth of our religion, loses the end and reward we would expect. But that is not all. To provoke him by the hypocritical pretence and abuse of it, cannot but infer a sharp revenge which it may be we expected not. And let us bethink ourselves how high the provocation is! Either we design to please, honour and enjoy him by that irrational and undelightful course of religion, or we do not. If we do not, this signifies nothing but highest contempt and defiance of him; and that we care not for his favour nor fear his displeasure. Yea, inasmuch as such religion is pretended as a homage to him, it is nothing really but most profane and insolent mockery; as if we would join in the same breath and in the same act, "Hail Jesus and crucify him;" and at once invest him with the purple robe, and spit in his face. But if we have such a design, and do really think to please him by such trifling with him; and that these vain fancies and formality shall make amends for all our neglects of him through the whole course of our lives besides; then how vile thoughts have we of him! what do we make of the God we serve? How justly may that be applied to us, ye worship ye know not what! (Joh. 4. 22.) Who gave us our idea of that ever blessed Being? It is not God, but a despicable idol of our own creating we are thinking to please. We may see how well he is pleased with the external shew and the appendages of religion (which being his own appointments would in conjunction and in subserviency thereto have signified somewhat, but disjoined from it, and accompanied with the neglect and abandoning of real piety and righteousness, signified nothing but an affront to him) in that remonstrance by the prophet; He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense as if he blessed an idol. (Isa. 66. 3.) He is pleased with their religion as he would be with murder, profaneness and idolatry. And is it strange this should be his estimate, when he is hereby

practically represented as such a one that will not be displeas'd with real wickedness, and that will be pleas'd with the thinnest and most superficial shew of devotion?

They therefore make a fair hand of their religion, who are so far from pleasing God by it and advantaging themselves, that they wound their own souls (as they are most like to do that handle so awkwardly such an edged tool) and render God their most avowed enemy. The religion then which hath no delight in it hath so much of folly, incommodity and mischief, that measuring it by the rules which were premis'd, we may see sufficient reason why such a religion should not be chosen or rested in: and that we are concern'd to look further.

CHAP. II.

We proceed to what was next propos'd, that is, to inquire, *Secondly*. What religion is fit to be chosen where somewhat is offer'd. 1. By way of direction: and 2. By way of excitation.

Secondly. **WE** pass on to the other head propos'd; the positive judgment we are to make, what religion is fit to be chosen, and wherein we may safely acquiesce? whereof we shall only give the account which the subject we have in hand allows to be here given, that is, that it be such as is in itself rationally and justly delectable. And though religion is not to be chosen only or chiefly, for the delightfulness of it; yet since, as we have seen, only that religion is true which is delightful; that only which is delightful is fit to be chosen. So that this is a certain character (though not the chief cause) of the eligibleness of religion. And when it is so expressly enjoin'd us as a duty, to delight ourselves in the Lord; if, as hath been shewn, this be within the meaning of the precept, that, in the general, we delight ourselves in a way and course of religion; it is plain such religion only can be meant or intended, as can afford us matter of delight, or as is itself truly and really delectable. And here we shall not need to repeat what hath been so largely discours'd in the Former Part, tending to shew the rich matter of delight which the several exerci-

ses of true living religion, and all the actions influenced and directed by it, do carry in them. It will only be requisite, to offer somewhat partly to direct, partly to excite unto that delightful pleasant life.

1. For direction, let such rules be observed as these which follow.

(1.) Endeavour to have a mind well instructed in the knowledge of such things as more directly concern the common practice of a religious man, as such. That is, to be thoroughly insighted into practical truths, or into that truth which is after godliness. It hath been the merciful vouchsafement of the divine goodness, so to order it, that those things are plain and but few, which are of more absolute necessity in religion. This may be seen by the summary accounts which we find sometimes given thereof, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. (Act. 20. 21.) Which two things (intimated to comprehend the whole counsel of God) do manifestly suppose the state of apostacy, and express the way of remedy; whereinto, when we are brought, how succinct and clear a recapitulation of our duty have we in that of our Saviour, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself!" To a well-complexioned spirit, how comprehensive and full, how savoury and acceptable will these things appear! Nor would such a one part with the substantial fulness of these few words for all the treasures of both the Indies. How truly is it called, that good, that acceptable and perfect will of God! (Rom. 12. 2.) And how fitly to be preferred before thousands of gold and silver! Things of highest value are not bulky; their excellency is the greater by being contracted; and that, being in themselves precious, they are so conveniently portable. How easily are these dictates carried about with us through our whole course! and how universally useful are they for the well-guiding of it, to such as have a greater mind to do their duty than move questions about it! Two things are both opposite to this rule and not a little prejudicial to the delight of religious conversation, (by which it will appear, how conducive to it the matter here directed is) namely, excessive curiosity in the speculation of truths belonging to religion; without designing to refer them to practice; (which hath been animadverted on before,) and an equally excessive scrupulosity about matters of practice. It were indeed an argument of a desperate mind, and destitute of any fear of God, to be careless what we do, and unconcerned whether the way we take, in this or that case, be right or wrong. But it is certain, there may be an excess in this matter, and too often is; that is, there may be a scrupulosity which is both

causeless and endless. There is surely some medium in travelling between a careless wandering we mind not whither, and a perpetual anxiety whether we be in our way or no, with often going back to inquire. This would quite destroy both the pleasure of the journey, and the progress of it. Some difficulties may occur, which should justly occasion one to make a stand and consider. But probably, very many cases that some do agitate with much disquiet to themselves and others, would soonest be expedited by sincerity, and reducing them to the law of love.

It would however make much for our pleasant, delightful walking on in the way of God, to have a mind (informed once and established thoroughly in the belief of the principal doctrines of christian religion) well furnished also with the most useful practical precepts, which might at every turn be ready at hand to be applied upon emergencies; which they whom predominant self-interest or corrupt inclination render not difficult to the apprehending of their duty, (our way is not usually otherwise so very intricate) may cheerfully and innocently guide themselves by. "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely." Though some men's way may, by the circumstances of their conditions, be much more perplexed than others, who are therefore concerned to be the more wary. But the difficult toil and tug that some have with themselves, is, how by contrived explications they may make their rule bend and yield to their self-biassed humours and ends; which because they find it not easy to do with full satisfaction to their consciences, (that see more than they would have them, and are yet not of authority enough with them to govern and command their practice) it is not strange, they entangle and even lose themselves amongst thorns and briars, and meet with little delight in their way. Wherefore,

(2.) Be principally intent to have your soul become habitually good and holy, by its own settled temper and complexion inclined and made suitable to the way of righteousness and life. It was, no doubt, with a very sweet gust and relish of pleasure, that the Psalmist utters that gratulatory acknowledgment of the divine goodness in this, He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in paths of righteousness, for his name's sake. (Psal. 23. 3.) The paths of righteousness are very agreeable and pleasant to a restored, a sound and healthy soul; to one that is now got into a good habit, and a settled state of spiritual strength. You may therefore take the meaning and substance of this precept, in the apostle's (more authoritative) words, be ye transformed in the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, that acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom. 12. 2.) "You

can never (as though he had said) have a proof of it, the very palate of your soul will be vicious and still disaffected till then, that is, till that transformation and renewing change hath past upon you. Then it will be pleasant to you to know the will of God; your delight will be in the law of the Lord, and in his law you will meditate both day and night. And it will be more pleasant to do it. You will esteem the words of his mouth as your appointed food, and it will be as your meat and drink to do his will. You can easily apprehend how toilsome and painful any thing of business and labour, is to a person that languishes under some enfeebling lazy disease. A like ease it is, when you would put one upon doing of anything spiritually good, that is listless, indisposed; to every good work reprobate. How will the heart recoil and give back! with how vehement a reluctance will it resist the proposal, as if you were urging it upon flames or the sword's point! The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be. (Rom. 8. 7.) But when once the law of God is within your heart, you will delight to do his will. (Psal. 40. 8.) To one that is born of God, and hath therefore overcome the world, his commands are not grievous. 1. Joh. 5. 5. Know therefore you must be good (really and habitually so) in order to your doing good with any delight, in conformity to the blessed God himself (your pattern) who therefore exercises loving-kindness judgment and righteousness in the earth, as delighting in these things. (Jer. 9. 24.) You must be partaker of a divine nature, and have the heart-rectifying communication before discoursed of, and become God's own workmanship, a second time, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Eph. 2. 10. It is not to be hoped, it can be delightful to act against inclination; or that a forced imitation of that good whereof you want the implanted vital principle, can be any more pleasing to you than it is to God, whom you cannot mock or impose upon by your most elaborate or specious disguises. And therefore, since that holy heart-rectitude must be had, it must be sought earnestly and without rest. Often ought heaven to be visited with such sighs and longings sent up thither, O that my ways were directed to keep thy righteous judgments. Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed. (Psal. 119. 80) And it should be sought with expectation of good-speed and without despair, remembering we are told, if we ask, we shall receive; if we seek we shall find; if we knock, it shall be opened unto us; yea, that our heavenly Father will much more readily give his Holy Spirit to them that ask, than you would bread to your child that calls for it, rather than a stone.

(3.) When once you find your spirit is become in any mea-

sure well-inclined, and begins to savour that which is truly good; know yet, that it needs your continual inspection and care, to cherish good principles and repress evil ones. Your work is not done as soon as you begin to live; as care about an infant ceases not as soon as it is born. Let it be therefore your constant business, to tend your inward man; otherwise all things will soon be out of course. God hath coupled delight with the labour of a christian, not with the sloth and neglect of himself; the heart must then be kept with all diligence, (Prov. 4. 23.) or above all keeping, in as much as out of it are the issues of life. All vital principles are lodged there; and only the genuine issues of such as are good and holy, will yield you pleasure. The exercises of religion will be pleasant when they are natural, and flow easily from their own fountain; but great care must be taken that the fountain be kept pure. There are other springs besides, which will be apt to intermingle therewith their bitter waters, or a root of bitterness, whose fruit is deadly, even that evil thing, and bitter forsaking the Lord. I wonder not, if they taste little of the delights of religion that take no heed to their spirits. Such a curse is upon the nature of man as is upon the ground which was cursed for his sake, (till the blessing of Abraham through Jesus Christ do take place, even the promise of the Spirit, Gal. 3. 14.) that it brings forth naturally thorns and thistles, and mingles sorrows with his bread. But that promised blessing, that will enable a man to eat with pleasure, comes not all at once; nor do the increases of it come on, or the pleasant fruits of righteousness spring up, but in them that give all diligence, to add to their faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity; which would make that we be not barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2. Pet. 1. 5-9.) Otherwise, look in upon thy soul when thou wilt, and thou wilt have no other than the dismal prospect of miserable wastes and desolation. Consider it seriously, wretched man! who tillest thy field, but not thy soul; and lovest to see thy garden neat and flourishing, but lettest thy spirit lie as a neglected thing, and as if it were not thine.

We are directed for the moderating of our care in our earthly concernments to consider the lillies how they grow without their own toil, and are beautifully arrayed without their spinning; but we are taught by no such instances, to divert or remit our care of our inward man. To these concernments, let us then apply and bend ourselves. That is, carefully to observe the first stirrings of our thoughts and desires; to animadvert

upon our inclinations as soon as they can come in view, upon our designs in their very formation; and inquire concerning each, whence is it? from a good principle or a bad? whither tends it? to good or hurt? will not this design, if prosecuted, prove an unjustifiable self-indulgence? does it not tend to an unlawful gratifying of the flesh, and fulfilling some lusts thereof? If so, let it be lopt off out of hand, and the axe be laid even to the root; strike at it, favour it not. Think with thyself, "This, if spared, will breed me sorrow; so much as I give to it, I take away from the comfort of my life; and spend of the stock of my spiritual delight in God. Shall I let sin, the tormentor of my soul, live and be maintained at so costly a rate?" If any good inclination discover itself, cherish it, confirm and strengthen it. Look up, and pray down a further quickening influence. Say with thyself, now that heavenly Spirit of life and grace begins to breathe, impart more of this pleasant vital breath thou blessed and Holy Spirit! Account this a seed time, now the light and gladness are a sowing in thy soul (which are wont to be for the righteous and upright in heart) and do promise ere long, a joyful harvest. But if thou wilt not observe how things go with thy soul, despair that they will ever go well.

(4.) Be frequent and impartial in the actual exercise of gracious principles; or in practising and doing as they direct. Your actual delight arises from and accompanies your holy actions themselves, and is to be perceived and tasted in them; not in the mere inclination to them which is not strong enough to go forth into act. And as these principles are more frequently exercised, they grow more lively and vigorous, and will thence act more strongly and pleasantly; so that your delight in doing good, will grow with the principles it proceeds from. But then you must be impartial and even handed herein, as well as frequent; and run the whole compass of that duty which belongs to you as a christian. Exercise yourself (as we find the direction is) unto godliness; (1 Tim. 4. 7.) and in such acts and parts of godliness chiefly and in the first place, as may be the exercise of the mind and spirit, in opposition to the bodily exercise (whether severities imposed upon, or performances that require the ministry of that grosser part) to which this nobler kind of exercise is justly preferred. Turn the powers of your soul upon God. Act seasonably the several graces of the spirit that terminate directly upon him. Let none grow out of use. At sometimes repentance, at others faith, now your love, then your fear: none of these are placed in you, or sanctified in vain. Retire much with God; learn and habituate yourselves unto secret converse with him; contemplate his nature, attri-

butes and works for your excitation to holy adoration, reverence and praise. And be much exercised in the open solemnities of his worship; there endeavouring that though your inward man bear not the only, it may be the principal part. How delightful a thing is it, to be paying actual avowed homage to the great Lord of heaven and earth before angels and men! And never think your religious and devotional exercises can acquit you, or supply the want and excuse the absence of sobriety and righteousness. Exercise a just authority over yourselves. Keep your imagination, passions, sensitive appetite under a due restraint, so as to be moderate in your desires and enjoyments, patient as to your wants and sufferings. Do to others as you would be done unto: study common good: endeavour, so far as your capacity can extend, all about you may be the better for you. Forbear and forgive the injurious, relieve the necessitous, delight in good men, pity the bad, be grateful towards friends, mild and unrevengeful towards enemies, just towards all. Abhor to do not only a dishonest, but even a mean and unworthy act, for any self-advantage. And all this out of an awful and dutiful respect to God; by which the ordinary actions of your life may become as so many acts of religion, or be directed and influenced thereby, tinged as it were with the savour of godliness. Pass thus, in your continual practice, through the whole circle of Christian duties and graces, with an equal respect to all God's commandments, not so partially addicting yourselves to one sort of exercise, as to disuse and neglect the rest; which kind of partiality is that which starves religion, and stifles the delight of it.

There are those that affect the reputation of being sober, just, kind, charitable persons, and do appear such, who yet are great strangers to God, and to the more noble exercises of the divine life, know not what belongs to communion with God, live not in his love and converse, savour not heaven; have not so much as the taste of the great vital powers of the world to come. Others, that pretend to much acquaintance with God, and are much taken up in discoursing of his love, and of intimacies with him, that count justice and charity mean things, and much beneath them: can allow themselves to be covetous, oppressive, fraudulent, wrathful, malicious, peevish, fretful, discontented, proud, censorious, merciless; and so glory in a religion which no one is the better for, and themselves least of all; and which is quite of another stamp from the pure religion and undefiled. (Jam. 1. 27.) which the apostle describes and recommends. And certainly, their religion hath as little of pleasure in it to themselves, as it hath of beauty and ornament in the sight of others. So maimed a religion can be ac-

accompanied with little delight. Would it not detract much from the natural pleasure of a man's life, if he should lose an arm or a leg? or have them useless and unserviceable? or if he should be deprived of some of his senses, or natural faculties, so as to be incapable of some of the more principal functions of life? And if we should suppose the new creature alike maimed and defective, will there not be a proportionable diminution of its delight? But the Spirit of God is the Author of no such imperfect productions; and therefore the total absence of any holy disposition will not argue the true delight of such a one to be little, but none at all. However, let all the integral parts of the new man be supposed formed at first, and existing together; when this creature is thus entirely framed, it is our business to see to the due exercise, and thereby to the improvement and growth of the several parts, wherein if one be neglected, it infers a general enfeeblement of the whole. Let patience have its perfect work (saith that apostle) that ye may be perfect, and entire wanting nothing, (Jam. 1. 4.) implying, that not only the absence of that one grace, but its not being thoroughly exercised, would render us very defective christians. We may say of the several members of this divine creature, as is said of the complex body of christians, if one suffer, all the members suffer with it; if one be honoured, all rejoice with it. Therefore that you may experience the delightfulness of religion, see that in the exercise and practice of it you be entire, thorough christians.

(5.) Be ye confirmed in the apprehension, that religion is in itself a delightful thing, even universally and in the whole nature of it. Whereby a double practical mistake and error will be avoided, that greatly obstructs and hinders the actual relish and sensation of that delight.

[1.] That either religion is in the whole nature of it such a thing to which delight must be alien, and banished from it; as if nothing did belong to, or could consist with it, but sour severities, pensiveness and sad thoughts. Or else,

[2.] That if any delight did belong to it at all, it must be found only in peculiar extraordinary assurances and persuasions of God's love; and be the attainment consequently of none but more eminent christians.

That apprehension being thoroughly admitted, both these misapprehensions fall and vanish. And it will take place, if it be duly considered,—that there is a delight that will naturally arise from the congruity and fitness of actions in themselves, and the facility of them, that they flow easily from their proper principles. Whereupon there can be no true vital act of re-

ligion but will be delightful. And we may appeal herein to the judgments of such as shall allow themselves to consider, whether the matter do not evidently appear to be so upon a serious review and revolving with themselves of the several gracious operations that proceed from the holy rectitude mentioned in the Former Part; as the acts of even repentance, self-abasement, self-denial, self-devoting, (appearing to be in themselves most fit and becoming things,) and readily without force proceeding (as they cannot but do) from a rectified and well-disposed heart, how can they but be pleasant? And it is much in our way to the experiencing of such delight, to be at a point with ourselves, and well resolved wherein it is to be sought and found.

(6.) However all the acts and operations of true, and living religion be in themselves delightful, yet apply yourselves to the doing of them for a higher reason, and with a greater design than your own delight. Otherwise you destroy your own work therein, and despoil your acts of their substantial, moral goodness, and consequently of their delightfulness also. That is not a morally good act, which is not referred to God, and done out of (at least) an habitual devotedness to him, so as that he be the supreme end thereof. You would therefore, by withdrawing and separating this reference to God, ravish from them their very life and soul; yea and perfectly nullify those of them that should be in themselves acts of religion. So as that in respect of all your actions, that separation were unjust; and as to those that should be direct acts of religion, impossible. Since therefore they are only delightful as they are vital acts, proceeding from a principle of divine life; and that an habitual devotedness to God, is that very (comprehensive and most radical) principle; you should, by designing your own delight in them supremely, counter-act yourself, and cross your own end; you should make them acts of idolatry, not religion; and set up your own self as the idol of jealousy, that receives the homage of them, instead of God: whereby the unlawful pleasure which you would engross to yourselves, will turn all to gall and wormwood, and be bitterness in the end. That therefore you may taste the sweetness and pleasure which belongs to a religious, godly life, your way must be, to act on directly forward in the simplicity of your heart, doing all that you do to and for God. And thus that pleasure, because it is natural to such acts, will of its own accord result and arise to you; and so much the more, by how much less you design for yourself in what you do. From that uprightness and sincerity of heart towards God it can never be separated. But to be a religious epicure, to pray, hear, meditate, do acts of justice and charity, only to

please and humour yourselves, and that you may derive a kind of solace and satisfaction from your own work, is to undo your design, and blast the delight which you covet. It follows while you seek it not; it flies from you while you so inordinately seek it.

(7.) Yet disallow not yourself to taste and enjoy the pleasure of well-doing. Yea, and (secondarily and in due subordination) to design and endeavour that you may do so. It is in itself, a covetable and lawful pleasure; so that it be not sought and entertained out of its own place. It is a promised pleasure, the good man (it is said) shall be satisfied from himself. (Pro. 14, 14.) And it is by particular direction to be testified to the righteous, they shall eat the fruit of their own doings. Isa. 3. 10. It is God's gracious allowance to them, which it is a part of gratitude and dutifulness to esteem and accept; yea, and with great admiration of the divine goodness that hath made and settled such a conjunction between their duty and their delight; that hath laid such laws upon them, as in the keeping whereof there is such reward; (Psal. 19. 11.) when as they might have been enjoined a meaner servitude, and by the condition and kind of their work, have been kept strangers to any thing of delight therein.

That thankful acknowledgment of the bounty and goodness of God to them in the very constitution of his laws and government, is become a part of their duty, which cannot be done without previous relishes of the sweetness and goodness of their other duty. They are required in every thing to give thanks, 1 Thes. 5. 18. And it is said, they shall go on in their way as the redeemed of the Lord, with everlasting joy upon their heads; (Isa. 51. 11.) that they shall sing in the ways of the Lord; (Psal. 138. 5.) which cannot be, if they take not notice that the ways of the Lord are pleasantness, and all his paths peace. Prov. 3. 17. Therefore you should designedly set yourself to taste the goodness and delightfulness of holy walking. And to that end, when you find the blessed cherishing warmth and vigour of God's gracious communication let in upon you, enlarging your hearts, making your way and work easy to you, and helping you to do with an untoilsome facility, what he requires and calls for, and to run the way of his commandments; so that you can do acts of piety, righteousness and mercy as natural acts, borne up by the power of a steady, living principle acting in you, (as it is said, they that wait upon the Lord shall renew strength and mount up with wings as eagles, run without weariness, and walk without fainting, Isa. 40. 31.) you should now reflect and take notice how good and pleasant is this! Make your pauses and deliberate; have your seasons of

respiration and drawing breath; and then bethink yourself, commune thus with your own heart, "How do I now like the way and service of the Lord? and a life of pure devotedness to him? a course of regular walking in thorough subjection to his laws and government? and that the course of my actions be as a continual sacrificing; doing all to him, and for him?" What do you not now rejoice that you find yourselves to offer willingly? Can you forbear with gratitude and joy to acknowledge and own it to him, that it is of his own hand that you do this? You should now compare your present with your former state and temper, and consider how much better is it to me to live in his fear, love and communion, than to be, as once I was, alienated from the life of God, and as without him in the world! now I can trust and obey, once I could not. Now, when the opportunity invites, I am in some readiness to serve him, created to good works, a vessel fitted to my master's use; some time I was to every good work reprobate. Surely it is most becoming to take a free complacency in this blessed change. That is, not with a proud, pharisaical gloriation to say, "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men;" or, trusting in yourself that you are righteous, to despise others; but with a mean estimation of yourself, and all you can do; and with that deep and constant sense, that when you have done all you can, you are an unprofitable servant, you do but your duty. Yet blessing God that since he hath made such things your duty, he also doth in some measure enable you to do it; that he hath reconciled and attempered your heart to your way and work, and made it pleasant to you. Not hypocritically arrogating all to yourself, under the formal and false shew of thanksgiving to him; or aiming only more colourably to introduce a vain boast and ostentation of yourself, in the form of gratulation to God; but as having a heart inwardly possessed with the humble sense who it is that hath made you differ, not only from other men, but from yourself also.

(8.) And because that disposedness of heart unto such a course of holy practice, may not be constantly actual, and equally sensible at all times, (that all delight, in the ways of God may not hereupon cease, and be broken off, which in those sadder intervals cannot but suffer a great diminution,) you must take heed, that as to the distempers and indispositions you now discern in your own spirit, you do neither indulge yourself nor despair; but take the proper course of redress.

To indulge yourself in them were mortal. Then down you go as a dead weight into the mire and dirt, into the depths of the earth, and your swift and pleasant flight ends in a heavy

lumpish fall. You should therefore bethink yourself, that if you yield to a slothful, sluggish temper of spirit, which you now feel coming on upon you, shortly you shall have nothing (sensibly) remaining to you of your religion, but the dead and empty forms. How waste and desolate a thing will that be! a like thing as if you come into a deserted house where you were wont pleasantly to converse with most delectable friends, and you now find nothing but cold bare walls. How dismal will it be when only the same duties, the same external frame and acts of worship remain, but the spirit of life and power which was wont to breathe in them, is retired and gone! And what, will you take up with that delusive unconvertible shadow, or be content to embrace the stiff and breathless carcase that remains? You find perhaps your spirit sinking into carnality, an earthly temper of mind gradually seizing on you; worldly thoughts, cares, desires, fears, invading your heart: by the same degrees that these come on, life retires; you grow listless toward God; your heart is not in your religion as heretofore: you keep up your fashion of praying, and doing other duties which were your former wont; but you languish in them. Can you here be content to lie still and die? and rather choose to suffer the pains of death than of labour, by which your soul might yet live? Is this a time to roll yourself upon your slothful bed, and say, "Soul, take thine ease," even upon the pit's brink? Do not agree the matter so. Think not of making a covenant with death. It is not so gentle a thing as your slothful temper makes you think. Account the state intolerable wherein you are so manifestly tending towards it. Think not well of yourself and your present case. What reason soever any have to be pleased and delighted with a course of lively converse with God, and of walking in the Spirit; so much reason you have to be displeased with yourself as your case now is; to dislike and abhor the present temper of your own soul. If the life of religion, and its vigorous exercises be delightful, by that very reason it appears its faint and sickly languishings are not so.

Therefore know, that self-indulgence is now most unsuitable and dangerous. Labour to awaken in yourselves some sense of your condition. Think, "Whither am I going?" Represent to your own soul the terrors of death. Admit the impression thereof. Behold its frightful visage, and be startled at it. Re-count with yourself what you shall be if God who is your life quite depart; if this shall never be, yet know that your fear lest it should, is the means of your preservation. And let the apprehension of the tendency of your distemper excite in you that just and reasonable fear. How sure soever you are of the

principle that God will never utterly forsake those that are his (as most certainly he never will) yet you cannot be so sure of your application of it to yourself, as your case stands, but that there will now be room for this fear: therefore let it be entertained.

But though you admit a just and very solicitous fear, be sure that you exclude not hope, though you apprehend your case dangerous, look not upon it as desperate. Your hope must not be in yourself, but in him that raises the dead, and calleth things that are not, as though they were; yea, makes them exist and be. But if you cast away all hope, you yield yourself to perish. This stops your breath; so that even all strugglings for life, and the very gaspings of your fainting heart must immediately cease and end in perfect death. The danger of your case as bad as it is, calls not for this; nor will the exigency of it comport with it, when once the soul says there is no hope, it immediately proceeds to say, I have loved strangers and after them will I go. (Jer. 2. 25) Your hope is as necessary to your safety as your fear; we are saved by hope, (Rom. 8. 24.) that is of the end itself, which therefore animates to all the encounters and difficulties of our way, as well from within as from without. Great distempers appear in you and often return; yea, such as are of a threatening aspect and tendency. You should yet consider you are under cure: the prescribed means and method whereof are before you. There is balm in Gilead, and a physician there: One in whose hands none that trusted him ever miscarried. It is well if you find yourself sick. The whole need him not, and will not therefore commit themselves to his care. He hath relieved many such as you, that apprehending their case, have been restored to him; let them despair that know no such way of help. Say within yourself, though I am fallen and low, I shall rise and stand, renewed by thee, O my God. Was there never such a time with you before, when in the like case you cried to the Lord and he answered you, and strengthened you with strength in your soul? (Psal. 138. 3.) Say, within yourself, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance (where health shews itself in lively, sprightly, pleasant looks) and my God." (Psal. 42. 11.) And this very hope as it preserves life, so it doth the delight and pleasure of life from being quite extinct. The joy of hope is not to go for nothing, when it can only be said; not, it is well but it shall be. It is pleasant to consider that the state wherein saints on earth are, is a state of recovery; that though it be not a state of perfect health, yet it is not (also) a state of death; but wherein they are tending to life in the perfection of it.

And their frequent (and very faulty) relapses shall be found but to magnify the more, the skill and patience of their great Physician. Therefore however you are not hence to be secure, or imposing upon him; yet let not your hearts sink into an abject despair and sullen discontent, that you find a distempered frame sometimes returning. Let there be tender relentings after God. Your heart ought often to smite you, that you have been no more careful and watchful; but not admit a thought that you will therefore cast off all; that it is in vain ever to strive more, or seek to recover that good frame that you have often found is so soon gone.

Instead of that, apply yourself with so much the more earnestness to the proper course of remedy; and therein you must know your own labour and diligence; your contentions with yourself must have a great place: otherwise it would never have been said, be watchful and strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die. (Rev. 3. 2.) And give all diligence to add to your faith, virtue, &c. (2. Pet. 1. 5.) Such things would never have been charged, as duty upon you if you had nothing to do. You must expect to be dealt with as a sort of creatures capable of understanding your own concerns; not to be hewed and hammered as senseless stones that are ignorant of the artist's intent, but as living ones to be polished and fitted to the spiritual building, by a hand that reasonably expects your own compliance and co-operation to its known design. Unto which design though you must know you are to be subservient and must do something; yet you must withal consider you can be but subservient and of yourselves alone can do just nothing. Therefore, if ever you would know what a life of spiritual delight means, you must constantly strive against all your spiritual distempers that obstruct it, in the power of the Holy Ghost. And do not think that is enjoining you a course wholly out of your power; for though it be true, that the power of the Holy Ghost, is not naturally yours, or at your disposal; yet by gracious vouchsafement and ordination it is. If it were not so, what means that exhortation, Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; (Eph. 6. 10.) and that if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit; (Gal. 5. 25.) with the foregoing prescription of walking in the Spirit, that we might not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. (ver. 16.) Doth the Holy Ghost himself prescribe to us impertinently, in order to our obtaining of his own imparted influences? Doth not he know the method and way wherein they are to be conveyed? or would he deceive us by misrepresenting it? In short walking in the Spirit must signify something; and what can it signify less than dependence on his power, and subjection thereto,

with the continuance of both these? These therefore are necessary to the making of that power our own:

[1.] Dependence and trust: as that like phrase imports, I will go in the strength of the Lord God, &c. (Psal. 71. 16.) And that, I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, (Zeeh. 10. 12) at once shews us both the communication of the divine power, "I will strengthen them in the Lord" and the way wherein it is communicated, their walking up and down in his name, namely in actual and continued dependence thereon. The blessed God hath settled this connexion between our faith and his own exerted power. As the extraordinary works of the Spirit were not done, but upon the exercise of the extraordinary faith, which by the divine constitution was requisite thereunto; so that the infidelity which stood in the privation of this faith, did sometimes (so inviolable had that constitution made that connexion) in a sort bind up the power of God, and he could do no mighty works there, and he marvelled because of their unbelief, (Mark 6. 5. 6.) Why could we not cast him out? Because of your unbelief. (Mat. 17. 19. 20.) Nor also are the works of the Holy Ghost, that are common upon all sincere christians, done, but upon the intervening exercise of that more common faith. (Eph. 6. 16) Therefore is this shield to be taken above all the other parts of the divine armature, as sufficient to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; therefore are we said to be kept by the power of God through faith, (1. Pet. 1. 5.) And more expressly in terms to our present purpose; we are to receive the promise of the Spirit (that is the Spirit promised) through faith. (Gal. 3. 14.) Hereby we draw the power of that Almighty Spirit into a consent and co-operation with our spirit. So the great God suffers himself, his own arm and power to be taken hold of by us. He is engaged when he is trusted; that trust being now in this case, not a rash and unwarrantable presuming upon him, but such whereto he hath given the invitation and encouragement himself. So that when we reflect upon the promises wherein the the gift of the Spirit is conveyed, or wherein the express grant thereof is folded up, we may say, Remember thy word to thy servant, wherein thou hast caused me to hope. (Prov. 1. 2. 3. Ezek. 36. 27. Psalm 119.)

And then surely he will not frustrate the expectation which he hath himself been the Author of. He would never have induced those to trust in him, whom he intended to disappoint. That free Spirit which (as the wind blows where it listeth) now permits itself to be brought under bonds, even the bonds of God's own covenant, whereof we now take hold by our faith;

so that he will not fail to give forth his influence, so far as shall be necessary for the maintaining a resolution in us of stedfast adherence to God and his service, and retaining a dominion over undue inclinations and affections. How express and peremptory are those words, this I say, (as though he had said) I know what I say, I have well weighed the matter, and speak not at random) "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh!" And so much as this affords great matter of rational delight, though more sensible transports (which are not so needful to us, and in reference whereto the Spirit therefore retains its liberty) be not so frequent. Therefore if we aim at the having our spirits placed and settled in the secret of the divine presence, entertained with the delights of it; if we would know and have the sensible proof of that religion which is all life and power, and consequently sweetness and pleasure; our direct way is believing on the Spirit. That very trust is his delight, he taketh pleasure in them that hope in his mercy. (Psal. 147. 11.) It is that whereby we give him divine honour, the homage and acknowledgments proper to a Deity; confessing ourselves impotent and insufficient to think any thing as of ourselves, we rely upon his sustaining hand and own our sufficiency to be of him. (2. Cor. 3. 5.) It is his delight to be depended on as a Father by his children. He is pleased that title should be given him the Father of spirits. (Heb. 12. 9.) To have the spirits which are his offspring gathering about him (especially those who being revolted from him and become sensible of their misery by their revolt, do now upon his invitation apply themselves, and say, "Lo, now we come to thee, thou art the Lord our God,") craving his renewed communications, drawing vital influences from him, and the breath of life, adoring his boundless fulness that filleth all in all. And when we thus give him his delight, we shall not long want ours. But then we must also add,

[2.] Subjection to our dependence; a willing, obedient surrender and resignation of ourselves to the conduct and guidance of that blessed Spirit. A dutiful yielding to his dictates, so as that they have actually with us the governing, binding force and power of a law, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ as it is called (Rom. 8. 3.) Great care must be taken of grieving and quenching the Spirit, of rebelling and vexing it, of resisting it, and of striving against it (which appears to have been the horrid crime of the old world; his Spirit it is intimated had striven, when it is said it should no longer strive; (Eph. 4. 30. 1. Thes. 5. 19. Isa. 63. 10. Acts. 7. 5. Gen. Gen. 6.) and that it had striven, implies a counter-striving that was now, by his penal retirement permitted to be victorious, but their own sudden ruin

of despiting the Spirit of grace. (Heb. 10. 29.) A wickedness aggravated by the very style and title there given it, the Spirit of grace; and unto which only such a vengeance (as is intimated in what follows) which it peculiarly belonged to God himself to inflict could be proportionable. When we permit ourselves entirely to the government of the Holy Ghost, thereby to have our spirits and ways framed and directed according to his own rules, his quickening influence, and the pleasure and sweet relishes thereof will not be withheld. And if the experience of some christians seem not constantly to answer this, who complain they pray often for the Spirit, and desire earnestly his gracious communications, but find little of them, they are concerned seriously to reflect, and bethink themselves whether their distrust or disobedience, or both, have not made them desolate. Surely we are altogether faulty in this matter: his promise and faithfulness do not fail, his Spirit is not straitened. But we either do not entirely commit and entrust ourselves to his guidance, or we obediently comply not with it; but either indulge our sluggishness and neglect, or our contrary inclinations, and resist his dictates; are intractable and wayward, not apt to be led by the Spirit, and hence provoke him to withdraw from us. Hereto we are in justice to impute it that we find so little of that power moving in us, all the motions whereof are accompanied with so much delight.

2. For excitation. Little one would think should be needfull to be said more than only that we would bethink ourselves, what all this while we have been directed to and are by this text. If that be once understood, hath it not in itself invitation enough? Do we need further to be invited to a life of delight? Do we need to be pressed with arguments to choose delightful and wholesome food, rather than gall and wormwood, or even very poison? It is a sad argument of the deplorate state of man that he should need arguments in such a case! But because (moreover) much is to be said hereafter, to persuade unto delighting in God considered in the stricter notion of it, and that will also be applicable to this purpose; therefore little is intended to be said here. Only it is to be considered, do you intend to proceed in any course of religion, or no? If not, you are to be remitted to such discourses as prove to you the reasonableness and necessity of it: which if you think nothing you meet with sufficiently proves: think with yourself how well you can prove, that there is no God, and that you are no man, but a perishing beast. For these things they are concerned not fondly to presume and wish, but most clearly and surely to demonstrate, who will be of no religion. But if you think that horrid; and resolve to own something or other of religion;

will you here use your understanding, and consider? Is it indeed so horrid a thing to disavow all religion? And what is it better to pretend to it to no purpose? You find the religion is all but shew and shadow, mere empty vanity and mockery, which is not delightful. If you will not choose a better, because it is delightful, (as you are not advised to do for that as your chief reason) yet at least choose that which is so, because it is in other more considerable respects eligible, as being most honourable and pleasing to him that made you, and only safe and profitable to yourself. And what shall your religion serve for, that will not answer these purposes? And if you be not ashamed to spend so considerable a part of the time of your life, as the exercises of your religion will take up, in doing that (as was said before) whereof you can give no account; yet, methinks you should be afraid to make such things the subject of your vanity, as do relate to God, either really or in your opinion. Can you find nothing wherein vainly to trifle, but the sacred things of the great God of heaven, and the eternal concernments of your own soul? And shall the time spent about these matters be peculiarly marked out as your idle time, wherein you shall be doing that only which shall wholly go for loss and signify nothing? The religion which is not delightful can turn to no better account.

If therefore you will have a religion, and you have any reason for that resolution, by the same reason you would have any, you must have the pleasant delightful religion we speak of. You have no other choice. There is no other will serve your turn. And therefore what hath been said to divert you from the other, ought to persuade you to the choice of this. And besides, since there is so much of secret delight in true substantial religion, that ought not to signify nothing with you. If we did consider the delightfulness of it alone, upon that single account, it surely challenges the preference, before that which is neither profitable nor delightful. And that it is in itself so delightful, if you had nothing to inform you but the report of such as profess to have tried and found it so, methinks that at least should provoke you to try also. How sluggish a temper doth it argue, not to be desirous to know the utmost that is in it! It were even a laudable curiosity to resolve upon making trial; to get into the inmost centre of it; to pierce and press onward till you reach the seat of life, till you have got the secret, and the very heart of religion and your heart do meet and join in one. Did you never try experiments for your pleasure? Try this one. See what you will find in withdrawing yourself from all things else, and becoming entirely devoted to God through the Redeemer, to live after his will and in his presence.

Try the difference between viewing truths to please your genius, or using divine ordinances to keep up the custom, to conform yourself to those you live among, and help to make a solemn shew; and doing these things with a serious design to get into an acquaintance with God, to have your soul transformed into his image, that you may have present and eternal fellowship with him. Try how much better it is, to have your lives governed by an awful and dutiful respect to God, than to follow your own wild and enormous inclinations; and whether it be not better, what good things soever you do, to do it for the Lord's sake, than from base and sordid motives.

And why should you be of so mean and abject a spirit, as to content yourself to be held at the door and in the outer courts of religion; when others enter in and taste the rich provisions of God's house? Why will you distinguish yourselves by so debasing a character? It is a just and commendable ambition, to be as forward here as the best. Why will you suffer this and that and the other man to enter into the kingdom of God before you; even that kingdom which consists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost! Think not so meanly of yourself; impose not on yourself that needless unwarrantable modesty, as to account you are of a lower rank than all that ever became intimately acquainted with the hidden delights of a godly life. At least you are as capable of being thought worthy as any, for his sake upon whose account all must be accepted. Therefore think with yourselves, Why should I not labour to attain as far in the matter of religion, as this or that neighbour of mine? What should hinder? Who restrains or forbids me?

But you cannot, if you consider, but have somewhat more to assure you of the delightfulness of it, than the mere report of others; for your own reason and conscience cannot but so pronounce, if you go to the particulars that have been instanced in. If you acknowledge a God, and consider yourself as a reasonable creature made by him, and depending on him; you cannot but see, it is congruous and fit your spirit should be so framed and affected towards him, towards your fellow creatures of your own order, and all things else that do and shall circumstantiate your present and future state, as hath been in some measure (though very defectively) represented; and that it must needs be very pleasant, if it were so. You can frame in your mind an idea of a life transacted according to such rectified inclinations. And when you have done so, do but solemnly appeal to your own judgment whether that were not a very delectable life and thereupon bethink yourself what your case is, if you cannot actually relish a pleasure in what your own judgment tells you is so highly pleasurable. Methinks you

should reflect thus, "What a monstrous creature am I, that confess that delightful wherein yet I can take no delight! How perverse a nature have I! Surely things are much out of order with me; I am not what I should be!" And one would think, it should be uneasy to you to be as you are; and that your spirit should be restless till you find your temper rectified, and that you are in this respect become what you should be. And will you dream and slumber all your days? How much time have you lost, that might have been pleasantly spent in a course of godliness! Do you not aim at a life of eternal delights with God? If you now begin not to live to God, when will you? That life which you reckon shall never end with you, must yet have a beginning. Will you defer till you die your beginning to live? Have you any hope, God will deal in a peculiar way with you from all men, and make the other world the place of your first heart-change? How dismal should it be to you, to look in and still find your heart dead towards God, and the things of God; so that you have no delight in them. Think what the beginnings of the divine life, and the present delights of it, must be the earnest of to you, and make sure the ground (betime) of so great a hope. But I forbear here to insist further; and pass on to the discourse of delighting in God, under the other more strict notion of it, namely, as the very act of delight hath its direct exercise upon himself, which is the subject of the following chapter.

CHAP. III.

Having considered the practice of delighting in God as adherent to the other duties of religion; we are now to consider it. **SECONDLY.** As a distinct duty of itself. In this view of it something is said, by way of—expostulation—invitation and—excitation. *First.* By way of expostulation. 1. With those who are averse to this duty. (1.) Their state shewn to be a state of apostacy. (2.) That their sin is great and horrid. 2. With those who are defective in it and dispute it. (1.) The evil included in the neglect of this part of holy practice. (2.) What evil is derived into it from its very faulty causes. (3.) What evils follow upon this neglect as natural consequents.

SECONDLY. **WE** are now to consider this delight, not as a thing ^{somewhat} adherent to all other duties of religion; but as a distinct duty of itself, that requires a solemn and direct application of ourselves thereunto. For though it seems little to be doubted, but there is in this precept a part of religion put for the whole (as having a real influence, and conferring with its name a grateful savour and tincture upon the whole) it would yet be very unreasonable, not to take special notice of that part from whence the intire frame of religion hath its name. And having shewn the nature of this duty already in the Former Part, what is now to be said, must more directly concern the practice of it; and will (as the case requires) fall into two kinds of discourse, namely, expostulation concerning the omission and disuse of such practice, and invitation thereunto. And in both these kinds it is requisite we apply ourselves to two sorts of persons, namely, to such whose spirits are wholly averse and alien to it, and such, as though not altogether unpractised, are very defective in it, and neglect it too much.

First. Both sorts are to be expostulated with; and no doubt the great God hath a just quarrel with mankind (whom these two sorts do comprehend) upon the one or the other of these accounts; wherein it is fit we should plead with men for his sake and their own.

1. With those who are altogether disaffected to God alienated and enemies in their minds through wicked works, and (excepting such as deny his Being, with whom we shall not here concern ourselves) at the utmost distance from delighting in him. And as to such, our expostulation should aim at their

conviction, both of the matter of fact, that thus the case is with them, and of the great iniquity and evil of it.

(1.) It is needful we endeavour to fasten upon such a conviction, that this is the state of their case. For while his Being is not flatly denied, men think it generally creditable, to be professed lovers of God; and reckon it so odious a thing not to be so, that they who are even most deeply guilty, are not easily brought to confess enmity to him; but flatter themselves in their own eyes, till their iniquity be found to be hateful. The difficulty of making such apprehend themselves diseased, that their minds are under the power of this dreadful distemper, that it is not well with spirits in this respect, is the great obstruction to their cure. But I suppose you to whom I now apply myself, to acknowledge the Bible to be God's word, and that you profess reverence to the truth and authority of that word, and will yield to be tried by it.

[1.] Therefore you must be supposed such as believe the account true, which that book gives of the common state of man; that it is a state of apostacy from God; that the Lord looking down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if any did understand and seek God, finds they are all gone aside, (Psal. 14. 2. 3.) that is, (that the return may answer to the meaning of the inquiry) gone off from him. Every one of them is gone back, (Psal. 53. 3.) or revolted, as it is expressed in the parallel psalm, there is none that doth good, no not one; (Rom. 3. 12) which is quoted by the apostle to the intent, that every mouth may be stopped. and the whole world may become guilty before God. (ver. 19.) This is then a common case. And as the same apostle charges it upon the Gentiles, that they were haters of God; so doth our Saviour as expressly on the Jews, (who no doubt thought themselves as innocent of this crime as you) that "they had both seen and hated both him and his Father." And when it is said of men, that they were by nature the children of wrath, (Eph. 2. 3.) (they to whom he writes even as others) do you think that is spoken of any lovers of God, as their present state? Or that when all by nature are children of wrath, any are by nature lovers of him, so as to love him, and be under his wrath both at once? It is likely then, that against so plain evidence, while you confess yourselves men, you will not deny you were sometime haters of God. Well then, is the case altered with you? It is a conviction against you, that you are of human race, till it can be evidenced you are born from above, and are become new creatures? And what, do you find this? It is not expected, you should be able to tell the very moment when you ceased from your enmity against God, and became his friends; or give a punctual account of every turn

or motion of thoughts in such a change : but it is to be supposed, the work was not done upon you in your sleep, so as that you could have no animadversion of what was doing. However, comparing what you sometime were with what you are, what difference do you observe ? What were you, sometime haters of God, and are you now come to love and delight in him without perceiving in yourselves any difference ? Bethink yourselves, is not the temper of your spirits just such Godward as it was always wont to be, without any remarkable turn or alteration ? That is a shrewd presumption against you, that your case is most deplorable. But,

[2.] What is your present temper, in itself considered ? You do love God and delight in him, how do you make it appear ? wherein doth that friendly and dutiful affection towards him evidence itself ? Sure love and hatred are not all one with you. Whereby would you discern your hatred towards one you did most flatly and preemptorily disaffect ? You would dislike the thoughts of him, hate his memory, cast him out of your thoughts. Do you not the same way shew your disaffection to God ? Do you not find, that so a wicked a man (his enemy) is branded and distinguished, God is not in all his thoughts ? (Psal. 10. 4.) Are not they who shall be turned into hell described thus, the people that forget God ; (Psal. 9. 17.) that is, who willingly and of choice forget him, or from the habitual inclination of their hearts ? And is not that your case ? What could hinder you to remember him, if you were so disposed ?

Yea, but you often forget your friends, or those at least to whom you are sure you bear no ill will ; and what friends would expect to be always in your thoughts ? It is answered ; but you disrelish not the remembrance of a friend. Do you not the thoughts of God ? You do not think on your absent friends while no present occasion occurs, to bring them to your remembrance : but is God absent ? Is he far from any one of us ? Or have you not daily before your eyes, things enough to bring him to mind ; while his glorious works surround you, and you live, move, and have your being in him, and your breath is in his hand ? Have you that dependence on any friend ? Are you under so much obligation to any ? You often do not think on friends with whom you have no opportunity to converse ; Have you no opportunity to converse with him ? Your friends can lay no such law upon you, to have them much in your thoughts. It argues a depraved inclination, not to do herein what you ought and are bound to do. You cannot by the exercise of your thoughts obtain the presence of a friend ; you might a most comfortable divine presence.

And what though you think not of many to whom you bear

no ill will, nor have any converse with many such; is it enough to bear no ill will to God? Will that suffice you to delighting in him? Are you no more concerned to mind God and converse with him, than with the man you never knew or had to do with? Your unconvertibility with God, and unmindfulness of him, can proceed from nothing but ill will, who daily offers himself to your converse, who seeks and invites your acquaintance, would have you inwardly know him, and lead your lives with him, why is it that you do not so, but that you like not to retain him in your knowledge? And that this is the sense and language of your hearts towards him, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?" It can proceed from nothing but ill will and a disagreeable temper, that you shun the converse of one that seeks yours; that you will take no notice of one that often offers himself to your view, one that meets you at every turn, and aims to draw your eye, and cannot gain a look. When this is your deportment towards God, that he passes by you, and you perceive him not; he compasses you about, behind and before and is acquainted with all your ways, and with him and his ways you will have no acquaintance, remain alienated from the life of God, and as without him in the world; is not this downright enmity? Or can this deportment agree with habitual and the frequent actual delight in God which is required.

Again, would you not be justly taken to disaffect one whose temper is ungrateful, whose disposition and way is displeasing to you? Is it not thus with you Godward? When you hear of the purity and holiness of his nature, his abhorrence of all wickedness, and how detestable to him every thing is that is impure, and that he will not endure it; do not your hearts regret this quality (as we must conceive of it) in the nature of God? Which yet, because it is very nature, doth so much the more certainly infer, that a dislike of it cannot but include disaffection to himself, and that habitual and constant, since his whole way of dealing with men, and the course of his government over the world, do (and shall more discernibly) savour of it; do they not wish him hereupon not to be, in this respect, what he is; which is in effect, to wish him not to be at all? The same thing which the heart of the fool says, "No God;" that is, this would please such a one to the very heart. And doth this import no enmity? Can this stand with delight in him. Are you not disaffected to him, whom not being able to accuse of falsehood, whom having the greatest imaginable assurances of the impossibility he should deceive, you will yet by no means be induced to trust? Consider, what doth your trust in God signify, more than the sound of the name? Doth it quiet your heart, in re-

ference to any affairs you pretend to commit to him? Doth it purify it, and check your ill inclinations, in any thing wherein they should be countermanded upon the credit of his word? What doth his testimony concerning the future things you have not seen, weigh with you, to the altering of your course, and rendering it such as may comport and square with the belief of such things? Would not the word of an ordinary man, premonishing you of any advantage or danger which you have no other knowledge of, be of more value with you? Constant suspicion of any one, without cause or pretence most certainly argues radical enmity. You love him not whom you cannot trust.

Do you love him whom upon all occasions you most causlessly displease; whose offence you reckon nothing of? Is that ingenuous towards a friend, or dutiful towards a father or a lord? How do you, in this, carry towards the blessed God? Are you wont to displease yourselves to please him, or cross your own will to do his? Do you take delight in him whom you make no difficulty to vex; whose known declared pleasure, though you confess him greater, wiser, and more righteous than yourself, you have no more regard to, wherein it crosses your own inclination, than you would have to that of your child, your slave, or a fool? Have you any thing to except against that measure and character of loyal affection to your Redeemer and Lord, "If ye love me, keep my commandments; ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you; this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments?" Do you not disobey the known will of God in your ordinary practice without regret? Do you not know it to be his will, that you "strive to enter in at the strait gate;" that you "seek first the kingdom of heaven;" that you "keep your heart with all diligence;" that you "deny yourself, crucify the flesh," be temperate, just, merciful, patient? Do you aim at obeying him in these things? Can you say, Lord, for thy sake I refrain the things to which my heart inclines? Hath his prohibition any restraining force upon your hearts? Do you not allow yourself to be licentious, earthly, vain, proud, wrathful, revengeful, though you know it will offend him? and is this your love to him, or delight in him? Do you bear goodwill to him whose reproach and dishonour you are not concerned for, yea, whom you stick not to dishonour and reproach? whose interest among men hath no place in your thoughts, whose friends are none of yours, whose enemies are your friends, whose favour you care not for, nor regret his frowns, whose worship is a burden to you, (that you had rather do any thing than pray to him,) and his fellowship an undesired thing? Make an estimate by these things of the temper of your hearts

towards God; and consider whether it bespeak delight in him, or not rather habitual aversion and enmity.

It may be you will admit these things seem to carry somewhat of conviction with them; but they concern many that are taken for godly persons and lovers of God, as well as they do you. And it may be many such may take themselves for godly persons and lovers of God, and be mistaken as well as you. And what will that mend your cause? If these things will prove a person one that hath no delight in God, they equally prove it as to you and others, which will make nothing to your advantage. But if they who have sincere love to God, are in a degree peccant against the laws of such love (as that they are, they will hear in due time,) they are more ready to accuse themselves than other men; they abhor themselves, that they do not more entirely delight in God, and repent in dust and ashes. It better becomes you, to imitate their repentance, than glory in their sinful weakness; which while they patronize not themselves, you should not think it can afford a valuable patronage unto you. When did you check and contend with your own hearts upon these accounts, as they are wont to do? And if these things, in a degree found with them, prove their delight in God imperfect, their prevailing contraries will prove it (however) sincere. And if you will not now understand the difference, God grant you may not hereafter at a more costly rate, between the imperfection and the total want of his love; between having your heart and soul imperfectly alive towards God and perfectly dead.

You may further say, God is out of your sight, and therefore how can it be expected you should find a sensible delight in him? But is he out of the sight of your minds? If he be, what would you infer, that then you cannot delight in him at all, and therefore that you do not; the thing that you are charged with all this while. But he is out of sight by the high excellency of his Being; for which reason he should be delighted in the more, that is, with a deeper delight, though not like that you take in the things of sense: and he hath been so beyond all things, notwithstanding his abode in that light which is inaccessible. This therefore is confession without excuse; and would never be offered as an excuse by any, but those that are lost in flesh and sense, have forgot they have reasonable souls, and had rather be numbered with brutes than men; as if there were not many things you have not seen with the eyes of flesh, more excellent than those you have! or as if you had no other faculty than eyes of flesh to see with! Which since you have, and the depravation thereof is vicious and sinful; as your not-delighting in God (the matter of fact) seems to be yielded, and

so you quit your first post, it will thence appear, that it cannot but be sinful too. And since at that you seem to make a stand (as at your next post,) either thinking to deny or extenuate the evil of it, our expostulation must follow you thither, and be aimed,

(2.) To evince to you the greatness and horridness of that sin. Suffer yourselves therefore to be reasoned with to this purpose, and consider,—That you have somewhat of delectation in your natures, that is, you have the power naturally inherent in you, of taking delight in one thing or other. You have such a thing as love about you. Are not some things grateful and agreeable to you, in which you can and do take complacency? Therefore herein an act is not enjoined you which is incompetent to your natures, or simply impossible to you. Next then, do you not know, your delight or love ought to be placed on some good or other that is known to you; and among things that you know to be good, proportionably to the goodness which you find in them, and supremely on the best? Further, do you not acknowledge the blessed God to be the best and most excellent good? as being the first and fountain-good, the fullest and most comprehensive, the purest and altogether unmixed, the most immutable and permanent good? How plain and certain is this? How manifestly impossible is it, if there were not such a good, that otherwise any thing else should ever have been good, or been at all? Is not this as sure and evident as any thing your senses could inform you of? Whence is the glorious excellency of this great creation, the beauty, loveliness, pleasantness of any creature? Must not all that, and infinitely more, be originally in the great Creator of all. This, if you consider, you cannot but see and own.

While then your own hearts tell you, you delight not in God, do not your consciences begin to accuse and judge you, that you deal not righteously in this matter? And ought it not to fill your souls with horror, when you consider, you take no delight in the best and sovereign good? Yea, when you look into your disaffected hearts and find, that you not only do not delight in God, but you cannot; and not for the want of the natural power, but a right inclination? Should you not with astonishment bethink yourselves, every one for himself, “What is this that has befallen me; I am convinced, this is the best good, every way most worthy of my highest delight and love, and yet my heart savours it not!” You can have no pretence to say, that because your heart is disinclined, therefore you are excused, for you only do not what through an invincible disinclination you apprehend you cannot do. But you should bethink yourself, “What a wretch am I, that am so ill-inclined?”

For is not any one more wicked according as he is more strongly inclined to wickedness and averse to what is good? But how vincible or invincible, your disinclination is, you do not yet know, not having yet made due trial. That you cannot of yourselves overcome, it is out of question: but have you tried what help might be got from heaven, in the use of God's own prescribed means? If that course bring you in no help, then may you understand how much you have provoked the Lord. For though he hath promised, that for such as turn at his reproof, he will pour out his Spirit to them; yet they who when he calls refuse, and when he stretches out his hand regard not, but set at nought all his counsel, &c. may call and not be answered, may seek him early and not find him. (Prov. 1. 23. 29.) And that wickedness may somewhat be estimated by this effect, that thus it makes the Spirit of grace retire, that free, benign, merciful Spirit, the Author of all love, sweetness and goodness, become to a forlorn soul a resolved stranger. If you are so given up, you have first given up yourselves; you have wilfully cast him out of your thoughts, and hardened your own hearts against him, who was the Spring of your life and being, and in whom is all your hope. And whether this malignity of your hearts shall ever finally be overcome or no (as you have no cause to despair but it may be overcome, if apprehending your life to lie upon it, you wait and strive, and pray and cry, as your case requires;) yet do you not see it to be a fearful pitch of malignity? and so much the worse and more vicious by how much it is more hardly overcome?

That we may here be a little more particular: consider,

[1.] How tumultuous and disorderly a thing this your disaffection is? You are here to consider its direct tendency, its natural aptitude or what it doth of itself, and in its own nature lead and tend to. If you may withdraw your delight and love from God, then so may all other men as well. Therefore now view the thing itself in the common nature of it: and so, is not aversion to delight in God a manifest contrariety to the order of things? a turning all upside down? a shattering and breaking asunder the bond between rational appetite and the First Good? A disjointing and unbinging of the best and noblest part of God's creation from its station and rest, its proper basis and centre? How fearful a rupture doth it make! How violent and destructive a dislocation! If you could break in pieces the orderly contexture of the whole universe within itself, reduce the frame of nature to utmost confusion, rout all the ranks and orders of creatures, tear asunder the heavens, and dissolve the compacted body of the earth, mingle heaven and earth together, and resolve the

world into a mere heap ; you had not done so great a spoil, as in breaking the primary and supreme tie and bond between the creature and his Maker ; yea, between the Creator of all things and his more noble and excellent creature. All the relations, aptitudes and inclinations of the creatures to one another, are but inferior and subordinate to those between the creatures and their common Author and Lord : and here the corruption of the best cannot but be worst of all. Again,

[2.] What an unnatural wickedness is it ! To hate thy own original ! To disaffect the most bountiful Author of thy life and being ! What wouldst thou say to it if thy own son did hate the very sight of thee, and abhor thy presence and converse ? especially if thou never gavest him the least cause ? If thou hast been always kind and indulgent, full of paternal affection towards him, wouldst thou not think him a vile miscreant ? and reckon the earth too good to bear him ? But how little, and in how low a capacity, didst thou contribute to his being in comparison of what the great God did to thine ? How little of natural excellency hast thou above him (it may be in many things besides this unhappy temper he much excels thee) when thou knowest, in thy Maker is infinite excellency beyond what thou canst pretend unto ? And what cause canst thou pretend of disaffection towards him ? Many good works hath he done for thee : for which of these dost thou hate him ? Whereby hath he ever disobliged thee ? With how sweet and gentle allurements hath he sought to win thy heart ? And is it not most vilely unnatural that thy spirit should be so sullenly averse to him, who is pleased to be stiled the Father of spirits ? And in which respect it may fitly be said to thee, dost thou thus requite the Lord, O foolish creature, and unwise ? (Deut. 32. 6.) Is not he thy Father—? If thou didst hate thy own self (in a sense besides that wherein it is thy duty, and in which kind thou hast, as thy case is, a just and dreadful cause of self-abhorrence ;) if thou didst hate thy very life and being and wert laying daily plots of self-destruction, thou wert not so wickedly unnatural. He is more intimate to thee than thou art to thyself, That natural love which thou owest to thyself, and the nature from whence it springs, is of him, and ought to be subordinate to him ; and by a superior law of nature, thy very life if he actually require it, ought to be sacrificed and laid down for his sake. Thy hatred towards him, therefore is more prodigiously unnatural, than if it were most directly and implacably bent against thyself. And yet also in hating him thou dost most mischievously hate thyself too ; and all that thou dost, by the instinct of that vile temper of heart towards him thou dost it against thy own life and soul. Thou cuttest thy-

self off from him who is thy life ; and art laying a train for the blowing up of thy eternal hope. All that hate him love death, (Prov. 8. 36.) Further,

[3.] It is the most comprehensive wickedness, and which entirely contains all other in it. For as the law of love is the universal and summary law, comprehending all duty, and even as it enjoins love to God (for love to men ought to be resolved into that, and must be for his sake ;) so must disaffection to God be comprehensive of all sin, whereinto every thing of it resolves itself. Dost thou not see then how thou cancellest and nullifiest the obligation of all laws, while thou hast no delight in God? offerest violence to the very knot and juncture, wherein they all meet and are infolded together? Not to delight in God therefore, What can it be but the very top of rebellion? What will thy sobriety, thy justice, thy charity signify, if thou hadst these to glory in, while thou art habitually disaffected to thy God? Let men value thee for these, to whom thereby thou shewest some respect; but shall he, who in the mean time knows thou bearest none to him?

[4.] It is a most reproachful contemptuous wickedness! To him, I mean, whom it most directly offends against!—Carries it not in it most horrid contumely and indignity to the most high God? It is a practical denial of all those excellencies in him, that render and recommend him the most worthy object of our delight; it is more than saying, He is not good, holy, wise, just and true. Things may on the sudden be said that are not deliberately thought, and may be retracted the next breath; but a man's stated, constant course and way signify the apprehension it proceeds from to be fixed, and that it is the settled habitual sense of his soul. Yea, and since, as hath been said, Thou delightest in other things whilst thou delightest not in him; it plainly imports it to be the constant sense of thy very heart, that those things are better than He. What is it then that hath thy delight and love? Whereon is thy heart set? Commune with thyself. Dost thou not tremble, when thou findest this to be thy very case, that thou mayest truly say, "I can delight in creatures, but not in God; can take pleasure in my friend, but none in him; I must confess it to be the temper of my heart, that I love my father, mother, son or daughter more than Christ. (Mat. 10. 37. Luk. 14. 26.) Is it not then to be concluded from his own express word, that thou art not worthy of him, and canst be none of his disciple? Nay, mayst thou not moreover truly say, that thou lovest this base impure earth more than God? that thou takest more delight in thy companions in wickedness; canst more solace thyself with a drunkard on the ale bench, with a lascivious wanton, with a

prophane scoffer at godliness, than with the blessed God? that thou canst allow thyself to riot with the luxurious, and eat and drink with the drunken, and not only do such things, but take pleasure in them that do them, yea and thyself take pleasure to commit iniquity; but in the glorious holy God thou canst take no pleasure! Then wouldst thou be content to carry the plain sense of thy heart written on thy forehead, and proclaim it to all the world, as thy resolved practical judgment, that thou accountest thy friends, thy relations, this vile and vanishing world, thy wicked associates, thine own impure lusts, better than God? And dost thou not yet see the horrid vile-ness of thy own heart in all this? Art thou yet a harmless innocent creature, an honest well-meaning man for all this?

Yea, wilt thou not see, that thine heart goes against thy conscience all this while? that thou disaffectest him in whom thou knowest thou shouldst delight? that the temper of thy spirit is a continual affront to thy profession, through the perfidious falsehood and vanity whereof, thou dost but cover hatred with lying lips? Is not that an odious thing which thou so seekest to hide; and which, though thou art not loath to be guilty of it, thou art so very unwilling should be known? And since thou art so very loath it should be known, how canst thou hold up thy head before that eye that is as a flame of fire, that searches thy heart and tries thy reins, that observes thy wayward spirit, and sees with how obstinate an aversion thou declinest his acquaintance and converse? Wilt thou stand before the glorious Majesty of heaven and earth, who knows thy disaffected heart, and say, it is but a small transgression thou hast been guilty of, in not loving him and making him thy delight? Dost thou think this will pass for a little offence in the solemn judgment of the great day that is drawing on? Or will thy heart endure, or thy hands be strong, when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, thou shalt stand convicted before his tribunal in the sight of angels and men, of having borne all thy days a false, disloyal heart, full of malignity and ill-will to thy Sovereign Lord, whom thou wast so many ways obliged to serve and cleave to with delight and love? When the difference shall be visibly put between those that delighted in God and them that never did, and thou shalt be marked out for one of them that didst in heart depart from him all thy days, and be thereupon abandoned to the society of that horrid accursed crew, in whom only thou didst delight: surely thou wilt not then say, thy transgression was small.

2. But we are also to expostulate with another sort; who,

though they are not altogether unacquainted with this heavenly exercise of delighting in God, yet too much disuse it, and apply not themselves to it (as who do?) with that constancy and intention of soul as the matter requires. And these we are to put upon the consideration of such evils, as either are included in this neglect, or are allied unto it (and do therefore accompany and aggravate the natural evil of it,) as either causing it, or being caused by it. And,

(1.) Those whom we now intend are to bethink themselves, what evil is included in their neglect of this part of holy practice. And you are to judge of the evil of it by its disagreement with such known and usual measures, as whereto our practice should be suitable, and which in reason and justice it is to be estimated and censured by; as for instance, the divine law, conscience, experience, obligation by kindness, stipulation, relation, profession, tendency of the new nature, dictates of God's Spirit, the course and drift of his design; with all which it will be found to have very ill accord.

[1.] How directly opposite is it to the law of God! Not only to his express written precept, but to that immutable, eternal law which arises from our very natures referred unto his! The obligingness or binding force whereof, doth not so much stand in this, That the thing to be done is such as whereto our natures were originally inclined, (which yet is of great weight, they having been thus inclined and determined by our Maker himself, so that our inclination was in this case expressive of his will;) but (which is indeed the very reason of that, for we must conceive the divine wisdom in the blessed God to conduct all the determinations of his will,) the natural unchangeable congruity of the thing itself. And therefore as to the things whose constant fitness would render them matter of duty to us at all times, it was provided, inclinations suitable to them should be planted in our natures from the beginning: but things that were to be matter of duty but for a time, having only a present fitness unto some present juncture or state of affairs, it was sufficient that the divine pleasure should be signified about them in some way more suitable to their occasional and temporary use, and that might not so certainly extend to all men and times.

That great law of love to God (which comprehends this of delighting in him) is you may be sure of that former sort, it being impossible there should be a reasonable creature in being, but it will immediately and always be his duty to love God supremely and above all things; yea, that you must know, is the most fundamental of all such laws. And therefore, when because original impressions were become so obscure and illegi-

ble in our natures, it became necessary there should be a new and more express edition of them in God's written word: this is placed in the very front of them, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" Which signifies only the having of a God in name and no more, if it doth not signify loving him before all other. Wherefore when our Saviour was to tell which was the first and great commandment, he gives it thus, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. (Mat. 22. 37.) The thing enjoined by this law is most substantial, the life and soul of all other duty, and without which all that we can do besides is but mere shadow; for whatsoever we are enjoined to do else, we must understand enjoined to be done out of love to God, as the principle whence it must proceed; and not proceeding thence, the moral goodness of it vanishes as a beam cut off from the sun. For on this (with the other which is like unto it, and which also hangs upon this) "hang all the law and the prophets." And what durst thou who knowest God, or rather art known of him, neglect so great and substantial a duty? This is not like the command of wearing fringe on the borders of the garment, or of not wearing a garment of linen and woollen; wherein sure they whom it concerned should have been very undutiful to have disobeyed: but it is the very greatest among the great things of the law: a duty upon which all duty depends, even for life and breath! Should not this have obtained in thy practice, that ought to run through and animate all the rest? Or was it fit it should lie dead, and bound up in the habitual principle and not go forth (or very rarely) into act and exercise? Or didst thou do thy duty herein, by being only inclined to do it? Or would not the inclination, if it were right, infer (or otherwise is it like to last long without) suitable exercise? Why was so express a law neglected, so often enjoined (or the practice mentioned with approbation, or the neglect of it animadverted upon with abhorrence, in the very terms, or in terms evidently enough of the same import) in the Sacred Volume? * How could you turn over the leaves of that book and not often meet with such words, "Rejoice in the Lord ye righteous: rejoice in the Lord, and again I say unto you rejoice, &c." † Should not so frequent inculcations of the same thing have been answered by the frequency and continuedness of your practice of it? Or was it enough now and then, as it were casually and by chance to hit upon the doing of what is so momentous a part of your religion, and ought to be the business of your life? Ought it not

* Isa. 55. 1. 2. 3. Psal. 44. 19. Job. 27. 10. chap. 34. 9. Isa. 58. 14. † Psal. 33. 1. 97. 12. Phil. 3. 1. 4. 4.

to cut your heart to find yourself convicted herein of a disobedient omission? And when the great God exacts that stated homage from you, a frequent, practical, explicit recognition and owning of him as the supreme delight, the great solace, repose and rest of your souls, that you have been so little awed with the apprehension of his authority and right in this case? when he hath mercifully chosen, to make that the matter of his command and claim, wherein your own advantage, satisfaction and content doth so intirely consist? That your practice is herein disagreeable to a law, speaks it sinful: that it transgresses so great a law highly aggravates your sin: a law so important, upon which so much depends, so express and plain, legible in the very nature of things, and in reference whereto, the very excellency of the object would suffice to be a law to you, and dictate your duty, if no command had been otherwise given in the case. Surely the neglect of such a law cannot have been without great transgression.

[2.] Your own conscience you will acknowledge ought to be a rule to you, when it manifestly agrees with that former rule the supreme and royal law. Do you not find yourselves herein to have offended against that? It may be your sleeping conscience did not find yourself to offend: but do you not find yourself to have offended it, now beginning to awake? This is not a doubtful and disputable matter, (perhaps your minding such matters too much, hath hindered you in this) surely you will not make a scruple of it, a difficult case of conscience, whether you should take the Lord of heaven and earth for your God; whether you should choose him for your portion, seek rest in him, and place upon him your delight and love? And if in so plain a case your conscience hath not expressed itself offended, you have offended against it, in letting it sleep so securely, and not stirring it up to its proper office and work. And know that sinning against the light of one's own conscience, doth not stand only in going against the actual deliberated thoughts which we have had, but also in walking contrary to our habitual knowledge, and the thoughts and apprehensions which thence we might and should actually have had. Inadvertency and disregard of known duty, is the most usual way of sinning against conscience. And besides, have you not in this often gone against the repeated checks of your own consciences? Bethink yourselves, have you not in your prayers, intermingled frequent confessions of your cold love to God, and that you have taken so little delight in him? And were those only customary forms with you, and words of course? Surely (though it might not be urgently enough) your consciences did at such times accuse you. And let that be a dreadful thing in your eyes, to continue a

course which, if you consider, you cannot but condemn. And,

[3.] Ought not your experience to have been instructive to you; as it commonly is to men in other matters? Have you not in this neglect run counter to such instruction? By this means you are supposed to have known the sweetness, as by that last mentioned, the equity and fitness of delight in God. Have not those been your best hours, wherein you could freely solace yourselves in him? was not one of them better than a thousand otherwise spent! Did you never find it good for you, in this way, to draw nigh to God? (Psal. 73. 28) and hereupon pronounce them blessed whom he did choose and cause to approach unto him? (Psal. 65. 4) And where is that blessedness of which ye spake? Have ye forgotten, that ye ever thus tasted how gracious the Lord was? And it is like, you have by your taste found it also an evil thing and bitter to depart from him. Methinks you should reckon it a great increase of your sin to have gone against your own sense when especially your superior rule might give you assurance it did not deceive you. And doth it not expressly oblige you to follow its guidance, while it puts the character of perfect, or of being come to full age, upon them, who by reason of use (or accustomedness) have senses exercised to discern between good and evil? (Heb. 5. 14.)

[4.] And what will you say to the great obligations which the love and kindness of God have laid upon you? Will you not esteem yourselves to have been thereby bound to place your love and delight on him? could you decline doing so without putting a slight upon his love who is infinite in what he is, and who is love? was not his love enough to deserve yours? the love of a God, that of a silly worm! were you not obliged to love him back again, who was so much before hand with you in the matter of love? to love him who had loved you first? (1. Joh. 4. 19) The first love is therefore perfectly free; the latter is thereby certainly obliged and become bounden duty. How variously and with how mighty demonstration hath that love expressed and evidenced itself? It hath not glanced at you, but rested on you, and settled in delight. He hath so stood affected towards the people of his choice, and put a name on them on purpose to signify his delight in them. (Isa. 62. 4.) He rejoices over them with joy, and rests in his love to them. (Zeph. 3. 17.) The Lord taketh pleasure in his people. (Psal. 149. 4.) His delights have from of old been with the sons of men. (Prov. 8. 31.) Could he delight in such as you, and cannot you in him? Be amazed at this! How mean an object had he for his delight! How glorious and enamouring a one have you! excellency and love in conjunction! whereas in you were

met deformity and ill will ! he hath loved you so as to remit to you much. To give to you and for you a great deal more ; Himself and the Son of his delights. He then (thou shouldst recount) did invite thee to delight in him who hath always sought thy good, done strange things to effect it, takes pleasure in thy prosperity, and exercises loving kindness towards thee with delight ; who contrived thy happiness ; wrought out thy peace at the expence of blood, even his own ; taught thee the way of life, cared for thee all thy days, hath supplied thy wants, borne thy burdens, eased thy griefs, wiped thy tears. And if now he say to thee ; “ After all this couldst thou take no pleasure in me ? ” Will not that confound and shame thee ? He hath expressed his love by his so earnest (and at last successful) endeavours to gain thine. By this, that he hath seemed to put a value on it ; and that he desisted not till in some degree he had won it ; whereupon there hath been an acquaintance, a friendship, some intimacies between him and thee, according as Sovereign Majesty hath vouchsafed to descend, and advance sinful dust. And how disingenuous, unbecoming, and unsuitable to all this is thy strangeness and distance afterwards ! It is more unworthy to cast out of your hearts than not to have admitted such a guest.

[5.] How contrary is this omission to what by solemn vow and stipulation you have bound yourselves to ? It hath graciously pleased the blessed God in his transactions with men to contrive his laws into the form of a covenant, wherein upon terms, he binds himself to them, expecting (what he obtains from such as become his own) their restipulation. Wonderful grace ! that he should article with his creatures, and capitulate with the work of his own hands ! And whereas his first and great law (and which virtually being submitted to comprehends our obedience to all the rest) is as hath been noted, “ Thou shalt have no other Gods before me. ” This also he gives forth often, as the sum and abridgment of his covenant, “ That he will be our God, and we shall be his people. ” Now this you have consented to ; and therein bound yourselves, (as you have heard our Saviour expounds the first and great commandment) to love him with all your soul, &c. And how well doth your neglect to delight in him agree and consist with this ? What, love him with all your soul in whom you can rarely find yourselves to take any pleasure ? Surely your hearts will now misgive and admit a conviction you have not dealt truly (as well as not kindly) in this. What, not to keep faith with the righteous God ! To deceive a deceiver some would think not intolerable, but what pretence can there be for such dealing with the God of truth ? You have vowed to him, What think you of this

drawing back? Such trifling with him; the great and terrible God who keeps covenant and mercy for ever! How unbecoming is it! to dally with him as you would with an uncertain whiffling man! To be off and on, to say and unsay, that he shall be your God, and that he shall not, (for how is he your God if you delight not in him?) imports little of that solemn gravity and stayedness which becomes a transaction with the most high God. He takes no pleasure in fools; wherefore pay that which you have vowed. (Eccle. 5. 4.)

[6.] Nor doth it better agree with your relation to him, which arises from your covenant. Thence he becomes yours, and you his! "I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine;" and the covenant binding on both parts, the relation is mutual: so that thereby also he becomes yours. It is a most near; represented therefore by the nearest among men, even the conjugal relation; therefore how full is that Song of Songs of expressions importing mutual delight suitable thereto! And what a bondage (as well as incongruity) were that relation without delight? Have you repented your choice? If not, why take you not pleasure? Why do you not rejoice and glory in it, even as he professes to do over you? If he should repent, in what case were you? Not to take pleasure in God! your own God! How strangely uncouth is it? You are not to consider him as a stranger, an unrelated one. If he were such to you, his own excellencies challenge to be beheld with delight. But you are to reckon and say of him, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, &c. I am his and he is mine." And how ill do such words become the mouth that utters them not from the abundance of the heart, even from a heart abounding and overflowing with love and joy!

[7.] And how doth the temper of your heart and your practice, while you take not actual, ordinary delight in God, clash and jar with your profession? For admit you do not then make an express verbal profession of actual delight in God at such times when you find it not, yet you still avow yourselves, and would be accounted and looked upon as related to him: and the just challenges of that relation are not any way answered, but by a course of ordinary actual delight. So much your profession manifestly imports. Whilst you profess the Lord to be your God, you profess him to be your supreme delight. And how is he so, when you seldom have a delightful thought of him, or look to him with any pleasure? And the temper of your spirit towards him is usually strange and shy? And bethink yourselves, what would you then be esteemed such as care not for him, as value him not? Would you willingly be taken for such in all those long intervals wherein your actual delight in him is

wholly discontinued? Would you not be ashamed the disposition of your heart towards him at such times should be known? Do you not desire to be better thought of? What is there then at the bottom, and under the covert of your yet continued profession at such times, but falsehood? A correspondent affection there is not. Is not your very profession then mere dissimulation and a lie? A concealment and disguise of a heart inwardly bad and naught? but which only comforts itself that it is not known; that is all day long full of earth and vanity, and wholly taken up with either the contentments, delights and hopes, or the cares, fears and discontents that do naturally arise from these vile, mean objects, and so are of a kind as mean and vile as they; only makes a shift to lie hid all the while, and lurk under the appearance such a one hath put on of a lover of God, and one that above all things delights in him. But is this honest dealing? or was this indeed all that was this while to be got of God, the credit of being thought his?

Yet it may be you will somewhat relieve yourselves, by saying you suppose for all this your profession was not altogether false. For you hope there was still a principle in you by which your heart was habitually directed towards God, and whereby his interest did still live and was maintained in you, notwithstanding your many and long diversions from him. And while your profession did signify that, it signified some real thing, and so was not a false and lying profession.

But to this I say, was this all that your profession was in itself apt, and by you designed to signify? Surely it was apt and intended to signify more than habitual inclination. It carried the appearance of such actings Godward as were suitable to your having him for your God; and you would it is likely have been loath it should have been otherwise understood. And surely whatsoever it said or imported more than the truth was false.

And again, can you be confident that so much as you suppose, was true? Are you sure of this, that because you sometimes found some motions of heart towards God, it is therefore habitually inclined to him, when it very rarely puts forth itself in any suitable acts, and for the most part works quite another way? Whereby are habits to be known but by the frequency of their acts? Do not you know there are many half-inclinations and workings of heart with some complacency Godward that prove abortive and come to nothing, as that of the stony ground, and that of Heb. 6. 4. do more than intimate. Surely your hope and safety more depend upon your repentance, your return and closer adherence to God thereupon, than the supposition your heart is in the main sound and right amidst those more notable declinings from him. But we will admit your supposition true

(which the consideration of the persons we are now dealing with and the design of this present piece of our discourse requires) and take it for granted, that amidst this your great neglect, you have notwithstanding, a principle, a new and holy nature in you, whose tendency is Godward; whereupon, we further say then,

[S.] And doth not your unaccustomedness to this blessed exercise resist the tendency of that new nature? And so your practice while your hearts run a quite contrary course (for they are not doing nothing while they are not in this delightful way working towards God) doth not only offend against your profession which it in great part belies; but against that vital principle also, which is in you; and so your very excuse aggravates your sin. Is there indeed such a principle in you? And whither tends it? Is it not from God? And doth it not then naturally aim at him and tend towards him? being upon both these accounts (as well as that it resembles him, and is his living image) called a participation of the divine nature? Yea, doth it not tend to delight in him? for it tends to him as the soul's last end and rest. What good principle can you have in you Godward if you have not love to him? And the property of that, is to work towards him by desire, that it may rest in him by delight. Have you faith in God? That works by this love. *Faith* is that great power in the holy soul by which it acts from God as a *principle*; *love* is that by which it acts towards him as an *end*; by that it draws from him, by this it moves to him, and rests in him. The same holy, gracious nature (dependently on its great Author and Cause) inclining it both to this motion and rest; and to the former, in order to the latter: so by the work of the new creature in the soul formed purposely for blessedness in God and devotedness to him; its aspirations, its motions, its very pulse, breathe, tend and beat this way. But you apply not your souls to delight in God. You bend your minds and hearts another way. What are you doing then? You are striving against your own life; you are mortifying all good inclinations towards God, stifling and stopping the breath that your panting heart would send forth to him; you are busily crucifying the new creature, instead of the body of sin. There is somewhat in you that would work towards God, and you suffer it not; and is that well? that divine thing, born of God, of heavenly descent, that hath so much in it of sacredness by its extraction and parentage, you fear not to do violence to!

If indeed such a thing (as you seem to hope) be in you; at sometime or other you may perceive which way it beats and tends. The soul in which it hath place is biassed by it Godward; and though often it is not discernible, it sometimes

shews its inclination. Other men, and meaner creatures, sleep sometimes, and then their most rooted dispositions appear not; when they are awake they bewray them, and let them be seen in their actions, motions and pursuits. The renewed soul hath its sleeping intervals too, and what propensions it hath towards God is little discernible, (and yet even then it sometimes dreams of him, at least between sleeping and waking; I sleep, but my heart waketh, it is the voice of my beloved, (Cant. 5. 2.) But if you seriously commune with yourselves in your more wakeful seasons, you may perceive what your hearts seek and crave; some such sense as this may be read in them, the desire of our souls is unto thy name, O Lord, and to the remembrance of thee. (Isa. 26. 8.) One thing have I desired, that will I seek after, to behold the beauty (the delight, as the word signifies) of the Lord. (Psal. 27. 4.) And when you observe this discovered inclination, you may see what it is that in your too wonted course you repress and strive against. That divine birth calls for suitable nutriment, more tastes how gracious the Lord is. You will have it feed upon ashes, upon wind and vanity; or (although it had the best parent, it hath so ill a nurse) when it asks bread, you give it a stone, and let it be stung by a scorpion: and the injury strikes higher than at it alone, even (as is obvious) at the very Author of this divine production; which therefore we add as a further aggravation of this evil, namely,

[9.] That it is an offence against the Spirit of grace, whose dictates are herein slighted and opposed; for surely with the tendencies of the new creature he concurs. It is maintained by him as well as produced, continually depends on him as to its being, properties, and all its operations. Nothing therefore can be cross to the inclination of a renewed soul as such, which is not more principally so to the Holy Ghost himself. And particularly the disposing of the soul unto delight is most expressly ascribed to him; that very disposition being itself joy in the Holy Ghost; (Rom. 14. 17.) and we find it numbered among the fruits of the Spirit. (Gal. 5. 22.) You may possibly be less apprehensive of your sin in this, because you find him not dictating to you with that discernible majesty, authority and glory that you may think agreeable to so great an Agent. But you must know, he applies himself to us in a way much imitating that of nature. And as in reference to the conservation of our natural beings, we are assured the first cause co-operates with inferior causes (for we live, move, and have our being in him) though the divine influence is not communicated to this purpose with any sensible glory, or so distinguishably, that we can discern what influence is from the superior cause and what from subordinate; our reason and faith certainly assure us of

what our sense can reach in this matter. So it is here also, the divine Spirit accommodates himself very much to the same way of working with our own, and acts us suitably to our own natures. And though by very sensible tokens we cannot always tell which be the motions that proceed from him; yet faith teaches us from his word, to ascribe to him whatever spiritual good we find in ourselves; inasmuch as we are not of ourselves sufficient to think a good thought. And if by that word we judge of the various motions that stir in us, we may discern which are good and which not; and so may know what to ascribe to the Spirit, and what not. Whereas therefore, that word commands us to delight in God, if we find any motion in our hearts tending that way, we are presently to own the finger of God, and the touch of his Holy Spirit therein. And what have you found no such motions excited, no thoughts cast in that have had this aspect and tendency, which your indulged carnality and aversion have repressed and counter-wrought? Herein you have grieved and quenched the Spirit.

And if it have not over-borne you into what you should have understood to have been your duty, but have upon your untractableness, retired and with-drawn from you; do not therefore make the less reckoning of the matter, but the more rather; this carries more in it of awful consideration to you, and smarter rebuke that he desisted. You must consider him as a free Agent, and who works to will and to do of his good pleasure. His influence is retractable, and when it is retracted you ought in this case to reckon, it signifies a resentment of your undutiful and regardless carriage towards him. And ought you not to smite upon the thigh then, and say, "What have I done?" You have striven against the Spirit of the most high God; you have resisted him in the execution of his office, when you were committed to his conduct and government; you have fallen out and quarrelled with your merciful guide, and slighted at once both his authority and love. This could be no small offence. And you are also to consider, that when such a province was assigned him in reference to you, and such as you; and the great God set his Spirit to work about you; it was with a special end and design, being the determination of most wise counsel. And how highly doth this increase the offence? that,

[10.] You have herein directly obstructed the course and progress of that design; which could be no other than the magnifying of his grace in your conduct to blessedness. This is that whereon he hath been intent; and he hath made his design herein so visible, that they that run might read what it was. The very overture to you of placing your delights on him, speaks

its end; It is that whereby he should be most highly acknowledged and you blessed both at once. His known design you ought to have reckoned did prescribe to you, and give you a law. It is a part of civility towards even an ordinary man, not to cross his design which I know him earnestly to intend, when it tends no way to my prejudice, or any man's; yea, to do so would in common interpretation, besides rudeness, argue ill nature and a mischievous disposition. Much more would duty and just observance towards a superior challenge so much, as not to counter-work him, and awe a well-tempered spirit into subjection and compliance; but a stiff reluctance to the great and known design of the blessed God, meant so directly to our own advantage, speaks so very bad a temper; hath in it such a complication of peevish wilfulness, of undutifulness and ingratitude to him, of negligence and disregard of ourselves, that it must want a name to express it.

And now do you see what evil the neglect of delighting in God (accompanied as it cannot but be with the having your hearts otherwise engaged and vainly busy) doth include and carry in it? Will you pause awhile and deliberate upon it? Do but make your just and sober estimate by the things that have been mentioned. Measure it by God's law, and it imports manifest disobedience in a matter of highest consequence;—by the judgment of your own conscience, and it imports much boldness against light in a very plain case;—by your experience, and it speaks an uninstrutable stupidity, or a very heedless forgetful spirit;—by the obligation laid upon you, by the kindness of this very counsel and offer (besides many other ways) and it hath in it great ingratitude and insensibleness of the greatest love;—by your covenant, and it imports treachery;—by your relation, much incongruity and undecency;—by your profession, falsehood and hypocrisy;—by the tendency of the new nature in you, unnatural violence;—by the dictates of God's spirit, great untractableness;—by his known declared design in this matter, a most undutiful disrespect to him, with a most wretched carelessness of yourselves, as to your nearest and most important concern. One would think it needless to say more. But why should we baulk anything that so obviously occurs, tending to set forth the exceeding great sinfulness of this sin? Therefore know, that besides its great faultiness in itself.

(2.) Much also cannot but be derived into it from its very faulty causes. It supposes and argues great evils that flow into it, and from which it hath its rise.

[1.] Great blindness and ignorance of God. For is it possible any should have known and not have loved him? or have beheld his glory and not have been delighted therewith? and

that with such delight and love as should have held a settled seat and residence in them. And can your ignorance of God be excusable or innocent? The apostle's words are too applicable; some have not the knowledge of God, I speak it to your shame. (1. Cor. 13. 34.) Do you pretend to him, and know him not? worship him so oft, and worship you know not what? had such opportunity of knowing him, and yet be ignorant? At least it would be thought, In Judah is God known, and that his name were great in Israel, (Psal. 76. 1. 2.) where he hath had his tabernacle and dwelling place. Here one would think his altar should not bear the same inscription as at Athens, "To the unknown God." How express hath his discovery of himself been to you! and how amiable! What was there in it not delectable? or in respect whereof he hath not appeared altogether lovely! as it were composed of delights! You have had opportunity to behold him clad with the garments of salvation and praise; and as he is in Christ, in that alluring posture, "reconciling the world to himself," wherein all his attributes have visibly complied to the reconciling design; his boundless fulness of life and love not obstructed by any of them, from flowing out in rich and liberal communications. If you had not excluded that glorious pleasant light wherein he is so to be beheld, you would have beheld what had won your hearts fully, and bound them to him in everlasting delight and love. And have you not reason to be ashamed you have not known him better, and to better purpose! Alienation from the life of God (Eph. 4. 18.) proceeds from blindness of heart, that is a chosen affected voluntary blindness. Or if your knowledge of him be not little,

[2.] Your little delight in him argues much unmindfulness of him; at least that you have not minded him duly, and according to what you have known. It might here be seasonable to suggest to you, how likely it is, that several ways your great faultiness in the matter of thinking of God may have contributed to the withholding of your delight from him. Consider therefore,

First. Have not your thoughts of him been slight and transient? Have they not been overly superficial thoughts? casual only, and such as have dropped into your minds as it were by chance, fluid and roving, fixed neither upon him nor into your hearts? Too much resembling what is said of the wicked man, God is not in all his thoughts; (Psal. 10. 4.) he hath not been amidst them. Your thoughts have not united upon him, he hath not been situated and centred in them. Was not this the case? You bestowed upon him it may be now and then a hasty passant glance, the careless cast of a wandering eye; and was

this likely to beget an abiding permanent delight! have you been wont to compose yourselves designedly and on purpose to think of him, so as your thoughts might be said to have been directed towards him by the desire and inclining bent of your heart; according to that, the desire of our soul is towards thy name, and to the remembrance of thee! (Isa. 26. 8.) Whence it is that it is represented as the usual posture of them whom he reckons among his jewels, and for whom the book of remembrance was written, that they thought on his name: a thing that they might be known by, and distinguished from other men. Wherefore it is observable that their remembrance of him, was thought worth the remembering, and to be transmitted into records never to be forgotten. The evil of your not delighting in God, hath a great accession from your negligent thinking of him.

Secondly. Have not your thoughts of him been low and mean, such as have imported light esteem! Compare them with those admiring thoughts, Who is like unto thee, O Lord among the gods! who is like thee, glorious in holiness! (Deut. 32. 15.) O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! (Psal. 8. 1.) How unlike have yours been to such thoughts? Bethink yourselves how deeply culpable you have made your neglect to delight in God, by your unworthy thoughts by which you have detracted so unspeakably from the divine excellency! hence you have more to account for than merely not delighting in God, a rendering him such to yourselves, as if he were not worthy to be delighted in. How ought this to shake your hearts!

Thirdly. Have they not been hard thoughts; full of censure, and misjudging of his nature, counsels, ways, and works? have there not been perverse reasonings, with dislike of his methods of government over men in this present state! as if he had too little kindness for such as you would have him favour, and too much for others; judging his love and hatred by false measures! This seems to be much the evil unto which the injunction of delight in God is here opposed in this psalm and whence it may be estimated, how directly that militates against this, and prevailing, excludes it. Perhaps you have delighted so little in God because ye have thought (the thing that is so wearisome to him,) every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; and have said in your hearts, where is the God of judgment? Or have you not been more peccant in your apprehensions of his rules and resolutions for the disposing of men as to their eternal states? Have you not disbelieved the revelation he hath given of his nature, and express declarations of his mind and purpose touching these

matters? Was it not enough for you to have known his gracious propensions towards returning sinners, that desire him again for their God, and willingly accept the grace, and submit themselves to the conduct and government of his Son? Should not this have allured and won your hearts to him, and made you, with humble, thankful admiration of his grace, resign and yield yourselves to be his for ever? Have you not measured your apprehensions of him by the suggestions and misgivings of your guilty, jealous hearts; or by your experienced animosity, and the implacableness of your own spirits towards such as have offended you; as if he could forgive no more than you are disposed to do? Have you not opposed your own imaginations of him to his express testifications of himself, that "He is love; slow to anger, and of great mercy, &c. And that as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts?" Have you not (against his plain word) thought him irreconcilable, and averse to the accepting of any atonement for you? prescribed and set bounds to him, and thought your sin greater than could be forgiven? And if hereupon you have not delighted in him, and have found all ingenuous affection towards him stifled within you, as your not delighting in him, was a foul evil; the more sinful injurious cause (denying the infinite goodness of his nature, and giving the lie to his word) hath made it beyond all expression worse. And further at least consider,

Fourthly. Have not your thoughts of God been few? Is not the meditation of him with you an unwonted thing? The Psalmist, resolving to mind him much, to praise and sing to him as long as he lived, and while he had any being; (Psal. 104. 33.) doth as it were prophesy to himself, that his meditation of him should be sweet. Frequent right thoughts of God, will surely be pleasant delightful thoughts: but your little delight in God too plainly argues, you have minded him but seldom. And how full of guilt is your not delighting in God upon this account! How cheap is the expence of a thought! What, that so much should not be done in order to the delightful rest of your soul in God!

[3.] It supposes much carnality, a prone inclination and addictedness to this earth and the things of it; and thereupon argues in you a very mean, abject spirit. While you can take no pleasure (or do take so little) in God, is there nothing else wherein you take pleasure! And what is it? God hath in this matter no other rival than this world. It is its friendship that is enmity to him; (Jam. 4. 4.) something or other of it, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life prevails far, while the love of the Father hath so little place in you. (1, John

2. 16.) Whither are you sunk? into how low and vile a temper of spirit, when you can take pleasure in so base things, rather than in the blessed God; and quit so high and pure delights for mire and dirt? What hath thus carnalized your minds that you savour only the things of the flesh, and divine things are tasteless and without relish? Nor are you to think more favourably of your case, if you take little actual complacency in the world also; probably it is because you have little of it to delight in; it may be you are more acquainted with the cares of it than the delights; or your desire after it is much larger than your possession. It is all one for that. But what are your hearts most apt to delight in? or, what is most agreeable to your temper? It is the same thing, what earthly affection predominates in you, while the temper of your spirit is earthly; and it is thereby held off from God. Your not having actual earthly delights to put in the balance against heavenly, is only by accident. But all your cares, desires and hopes of that vile kind, would turn into as vile delights, if you had your wills. In the mean time, you are the more excuseless, and your sin is the grosser, that even the cares and troubles of this world are of more value with you than delight in God. How far are you from that temper, Whom have I in heaven but thee, and whom do I desire on earth besides thee? (Psal. 73. 25.)

[4.] And how sad an argument is it, of downright aversion and disaffectedness to God, in a great degree at least yet remaining! Whence can your not delighting in him proceed, but from this, as its most immediate cause? What could hinder you, if your heart were inclined? Are you not astonished to behold this as the state of your case, that you delight not in him, because your heart is against it; that is, from flat enmity. And what doth more naturally import enmity to any thing than to turn off from it, as not being able to take pleasure in it. So God expresses his detestation of apostates, If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. (Heb. 10, 38.) And his contempt of Jechoniah is signified by the like manner of speaking. Do you not tremble to think that this should be the temper of your spirit towards God, and that your estimate of him, as if he were a despised broken idol, and as mean a thing, as a vessel wherein is no pleasure? (Jer. 22. 28.) Reckon then thus with yourself. As your case stands, and things do lie between God and you, your little delight in God can have no more favourable account given of it, nor be resolved into any gentler or milder cause than enmity. And if this seem to you not to be a cause, but to be coincident; and fall in with it, so much the worse. By how much less this enmity hath of antecedency to your neglect, or the more it seems the same

with it, so much the more it discovers the evil of the thing itself. For by what worse name can we call any thing than enmity to God? But we speak of your habitual temper, as that, which is the cause of your actual neglect. And since you have a discovery of God as the most delectable object, cannot pretend there is a better, have leave and free permission to place your delight on him, ye are earnestly invited and pressed to it. It is plain nothing else is in your way to hinder you. Therefore you delight not in him, because your heart only is averse.

(3.) We also might insist further to shew the evils that ensue and follow upon this neglect. Such I mean, as do not follow casually and by accident, but which have a very inward connexion with it, and are its most natural consequents; being someway caused by it, or which it doth very directly tend to beget. And yet these we need not be solicitously curious to distinguish, as things of a kind altogether diverse from those last mentioned under the foregoing head. For it is very apparent, the same things may both cause little delight in God, and be caused thereby; as a person may therefore not delight in God because he knows him not, and may therefore be the less apt to entertain the knowledge of him, because he hath no delight in him. And the case is the same as to the other things spoken of as causes of this omission, that is, that it and they may be mutual causes of one another. But it however equally serves the design of aggravating the evil of not taking frequent actual delight in God, that hereby sin grows, whether in the same or in different kinds. There is still an increase of sin, though but of the same sort that was in being before. You ought to consider then, as you take so little delight in God from that very bad cause, that you have not entertained the right knowledge of him, when you had so great opportunity to get much of it, which makes your matter very ill; do you not also find that by your withholding yourselves from delighting in him, you have still less disposition to seek his more inward acquaintance? And doth not that make your matter much worse? If you already know somewhat of him, you yet know but in part; your object is infinite, and this knowledge so excellent, that you cannot fully attain to it, there is still more to be known.

Now therefore if you did delight much in God, would you not be pressing hard after him? (Psal. 63. 8.) would you not be following on to know him? (Hos. 6. 3.) And then would his goings forth be prepared before you as the morning, and he would be still visiting you with fresh and increasing light; whereupon your pleasure would be renewed and increased by every fresh view, and consequently your progress would be from sight to sight, and from pleasure to pleasure; whereas now this wheel stands till, or

you are going back into darkness and desolation. Have you not much the more to answer for upon this account? The like may be said as to the rest. The irrectitude and great faultiness of your thoughts of God, though that contribute not a little to your not delighting in him, yet also if you did delight in him more, would not your thoughts of him be more deeply serious, more highly raised? Would you not be very unapt to take up injurious hard thoughts of him? Would not his thoughts (once become precious to you, (Psal. 139. 17.) be also numerous or innumerable rather, as the sands of the sea shore? Would not your earthly temper, your strangeness and averseness to him, vanish and wear off, if you were more exercised in actual delightful converses with him? Therefore the permanency and increase of those mentioned evils, and that they have got such settled rooting in you, is all to be charged upon your not applying yourselves to more frequent actual delight in God. Besides what may further follow hereupon, the languishment and decays of your inward man; the difficulty you find to trust in God, when you are reduced to straits, (as who would commit his concernments to one he doth not love?) your impatience of adverse and cross emergencies, that may often befall to you; your aptnes to vexation or despondency; the easy victory a temptation hath over you, (as surely he is sooner drawn away from God, or into sin against him, who delights not in him;) your less usefulness in your place and station; your want of courage, resolution, zeal for God, (which are best maintained by delight and the relishes of a sweet complacency taken in him) your sluggishness in a course of well doing: the sense of a toilsome, heavy labour in religion, that it begets you weariness without rest, whence you rather affect a rest from it, than in it and by it;) and lastly, your continual bondage by the fear of death, which one would not dread, apprehending it only a removal into his presence in whom I delight. All these things (which might have been distinctly insisted on, and more expressly accommodated to the present purpose, but that I would not be over-tedious, and that somewhere else some or other of them may fall again in our way) do bring in great and weighty additions to the evil and guiltiness of this sin, and much tend to lay load upon it, to fill up its measure, even unto pressing down and running over. For how just is it, to impute to it what it naturally causes, and lay its own impure and viperous births at its own door?

And though this discourse hath been drawn out to a greater length than was intended, it will not be lost labour, if by all that hath been said, any that fear God shall be brought to apprehend more of the odiousness of this sin; and the self in-

dulgent thought be banished far from them, that this is either an indifferent matter, or at least (if it be somewhat a careless) it is one of their more harmless inadvertencies and omissions. Which good effect, if through the blessing of God it may accomplish, there will be the less need unto such to read on, but take their nearer way to the immediate present practice of this great duty, and because also it is to be hoped, that the evil of this neglect once apprehended, will prompt and quicken serious and considering persons to set upon the enjoined duty; it will be the less necessary to enlarge much in that other kind of discourse which we are now come to; namely of invitation to this holy exercise.

CHAP. IV.

We pass on to the next thing proposed, which is to say something, *Secondly*, By way of invitation to this duty: addressed, 1. To those who are less disposed to it. 2. To those who are more disposed, or in a nearer capacity, yet are grown strange. 3. To those who are desirous of direction how to proceed in this holy exercise.

HAVING as proposed in the first place expostulated with those who are averse to this duty, and with those also who are defective in it, we come,

Secondly, To say something by way of invitation thereunto. Wherein yet we have reason to fear it may be too needful to place some part of our present labour. For though in matters of an infinitely inferior nature and concernment, any practice is readily undertaken that is once represented reasonable and gainful; in such a business as this, a hundred difficulties are imagined; we stand as persons that cannot find their hands; and all the question is, (even if there be some inclination to it, or conviction at least it should be done,) but how shall we go about it? We are apt to grope as in the dark, even at noon-day, and cannot find the door or way that leads into a practice wherein there is so much both of pleasantness and duty. Therefore as the case is, the invitation to this exercise ought, if it were possible, to be a kind of manuduction; and it is needful we be not only called and pressed, but even led into it. This

then we are to endeavour, the giving of some plain prescriptions that may put us into an easy and direct way of falling expediently upon this delightful work. And here it must be considered, that all (as hath been said) are not in an equal disposition to it. Some are more averse, others less, but all too much; therefore are we to begin as low as their case may require, who are less disposed; and so proceeding on in our course, somewhat may fall in more suitable to them who are in some disposition to it, but do yet need (as who do not?) some help and furtherance in order thereto.

1. Our invitation is addressed to those who are less disposed to this duty. Unto whom we say therefore,

(1). It is necessary, that you do deliberately and resolvedly design the thing itself. Propose to yourselves delighting in God as a business unto which you will designedly and with steadfast purpose apply your whole soul. Content not yourselves with light roving thoughts about it, which many have about divers matters which they never think fit to engage themselves in. Determine the matter fully in your own heart, and say, "Many projects I have tried in my time, sundry things I have turned my mind unto, to little purpose, I will now see what there is of delight to be found in God. The sloth and aversion of a backward heart must be overcome by resolution; and that resolution be well-weighed, deliberately taken up, deeply fixed, that it may last and overcome. And why should you not be resolved in this point? Is this a matter always to be waved? Know you another way to be happy? Are you yet to learn, that a reasonable soul needs the fulness of God to make it happy, and that there is no other God but one? Can there be any dispute or doubt in the case, when there is but one thing to be done, besides yielding one's self to be miserable for ever? And what need of that, while yet there is one way to avoid it? Surely, that there is but one, is better than if there were a thousand. You need not now be long in choosing; nor do you need to deliberate, because of any doubt in the case, but that you may more fully comprehend in your own thoughts that there is none, and that your resolutions may hereupon grow the more peremptory, and secure from the danger of any change.

To talk of any difficulty in the matter, is a strange impertinency; for who would oppose difficulty to necessity? or allege the thing is hard which must be done? Or must it be done, and never be attempted? or attempted, and not be resolved upon? You have nothing to do to read further, who will not digest this first counsel, and here settle your resolution, "I will apply myself to a course of delight in God." If this appear

not reasonable to you, despair that any thing will that follows. It is foolish trifling, to look upon such writings that profess their design, and have it in their fronts, that they are meant for helps unto Christian practice, only with a humour of seeing what a man can say. And if ever you will be in earnest, you must return to this point; and will but waste time to no purpose, if you will not now set down your resolution; that is, that you will seek a happiness for your soul, (too long already neglected!) a happiness that may satisfy and last; and (where only it is to be found) in the blessed God; and in him by setting yourselves to delight in him; since nothing can make you happy wherein you delight not. And that you will make use of what you further read, according as you find it conducing, and apt to serve your purpose herein. Then next,

(2.) Consider your present state Godward. Must you, do you see you must come to this point, of having your delight in God? In what posture then are your affairs towards him? How do things stand between him and you? You do well know, you were unacceptable to him, and his enemy; and that his justice and holy nature obliged him to hold you as such, though he never gave you ground to think him implacable. Can you delight in an enemy? who (as matters in that case stand) must be apprehended ready to avenge himself on you, and as having whet his glittering sword, and made the arrow ready upon the string, directed against your very heart? Apprehend this to have been your case, and most deservedly, that you were an impure, hateful wretch, deformed and loathsome, one that could yield the holy God no matter of delight, full of enmity and contrariety to him, and in whom he could not but find much cause of most just hatred. Remember you were one of his revolted creatures, under his most deserved wrath and curse. Know at how vast a distance you were from delighting in him, or a state that could admit of it. Consider, is this still your case? And do not rashly think it altered; or that you have nothing to do, but out of hand to rush upon the business of delighting in God.

(3.) Yet do not think it unalterable. Do not conclude it as a determined and undoubted thing, that matters can never be taken up between God and you, or you become suitable and acceptable to him. Look not upon your vile wicked heart as unalterably wicked; nor upon him therefore as an irreconcilable enemy. Account he waits for your turning to him, as being inclined to friendship with you. Otherwise, would vengeance have suffered you so long to live? Have you not been long at his mercy? Hath he not spared you, when it was in his power to crush you at pleasure? Do not think therefore (what you

have no pretence for) that he hath a destructive design upon you, and will accept of no atonement.

(4.) Acquaint yourself with the way and terms upon which his gospel declares him reconcilable ; that is, that he will never be reconciled to you while you remain wicked, nor for your own sake, become you never so good : that a more costly sacrifice than you can either procure or be, must expiate your guilt, and make your peace. If this matter could have been effected in a less expensive way, the Son of God had not (as you know he was) been designed himself, and made that sacrifice ; nor a work have been undertaken by him that might as well have been done by common hands. And since he submitted and undertook as he did, reckon with yourself, how highly just it is, that the entire honour of so merciful condescension, and so great a performance, be wholly ascribed to him. But withal know, he shed his blood, not in kindness to your sin, but to you : and that his design was at once to procure the death of that, and your life ; that you need his Spirit as well as his blood ; *that* to recommend and reconcile you to his holiness, as well as *this* to his vindictive justice ; that as you expect ever to experience and taste the delights of that communion, whereinto he calls you, you must not only have the “ blood of Christ to cleanse you from all sin,” but must also “ walk in the light, as he is in the light ;” that an entire resignation, a betrusting and subjecting of yourself to the mercy and governing power of the Redeemer, is necessary to the setting of things right between God and you ; in whom only you may both accept God and be accepted of him ; that he must be the centre of union between God and you ; and that union the ground of all delightful intercourse.

(5.) Make request to him, that he would draw you into that union with his Son ; unto whom none can come, but who are drawn by himself. (Joh. 6.44) Do not dream and slumber in this business ; but know your *All* depends on it. Consider the exigency of your case. Do you find your heart sluggish and indisposed to any such transaction with God and Christ ? Doth it decline and draw back ? Know, it herein doth but act its own nature, and do as it is, or like itself. Therefore stir up yourself, to take hold of his strength ; (Isa. 27. 5.) in which way, if you have mind to be at peace, you shall make peace. Cry to him earnestly, “ Draw a poor wretch out of darkness and death, that must otherwise be at eternal distance from thee, and be miserable for ever. Join me to him who will bring me to thee, and make me one for ever with thee.” Hereupon,

(6.) Accepting Jesus Christ as thy Saviour and thy Lord ; accept in him, with all humble reverence, thankfulness and ad-

miration of divine mercy and goodness, the blessed God to be thy God; surrendering and yielding up thyself entirely and fully to be his for ever. Do this unfeignedly, and with great solemnity; and let it be to thee for an everlasting memorial! record it as a memorable day, wherein thou didst go out of thyself, and all finite, narrow, limited good, and pass into union with the eternal, immense, incomprehensible and all comprehending good, and enter upon it as thine own! And what! wilt thou delight in a God that is not thine? Canst thou be content to look wistly on him, as one unrelated and a stranger? Apprehend (and bless God that this is the state of the case) that in this way he offers himself most freely to thee. It were astonishing to think of purchasing so great a good! the matter were not to be offered at. But how transporting is it, that nothing but acceptance and resignation should be needful to make thee one with the great God, and make his fulness thine! Therefore make haste to do this, and be not hasty in doing it. Defer not, but do it with great seriousness, deliberation and fulness of consent; considering you are about to enter into an everlasting covenant not to be forgotten; and doing a thing never to be again undone. Now if herein your heart be sincere and there be a real and vital exercise of your very soul in this transaction with God in Christ, so as that you truly take him for your God, preferring him in your estimation and choice above all things, and giving up yourself absolutely and without reservation to him as his, to be governed and disposed of by him in all things at his pleasure; you are hereby brought into that state that doth admit of delighting in him. And what remains to be said, will concern you,

2. As persons in a nearer capacity, and who have a kind of fundamental aptitude and disposedness of heart unto this spiritual work; and will therefore be directed to you, considered according to that supposition. Only it is withal to be considered, in the case of many such, that they were arrived hither long ago, and been (as was before supposed) hereupon somewhat exercised and versed in this piece of holy practice, have had many pleasant turns with God, and tasted often the delights of his converse: but have discontinued their course, and are grown strange to him who was their delight; have suffered themselves by insensible degrees to be drawn and tempted away from him; or there hath been some grosser and more violent rupture, by which they have broken themselves off. It will be requisite to say somewhat more peculiar to these, for the reducing of them again even to this unitive point. After which, what shall ensue, may in common concern them, and all that are arrived so far, together. For such therefore whose

case this is, it will surely both become and concern you to take this course :

(1.) Make a stand, and bethink yourselves ; Can you justify your carriage towards him whom you have taken to be your God? Can you approve your own way? Was this all that you obliged yourselves unto in the day of your solemn treaty with him; only to take on you the name of a relation to him, and so (excepting that you would now and then compliment him in some piece of external heartless homage) take leave till you meet again with him in another world? And that in the mean time this present world, or your carnal self (to be gratified and served out of it) should really be your God, and he only bear the name? Was this indeed your meaning? or if it was, did you deal sincerely in that treaty? or can you think it was his meaning, and that he would expect no more from you? Can you allow yourselves so to interpret his covenant, and give this as the summary account of the tenour of it? How would you then expound it to nothing, and make a mere trifle of it, and make your religion a fitter service for an inanimate, senseless idol, than the living and true God! Do you not yet know what the name of God imports? Can he be a God to you that is not acknowledged by you as your very best, the universal, and absolutely all-comprehending good? But if you apprehend there was really more in the matter; and that you have been altogether faulty in this thing. Then,

(2.) Represent to yourselves as fully as you can the greatness of the fault. What have you made God an unnecessary thing to you, while the creature, your very idols, lying vanities, were thought necessary? And these were the things upon which you thought fit to set your hearts! which you have loved, which you have served, after which you have walked, which you have sought, and whom you have worshiped! (Jer. 8. 2.) The heap of expressions wherewith it seemed meet to the Spirit of God to set out the profuse lavishness of idolatrous affection. Think how monstrous this is! Revolve in your own minds the several aggravations of your sinful neglect before mentioned: and labour to feel the weight of them upon your own spirits. Think what time you have lost from pleasant delightful walking with God! what damage you have done yourselves! how far you might have attained! how much you are cast behind in your preparations for a blessed eternity! what wrong you have done him, whom you took for the God of your life, to whom you vowed your hearts and souls! how little kindly and truly you have dealt with him!

(3.) Return to him with weeping and supplication. Open yourselves freely to him. Let him hear you bemoaning your-

selves, pour out your souls to him, in large acknowledgments and confessions of your guiltiness, which, while you keep silence, will consume your bones and waste you to nothing. "Remember whence you are fallen, and repent and do your first works." Till then, he hath this against you, that you have left your first love. And consider, is it not a grievous thing to you? Doth it not pain your hearts, that your Lord and Redeemer should have somewhat against you, as it were laid up, noted, and put on record, kept in store, and as himself remarkably expresses it, sealed up among his treasures; (Deut. 32. 34) somewhat that sticks with him, and which he bears in mind, and hath lying in his heart against you? Is this a small thing with you? when that must be apprehended to be his sense (and suppose him saying to you) I remember the kindness of thy youth the love of thine espousals. Jer. 2. 2.) And now since those former days, "What iniquity hast thou found in me, that thou art gone far from me, and hast walked after vanity, and art become vain?" How confounding a thing were it, if he should say, as some-time to others in a case resembling yours (and why should you not take it as equally belonging to you?) O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me: (Mic. 6. 3.) And while the case admits such sharp and cutting rebuke, and that it is the matter of rebuke (not rebuke itself abstracted from the matter, that is if it were causless) that should smart or wound; how becoming is it, and suitable to the ease, to cast down a wounded, bleeding heart before the Lord, and be abased in the dust at the foot stool of his mercy seat! And though your sin be great and heinous;

(4.) Yet apprehend you are before a mercy-seat; that "there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared." How would this apprehension promote the humiliation which the case requires! A sullen despondency that excludes hope of mercy hardens the heart; continues the sinful, comfortless distance. Therefore apply yourselves to him; seek his pardon in the blood of the Redeemer; know you need it, and that it is only upon such terms to be obtained. Yet also take heed lest any diminishing thoughts of the evil of your sin return, and make you neglect the thing, or wave the known stated way of remission. We are apt to look upon crimes whereby men are immediately offended, and which therefore are of worse reputation among men, as robbery, murder, &c. as very horrid. This is a matter that lies immediately between Spirit and spirit; the God of the spirits of all flesh and your spirit. You have had a solemn transaction with him, and have dealt falsely. And though the matter were secret between God and you, is it the less evil in it-

self for that? If you had dealt unworthily, and used base treachery towards a friend, in a matter only known to him and yourself, would you not when you have reflected, blush to see his face, till matters be composed betwixt you? And is there another way of having them composed, and of restoring delightful friendly converse, than by your seeking his pardon, and his granting it? Could you have the confidence to put yourself upon conversing with him as at former times, without such a preface? or were it not great immodesty and impudence to offer at it? But that when this hath been the case between the blessed God and you, and you now come with deep resentments, and serious unfeigned acknowledgments of your most offensive neglects of him, to seek forgiveness at his hand, he should be easy and facile to forgive; how should this melt you down before him! And this is what his own word obliges you to apprehend and believe of him. These words he hath required to be proclaimed to you; Return you backsliding ones, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever (Jer. 3. 12.) Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree (your offence hath been idolatry as well as theirs); turn, O backsliding children saith the Lord; for I am married unto you. (ver. 13.)

What heart would not break and bleed at this overture! You can be recovered to no capacity of delighting in God, as heretofore, till you sensibly feel the need of great forgiveness, and have a disposition of heart inwardly to relish the sweetness and pleasantness of it; till those words do agree with the sense of your hearts, and you can (as in a transport) cry out, O the blessedness of the man (as the expression imports) whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered! &c. (Psal. 32. 1. And now when you are come thus far, if the temper of your spirit be right even in this, there will be in conjunction with the desire, hope and value of forgiveness, at least an equal dread of such future strangenesses and breaches between God and you; and that will be very natural to you, which I next add as further advice;

(5.) Most earnestly seek and crave a better and more fixed temper of spirit; more fully determined and bent Godward; that your heart may be directed into the love of God; that the spirit of love, power, and a sound mind may bear rule in you (2. Thes. 3. 5.) Be intent upon the recovery of that healthy soundness, which wheresoever it hath place, will with a certain steady power, and a strong inclining bent of love, carry your heart toward God. And take heed lest you be satisfied in the expectation and hope of forgiveness, as to your former neglects

of God without this; there is a manifest prejudice daily accruing to the Christian name and profession, by the unequal estimation which that part of the doctrine of Christ hath, that concerns the work of his Spirit upon us, regeneration, the new creature, repentance, and a holy life; in comparison of that which concerns his performances and acquisitions for us, expiation of sin, satisfaction of divine justice, forgiveness and acceptance with God. How sweet, ravishing, transporting, doctrines, and how pure gospel are these latter accounted by many, who esteem the former cold, sapless, unpleasant notions! Thence comes Christian religion to look with so distorted a face and aspect, as if it suffered a convulsion, that hath altered and disguised it unto that degree, that it is hardly to be known; being made to seem as if it imported only a design to rescue some persons from divine wrath and justice, without ever giving them that disposition of heart which is necessary both to their serving of God and their blessedness in him. This is not to be imputed so much to the misrepresentation made of it by them, whose business it hath been to instruct others, (though of them too many may have been very faulty in almost suppressing or insisting less, or very little, upon doctrines of the former strain, while the stream of their discourses hath mostly run upon the other;) for it must be acknowledged, that by very many in our age, the absolute necessity of the great heart change hath been both most clearly represented, and as urgently pressed as perhaps in most that have gone before. But the matter is plainly to be most attributed to that depravedness of man's nature, whence there is a most unequal and partial reception of the truth of God; and that which seems (taken apart by itself) to import more of indulgence to sinners is readily caught at, that which more directly strikes at the very root of sin, is let pass as if it had never been spoken. And so men make up to themselves a gospel of this tenour and import, that let the temper of their spirits towards God be what it will, if they rely and rest upon the righteousness of Christ, God will be reconciled to them. And they think they need take no further care. But whatever is said in the gospel of Christ besides, of the necessity of being born of God, of partaking a divine nature, of putting off the old man, and putting on the new &c. is looked upon as if it had been thrown in by chance, and did signify nothing. And the other, without this, is thought to be pure gospel; as if these were impertinent additions and falsifications. But will not such men understand that the detracting of any thing from the instrument or testament of a man, as well as adding thereto, makes it another thing, and none of his act or deed? And so that their pure gospel, as they call it, is another gospel,

as they call it, is another gospel, nay (because there cannot be another) no gospel? Or will they not understand, how simply impossible it is, in the very nature of the thing, that the end should be attained, of bringing men to blessedness, (that is, to a delightful rest in God,) without their having a new nature, a heart inclined and bent toward God, wrought to a conformity and agreement with God's own holy nature and will, unto which the offer and hope of forgiveness by the blood of Christ is designed to win and form them? For can men be happy in him in whom they take no delight? or delight in him to whom the very temper of their spirits is habitually unsuitable and repugnant? How plain are things to them that are not resolved not to see!

Wherefore beware of contenting yourselves with the mere hope, that upon your having admitted a conviction, and felt some regret in your spirits for former strangeness to God, you shall be pardoned; so as thereupon never to design a redress, but run on the same course as before: and when you have hereby contracted a new score, and the load of your guilt begins to be sensibly heavy upon you, then betake yourselves to God for a new pardon. What presumptuous trifling is this with the Lord of heaven and earth! And what do you mean by it, or seem to expect? Is it not, that God should instead of remitting your sin to you remit your duty; cancel the obligation of that very supreme, universal, fundamental law of nature itself, and excuse you quite from ever loving, delighting in him, or setting your heart upon him at all? Think not forgiveness alone then will serve your turn; it will signify as much as a pardon will do to a malefactor just ready to die of a mortal disease. He, poor man! as much needs a skilful physieian, as a merciful prince; and so do you. And your matter is nothing the worse (sure) that the person of each is sustained by the same Jesus, and that both parts can be performed by the same hand. And know, that a restored rectitude of spirit Godward, a renewed healthiness and soundness of heart, with your actual delighting in God thereupon in your future course, stands in nearer and more immediate connexion with your final, perfect, delightful rest and blessedness in him, than your being perpetually forgiven the not doing of it; if this were supposed possible without that. But it is not indeed supposable, for if God would not therefore hereafter banish you his presence (as now he does not) you would for ever banish yourselves, as now you do.

(6.) Let there be a solemn recognition and renewal of your engagement and the devoting of yourself to God. Again take hold of his covenant, and see that it take faster hold of you. Do it as if you had never done it, as if you were now to begin with him;

only that your own sin and his grace ought now to appear greater in your eyes; that more odious, that you have added treachery to disaffection; this more glorious and admirable, that yet he hath left open to you a door of hope, and that there is place for repentance, and that he is ready to treat with you again on a new score. With what humility, shame, fear and trembling, distrust of yourself, resolution of future more diligent circumspection and observation of your own spirit, trust and dependence on his, ought this transaction now to be managed with the holy God! And when you are thus returned into the way and course of your duty; then may what follows concern you in common with all others, that (being entered) desire direction how to proceed and improve in this holy exercise of delighting in God. For there are many such as have been somewhat practised in this course, and being convinced of the equity and excellency of it, desire to make progress therein, who yet find a difficulty in it; it goes not easily with them, they are easily diverted and can hardly hold on in it.

3. Therefore somewhat is intended to be said to those who are desirous of direction how to proceed in this holy exercise, that possibly may, through the Lord's blessing be some use, as to that (too common) case.

(1.) Let it be your great study and endeavour to get a temper of mind actually, ordinarily and more entirely spiritual. We suppose the implantation of some holy and spiritual principles in you already; but that is not enough. For as a mind wholly carnal, only savours the things of the flesh, will perpetually withdraw and recoil, if you offer it any thing tending Godward; so, in whatsoever degree it is carnal, it will do thus in a proportionable degree. If you say, let me now apply myself to some delightful intercourse with God, while an earthly tincture is fresh with you, and it was some carnal thing that made the last impression upon your spirit, many excuses will be found out, there will be manifold diversions: it will never be thought reasonable. Many other things will be judged necessary to be minded first. Wherefore fence against the addictedness of your hearts to those other things. And whereas, through the great advantages that sensible things have upon your senses and imagination, you are in continual danger to be over-borne and heid off from God; this you must earnestly intend, to watch and fortify those inlets, and not to give away your souls to sense and the things of sense. Trust not your senses and the things of sense. Trust not your senses and their objects to parly, but under strict inspection. Never suffer that they should let in upon you what is suitable and grateful to them at their own pleasure.

You need to have somewhat else than sense, even a spirit of might and power, that may countermand and over-rule in every of those ports, and turn the battle in the gate. Those used to be the places of most strength; and surely here there needs most. Your case and present state cannot admit that you securely give up yourselves to unmixed unsollicitous delight even in the best object. If you intermit care and vigilancy, you will soon have such things come in upon you, as will make a worse mixture in your delight than they can do, and corrupt and spoil all. Your delight were better to be mixed with holy care, than with sinful vanity; *that* tends to preserve, *this* utterly to destroy it. Your state is that of conflict and warfare. You must be content with such spiritual delight, as will consist with this state. In a time of war and danger, when a city is beset with a surrounding enemy, and all the inhabitants are to be intent upon common safety, their case will not admit, that they should entirely indulge themselves to ease and pleasure. And surely it is better to bear the inconvenience of watching and guarding themselves, and enjoy the comforts which a rational probability of safety by such means will allow them, than merely with the mad hope of procuring themselves an opportunity and vacancy for freer delights, to throw open their gates, and permit themselves and all their delectable things to the rapine and spoil of a merciless enemy. Understand this to be your case. Therefore strictly guard all the avenues of your inward man. It is better resist *there* and combat your enemy, than *within* your walls; who is more easily kept than driven out. *There* cause every occasion and object (even that importunes and pretends business to you) to make a stand, and diligently examine the errand. Let also for this purpose a spirit of wisdom and judgment reside here, (the gate was wont to be the place of counsel and judgment as well as strength) that may prudently consider what is to be entertained and what not; and determine and do accordingly. But if you will have no rule over your own spirit, but let it be as a city broken down and without walls. (Prov. 25. 28.) If you will live careless and at ease, and think in this way to have delight in God, your delight will soon find other objects, and grow like that of the swine wallowing in the mire, become sensual, impure, and at length turn all to gall and wormwood.

It may be you have known some of much pretence to piety, that would allow themselves the liberty of being otherwise very pleasant in their usual conversation; by which you may imagine delight in God (which you cannot suppose such persons unacquainted with) may fairly consist with another sort of delight. Nor indeed is it to be doubted but it may; for the rules and measures which the holy God hath set us import no such rigo-

rous severity, nor do confine us to so very narrow bounds, but that there is scope and latitude enough left unto the satisfaction of sober desires and inclinations that are of a meaner kind. He that hath adjoined the inferior faculties we find in ourselves to our natures, and at first created a terrestrial paradise for innocent man, never intended to forbid the gratification of those faculties, nor hath given us any reason to doubt but that the lower delights that are suitable to them might be innocently entertained: nay, and the very rules themselves of temperance and sobriety, which he hath given us, for the guiding and governing of sensitive desires, do plainly imply, that they are permitted. For that which ought not to be, is not to be regulated, but destroyed. But then, whereas such rules do so limit the inclinations and functions of the low animal life, as that they may be consistent with our end, and subservient to it; how perverse and wicked an indulgence to them were it, to oppose them at once, both to the authority of him that set us those rules, and (therein) to our very end itself! That delectation in the things of this lower world, which is not by the divine law forbidden and declared evil, either in itself, or by the undue measure, season, or other circumstances thereof, is abundantly sufficient for our entertainment, and the gratification of this grosser part, while we are in this our earthly pilgrimage: and so much can never hurt us, nor hinder our higher delights. God hath fenced and hedged them in for us (as a garden enclosed) by his own rules and laws set about them; so that we cannot prejudice or impair them, but by breaking through his enclosure. Our great care and study therefore must be, to repress and mortify all earthly and sensual inclinations, unto that degree as till they be reduced to a conformity and agreement with his rules and measures; unto which they who have no regard, and do yet pretend highly to spirituality, and delight in God, it is apparently nothing else but mere hollow pretence; they only put on a good face, and make a fair shew; look big, and speak great swelling words of vanity, as they must be called, while their hearts taste nothing of what their tongues utter. Spiritual delight and joy is a severe thing, separated from vain and unbecoming levities, as well as from all earthly impurities; and only grows and flourishes in a soul that is dead to this world and alive to God through Jesus Christ.

See then to the usual temper of your spirit; and do not think it enough, that you hope the great renewing change did sometime pass upon it; and that therefore your case is good and safe, and you may now take your ease and liberty: but be intent upon this, to get into a confirmed growing spirituality, and that

you may find your are in your ordinary course after the Spirit; then will you savour the things of the Spirit; (Rom. 8. 5.) and then especially will the blessed God himself become your great delight, and your exceeding joy. (Psal. 43.4) Retire yourself from this world, draw off your mind and heart. This is God's great rival. The friendship of this world is enmity to him, (Jam. 4. 4.) which is elsewhere said of the carnal mind; (Rom. 8. 7.) that is indeed the same thing, namely, a mind that is overfriendly affected towards this world, or not chastely; wherefore also in that forementioned scripture, they that are supposed and suspected to have made themselves, in that undue sense, friends of this world, are bespoken under the names of adulterers and adulteresses. You must cast off all other lovers, if you intend delighting in God. Get up then into the higher region where you may be out of the danger of having your spirit ingulphed, and as it were, sucked up of the spirit of this world; or of being subject to its debasing, stupifying influence. Bear yourself as the inhabitant of another country. Make this your mark and scope, that the temper of your spirit may be such, that the secret of the divine presence may become to you as your very element, wherein you can most freely breathe and live, and be most at ease; and out of which you may perceive you cannot enjoy yourself; and that whatever tends to withdraw you from him, any extravagant motion, the beginnings of the excursion, or the least departing step, may be sensibly painful and grievous to you. And do not look upon it as a hopeless thing you should ever come to this; some have come to it; One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. (Psal. 27. 4.)

Nor was this a transient fit only with the Psalmist, but we find him frequently speaking the same sense, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, (Psal. 23. 6.) and again we have the like strains; How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord God of hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: blessed are they that dwell in thy house, &c. (Psal. 84. 1-4.) And what was this house more to him than another house, save that here he reckoned upon enjoying the divine presence? So that here was a heart no naturalized to this presence, as to affect an abode in it, and that he might lead his life with God, and dwell with him all his days: he could not be content with giving a visit now and then. And why should this temper of spirit in the clearer light of the gospel be

looked upon as an unattainable thing? A lazy despondency, and the mean conceit, that it is modest not to aim so high, starves religion, and stifles all truly noble and generous desires. Let this then be the thing designed with you, and constantly pursue and drive the design, that you may get into this disposition of spirit towards God. His Spirit will not be restrained, if it be duly sought, and dutifully complied with and obeyed; if you carefully reserve yourself for him, as one whom he hath set apart for himself. (Psal. 4. 4.) If you will be entirely his, and keep your distance, using a holy chaste reservedness as to other things; that is, such things as any way tend to indispose your spirit towards him, or render it less suitable to his converse, he will be no stranger to you. And that it may be more suitable and fit for him, you should habituate and accustom yourself to converse in the general with spiritual things. You will be as the things are you converse most with; they will leave their stamp and impress on you; wandering after vanity, you will become vain; minding earthly things, you will become earthly. Accordingly, being much taken up with spiritual things, you will bear their image, and become spiritual.

Think how unworthy it is, since you have faculties (and those now refined and improved by divine light and grace) that are capable of being employed about so much higher objects than those of sense, that you should yield to a confinement, in so great part, to so low and mean things; whence it is, that when you should mind things of a higher nature, it is a strange work with you, and those things seem odd and uncouth to you, and are all with you as mere shadow and darkness, that you should be most familiar with. Urge on your spirit; make it enter into the invisible world. May you not be assured, if you will use your understanding, that there are things you never saw, that are unspeakably more excellent and glorious than any thing you have seen, or than can be seen by eyes of flesh? Why should your mind and thoughts be limited within the narrow bounds of this sublunary world; so small and minute, and (by the apostacy and sin of man) so abject and deformed a part of God's creation? Do not bind down your spirit to the consideration and view of the affairs and concernments only of this region of sin and wretchedness; where few things fall under your notice, that can be a comfortable (or so greatly edifying and instructive a) prospect to a serious spirit. But consider, that as certainly as you behold with your eyes the wickedness and miseries of this forlorn world, that hath forsaken God, and is in great part forsaken of him; so certainly, there is a vastly greater world than this, of glorious and innocent creatures, that stand in direct and dutiful subordination to their common

Maker and Lord ; loving, and beloved of him ; delighting to do his will, and solacing themselves perpetually in his blessed presence, and in the mutual love, communion and felicity of one another. Unto which happy number (or innumerable company rather as they are called) the Redeemer is daily adjoining such as he recovers and translates out of the ruins and desolation of this miserable, accursed part of the universe.

Reckon yourself as someway appertaining to that blessed society. Mind the affairs thereof as those of your own country, and that properly belong to you. When we are taught to pray, "That the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven," can it be supposed, it ought to be a strange thing to our thoughts, how affairs go there ? Surely faith and holy reason, well used, would furnish us with regular and warrantable notions enough of the state of things above, that we should not need to carry it as persons that have no concern therein ; or, when we are required to be as strangers on earth, that we should make ourselves such to heaven rather. Let your mind be much employed in considering the state of things between God and his creatures. Design a large field for your thoughts to spread themselves in, (and you will also find it a fruitful one ;) let them run backward and forward and expatiate on every side. Think how all things sprang from God, and among them man, that excellent part of this his lower creation ; what he was towards God, and what he is now become. Think of the admirable person, the glorious excellencies, the mighty design, the wonderful achievements and performances of the Redeemer ; and the blessed issue he will bring things to at length. Think of, and study much the nature, parts and accomplishments of the new creature ; get your mind well-instructed and furnished with apprehensions of the whole entire frame of that holy rectitude wherein the image of God upon renewed souls doth consist ; the several lovely ornaments of the hidden man of the heart, how it is framed and habited, when it is as it should be towards God and towards men. Cast about, and you will not want matter of spiritual employment and exercise for your minds and hearts ; nor have occasion if any expostulate with you, why you mind this earth and the things of sense so much, to say, you know not what else to think of ; you may sure find many things else. And if you would use your thoughts to such converse, and thus daily entertain yourself, in this way you may expect a spiritual frame to grow habitual to you ; and then would the rest of your business do itself. You would not need to be pressed and persuaded to delight in God, any more than to do the acts of nature, to eat, and drink, and move, yea and draw your breath.

(2.) Endeavour your knowledge or the conception you have

of God, may be more distinct and clear. For observe whether when you would apply yourself to delight in him, this be not the next, (or at least one) great obstruction after that of an indisposed, carnal heart, that though you would, and you know it is fit you should do so, you know not how to go about it; for you are at a loss, what or how to conceive of him. But is it fit it should be always thus? What ever learning and never arrive to this knowledge? It is most true, "we can never search out the Almighty unto perfection;" and it will always be but a little portion we shall know of that glorious incomprehensible Being. But since there is a knowledge of God, we are required to have our souls furnished with, and whercon eternal life depends, with all gracious dispositions of heart towards him, that are the beginnings of that life; certainly the whole compass of our duty and blessedness is not all laid upon an impossibility. And therefore, if we do not so far know as to love and delight in him above all things else, this must be through our own great default; and more to be imputed to our carelessness and contentedness to be ignorant, than that he is unknowable, or hath so reserved and shut up himself from us that we cannot know him. There are many things belonging to the Being of God which we are not concerned to know, and which it would be a vain and bold curiosity to pry into: but what is necessary to direct our practice, and tends to shew how we should be and carry ourselves towards him, is not (such hath been his gracious vouchsafement) impossible or difficult to be known. We may apprehend him to be the most excellent Being; and may descend to many particular excellencies, wherein we may easily apprehend him infinitely to surpass all other beings.

For we most certainly know, all things were of him, and therefore, that whatsoever excellency we can observe in creatures, must be eminently and in highest perfection in him, without the want of any thing, but what doth itself import weakness and imperfection; and hath it not been his errand and business into the world, who lay in his bosom to declare him? (Joh. 1. 18.) And hath not he, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person? (Heb. 1. 1. 2.) He hath been on earth the visible representation of God to men; the divine glory shone in him, the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. Was not that divine? Suppose we then, we had seen Christ in the flesh, and been the constant observers of his whole conversation on earth, (and though we have not seen it, we have the sufficient records

of his life and actions in our hands;) let us I say suppose him from day to day before our eyes, in all his meek, humble, lovely deportments among men; and withal in the beams of majesty that appeared through that veil wherein he was pleased to in-wrap himself. Observe him going to and fro, and every where doing good, scattering blessings wherever he went; with what compassion and tenderness he healed the sick, instructed the ignorant supplied and fed the hungry and necessitous; how he bare with the weak, forgave the injurious (even against his own life) and wept over secure and obstinate sinners; with what mighty power he cast out devils, raised the dead, commanded winds and seas, and they obeyed him; with what authority, zeal and conviction he contested against a hypocritical generation of hardened, impenitent, unbelieving wretches, casting flames of holy just displeasure in their faces, and threatening them with the damnation of hell. And now suppose the veil laid aside, and the lustre of all these excellencies shining forth, without the interposition of any obscuring cloud or shadow; and such a one is the blessed God. For this was the express image of his person; and as he himself tells us, they that have seen him have seen the Father. (Joh. 14. 9.) And do you not now see one to be delighted in?

But yet further. Can you not frame a notion of wisdom, goodness, justice, holiness, truth, power, with other known perfections, all concurring together in a Being purely spiritual (not obvious to our sense) and that was eternally and originally of himself, the Author and Original of all things, and who is therefore over all and in all, infinite and unchangeable in all the perfections before-mentioned? Surely such conceptions are not impossible to you? And this is he in whom you are to delight. Lift up then your minds above, your senses and all sensible things; use your understandings, whereby you are distinguished from brute creatures. Consider, this is he from whom you and all things sprang, and in whom your life is. Do you perceive life, wisdom, power, love in other things; these must all have some or other fountain. Other things have not these of themselves, for they are not of themselves, therefore they must derive and partake them from him; and thence it is evident, they must be in him in their highest excellency. Of this, your understandings, duly exercised, will render you as sure, as if you saw that infinite glory, in which all these meet, with your eyes; and will assure you, it is so much more excellent and glorious, for that it cannot be seen with your eyes. You see the external acts and expressions of these things from such creatures as you are. But life, wisdom, power, love, themselves are invisible things, which in themselves you cannot see; yet you are not the less

certain that there are such things. And do you not find, that the certain evidence you have, that these things meet in this or that creature, do render it lovely and delightful in your eyes? especially, if you have, or apprehend you may have nearest interest in such a creature? The blessed God not only hath these things in himself, but is these very things himself; therefore must be invisible, as they are. And because he not only hath them, but is them, therefore they are in him perfectly unchangeably and eternally, as being his very essence. Think then of a Being that is pure, original, substantial, life, wisdom, power, love; and how infinitely amiable and delectable should that ever blessed Being be unto you!

Converse with the word of God. Read his descriptions of himself; and do not content yourselves to have the words and expressions before your eyes, or in your mouths, that represent to you his nature and attributes; but make your pauses, and consider the things themselves signified by them; that is, when you read such passages of his own holy Book, as that which tells you his name, that "He is the Lord the Lord God, gracious and merciful, &c." Or that tell you "He is light, he is love, he is God only wise, he is the Almighty, God all-sufficient, he is all in all," and that the "Heavens, and heaven of heavens cannot contain him;" Or wherein you find him admired as "glorious in holiness;" or that say, "he is what he is," that "he is the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega, &c." Labour to fix the apprehension and true import of all such expressions deep in your mind; that you may have an entire and well-formed representation of him before you, unto which you may upon all occasions have recourse, and not be at a loss every time you are to apply yourselves to any converse with him, what or how to conceive of him. And because mere words, though they may furnish you with a more full and comprehensive notion of him, yet it may be not with so lively a one, or that you find so powerfully striking your heart, compare with that account his word gives you of him, the works which your eyes may daily behold, and which you are assured were wrought and done by him. To read or hear of his wisdom, power, goodness, &c. and then to have the visible effects within your constant view, that so fully correspond to what his word hath said of him, and demonstrate him to be what you were told he is; how mighty a confirmation doth this carry with it! You may behold some what of him, in every creature. All his works do not only represent, but even praise and commend him to you.

Above all, since he is only to be seen in his own light, pray earnestly and continually to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, that he would give you the spirit of wisdom

and revelation in the knowledge of him. (Eph. 1. 17.) From such as so desire to know him, he will not conceal himself. This is your more direct following on to know the Lord; in which case he hath said, you shall know, and that his going forth shall be prepared as the morning. (Hos. 6. 3.) By your craving looks, and the expecting posture of your waiting eye, you draw forth and invite his enlightening communications, which do but wait for an invitation. For it is most reasonable you should feel your want, and express your desire of what is so precious, before you find it. Hereby you put yourselves amidst the glorious beams of his vital pleasant light; or do open your souls to admit and let it in upon you. Who when he finds it is with you a desired thing and longed for, takes more pleasure in imparting, than you can pains in seeking, or pleasure in receiving it. Nor yet, when you have thus attained to some competent measure of the knowledge of God, are you to satisfy yourselves that now you are not altogether ignorant: but to employ your knowledge; which will be enforced in the following chapter.

CHAP. V.

- I. Invitation to those desirous of direction in this holy exercise continued. II. The last thing proposed in the head of contents, chap. III. which was to say something. *Thirdly*, By way of excitation to this duty. 1. The grace breathing in these words, "Delight thyself in the Lord." 2. The thing desired, "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." (1.) Spiritual good things. (2.) External, of an inferior kind so far satisfying of them.

I. **WE** proceed with the subject of invitation to those who are desirous of direction in this holy exercise and say to such;

(3.) Employ your knowledge in frequent and solemn thinking on him; which is one (and the next) end of that knowledge and a further great means to your delighting in him. Your knowledge of God signifies little to this purpose, or any other, if, as it gives you the advantage of having frequent actual thoughts of him, it be not used to this end. Not having this knowledge when you would set yourselves seriously to

think on God, you are lost in the dark, and know not which way to turn yourselves? And having it, you will be as much strangers to delight in him, if you let your knowledge lie bound up in dead and spiritless notion, and labour not to have it turned into active life and fervent love, by the agitation of your working thoughts. By your musing this fire must be kindled. Do you suppose it possible to delight in God and not think of him? If God be the solace and joy of your souls, surely it must be God remembered and minded much, not neglected and forgotten, My soul (saith the Psalmist) shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; when I remember thee on my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. (Psal. 63. 5. 6.) And he at the same time says his meditation of him shall be sweet, when he says he will be glad in the Lord. (Psal. 104. 34.)

It is not a brutal delight you are here invited to. Even such creatures have their pleasures also; and do need thereto, besides a suitable object, only the help and ministry of their senses. Your delight in God can find no way into your hearts, but by the introduction of your exercised minds. There the matter must be prepared and formed by which your delight is to be nourished and maintained. Hereto then you must apply yourselves with design, and with serious diligence, and take pains with your recoiling thoughts. Do not make that fulsome pretence, to excuse your slothful neglect, that you cannot command your own thoughts. The thing itself is unquestionably true, and that you are not of yourselves sufficient to think any thing that is good, as of yourselves; and so you may truly enough say, that you cannot think any thought at all without God, or so much as draw a breath. Only, as besides your natural dependence on God for the support of your natural life and being, there must be that course taken, and those things done, by which in an orderly course of providence you may live; so for the maintaining of your spiritual life (which very much stands in delight and joy in God) you must join a spiritual dependence for that special influence and concurrence which is necessary hereto, with the doing of such things as by God's appointment and prescription are to serve this end. They who complain therefore they cannot attain to it, to delight in God, or their delight in him is faint and languishing; while in the mean time they use no endeavour to bend and direct their thoughts towards him, do make as idle a complaint, as he that shall say, he is in a miserable starving condition, and nothing nourishes him, who wanting nothing suitable for him, is so wretchedly slothful, that he will be at no pains to prepare, or so much as eat and chew his own necessary food. You may

not imagine, you have all that is needful for the well-governing of your spirits in your own hands and power. Nor ought you therefore to think, that what is simply needful is not to be had. God is not behind-hand with you; he is no such hard task-master, as to require brick and allow no straw: but may most righteously say, ye are idle, and do therefore only complain like the sluggard in his bed, whose hands cannot endure to labour. You dare not deliberately go to God, and tell him, you do all you can to fix the thoughts of your hearts on him, and yet it will not be; or that he gives you no help. Though he can be no way indebted to you, but by his own free promise; he giveth meat to them that fear him, being ever mindful of his covenant, (yea he doth it for ravens and sparrows) he will not then famish the souls that cry to him, and wait on him; their heart shall live that seek God. It is becoming and suitable to the state of things between him and you, that he should put you upon seeking that you may find. Your reasonable nature and faculties (especially being already rectified in some measure, and enlivened by his grace and Spirit) do require to be held to such terms. It is natural to you to think; and there is nothing more suitable to the new creature, than that you apply and set yourselves to think on him, and that your thoughts be set (and held) on work to inquire and seek him out. Know therefore, you do not your parts, unless you make this more your business. Therefore to be here more particular;

[1.] Solemnly set yourselves at chosen times to think on God. Meditation is of itself a distinct duty, and must have a considerable time allowed it among the other exercises of the Christian life. It challenges a just share and part in the time of our lives; and he in whom we are to place our delight, is you know, the prime and chief object of this holy work. Is it reasonable that he who is our life and our all, should never be thought on, but now and then, as it were by chance, and on the bye? "My meditation on him shall be sweet." Doth not that imply that it was with the Psalmist a designed thing to meditate on God? that it was a stated course? whereas it was become customary and usual to him, his ordinary practice to appoint times for meditating on God, his well-known exercise, (which is supposed) he promises himself satisfaction and solace of soul herein. Let your eyes herein therefore prevent the night-watches. Reckon you have neglected one of the most important businesses of the day, if you have omitted this, and that to such omissions you owe your little delight in God. Wherein therefore are you to repair yourselves but by redressing this great neglect?

[2] Think often of him amidst your other affairs. Every one as he is called (be his state or way of living what it will, be he bond or free) is required therein to abide with God. (1. Cor. 7. 20.) And how is that but by often thinking of him, as being a great part (and fundamental to all the rest) of what can be meant by this abode? How grateful a mixture would the thoughts of God make with that great variety of other things which we are necessarily to be concerned in, while we are in this world! If they be serious and right thoughts they will be accompanied with some savour and relish of sweetness, and at least, tend to keep the heart in a disposition for more delightful, solemn intercourses with God. It is a sad truth (than which also nothing is more apparent) that whatsoever there is, either of sinfulness or uncomfotableness in the lives of those who have engaged and devoted themselves to God, doth in greatest part proceed from their neglect to mind God. A thing, if due heed were taken about it, so easy, so little laborious, and the labour whereof (so much as it is) were sure to be recompenced with so unspeakable pleasure: that they are so often lost in darkness, drowned in carnality, buried in earthliness, and overwhelmed with miseries and desolations of spirit, and all this for want of a right employing of their thoughts, is from hence only; they set their thoughts upon things that tend either to corrupt and deprave their spirits, or to disquiet and afflict them.

At this in-let, and by the labour of their own thoughts, sins and calamities are brought in upon them as a flood; which very thoughts if they were placed and exercised aright, would let in God upon them, fill them with his fulness, replenish their souls with his light, grace and consolations. And how much more easy an exercise were it to keep their thoughts employed upon one object that is ever full, delectable and present; than to divide them among many, that either lie remote, and out of their power, to be pursued with anxiety, toil, and very often with disappointment; or being nearer hand, are to be enjoyed (if they be things that have an appearance of good in them) with much danger and damage to their spirits, and with little satisfaction; or (if they appear evil) to be endured with pain and sorrow! So that the labour of their thoughts, among those many things, brings them in torture, when their rest (Psal. 25. 13.) upon God alone, would be all pleasure delight and joy: here their souls might dwell at ease or (as those words import) rest in goodness (even with that quiet repose which men are wont to take by night; for so the word we read *dwell* peculiarly signifies,) after the weariness which we may suppose to have been contracted by the labour of the foregoing day. And if no such sweet and pleasant fruit were to be hoped for from the careful

government and ordering of our thoughts, is the obligation of God's law in this matter nothing with us? whom we are bound to fear, and love, to trust and obey above all things, of him are we not bound so much as to think? And what is loving God with all our mind, so expressly mentioned in that great summary of our duty towards him? Or what can it mean, after the required love of all the heart, and all the soul, to add so particularly, and with all thy mind, when as the mind we know is not the seat of love? Surely it cannot at least, but imply, that our thoughts must be much exercised upon God even by the direction of our love, and that our love must be maintained by thoughts of him; that our minds and hearts must continually correspond and concur to the loving of God; and so our whole soul be exercised and set on work therein.

What doth it mean that our youth is challenged to the remembrance of him? (Eccl. 12. 1) What, is our riper age more exempt? Do we as we longer live by him owe him less? Doth it signify nothing with us that (as was hinted formerly) the wicked bear this brand in the Scriptures, they that forget God: (Psal. 9. 16.) that it is a differencing character of his own people, that they thought on his name? Why do we suppose our thoughts exempt from his government, or the obligation of his laws? Why should it be reckoned less insolent to say "Our thoughts, than our tongues are our own, who is Lord over us?" May we do what we will with our thoughts? Who gave us our thinking power, or made us capable of forming a thought? And now, will we assume the confidence to tell God we think on him all that we can? How many idle thoughts in the day might we have exchanged for thoughts of God! and every thought have been to us a spring of pleasure, and holy delight in him! Know then that if ever you will do any thing in this great matter of delighting in God, you must arrest your thoughts for him, and engage them in more constant converse with him: and withal mix prayers with those thoughts; or let them often be praying, craving thoughts, such as may carry with them annexed desires; or wherein your heart may breathe out requests, such as that (for instance) Rejoice the soul of thy servant; for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul, (Ps. 86. 4) See they be spiritual thoughts that carry life in them, and aim to draw more. But now our thoughts may be conversant about him under very various considerations, and all of them very delightful. And this variety may much increase our delight, while our minds converse with him, now under one notion, then under another. They are apt to tire and grow weary, being long employed the same way upon the same thing. And it were an injury to the blessed God himself, when he presents

himself under various aspects and appearances, so to take notice of any one, as to overlook and neglect the rest. Therefore,

(4.) Look often to him according as absolutely considered he is in himself the most excellent Being : and as in reference to his creatures, he is the supreme Author and Lord of all. There is an unspeakable pleasure to be taken in him so beheld. Too many while their distrust, or their carnality and strangeness to God holds them in suspence concerning their own special relation to him, are apt to fancy themselves excused of delighting in him. It belongs not to them they think, but to some familiar friends, and great favourites of his to whom he expresses special kindness, and on whom he places the marks of his more peculiar good-will. But do you think so to shift and wave the obligation of a universal law upon mankind, and all reasonable nature? You are to remember (as hath been said) your delight in God is not to be considered only as your privilege but as an act of homage to him that made you, and put an intelligent apprehensive spirit into you, by which you are capable of knowing who made you, and of beholding your Maker's excellency with admiration and delight. And if now you are become guilty and vile ; will you run into darkness and hide yourselves from him, or close your eyes, and then say, the sun doth not shine, and deny the blessed, glorious God to be what most truly and unchangeably he is? Whatever you are or have desired he should be towards you, yet do him right. Behold and confess his glorious excellency, every way most worthy to be delighted in. Nor have you rendered yourselves so vile, nor had so much cause of apprehending his displeasure towards you, by any thing so much as this, your not having taken delight in him all this while ; and your neglect to take the ways (spoken of before) tending to bring you thereto. If you think you have no special relation to him, do you think you ever shall if you continue, in the temper of your spirits, strangers to him, and look upon him as one in whom you are to take no delight? Surely it is your dutiful affection towards him and complacency in him, that must give you ground to hope you are his, and he is yours ; and therefore the beginnings and first degrees of that complacency and delight must be in you before ; being begotten by the view of that excellency which he hath in himself antecedently to his being related to you. Yea, and if your relation to him were already as sure and evident to you as can be supposed ; yet are you to take heed of confining your delight in him to that consideration of him only ; or of making it the chief reason of that your delight. For so your delight in him will be more for your own sakes, or upon your own account than his. Learn to look upon things as they are, and not according to their aspect

upon your affairs. Is it not a greater thing that he is God, than that he is yours ?

It is a purer, a more noble and generous affection to him you are to aim at, than what is measured only by your private interest. Is that boundless fulness of life, glory, and all perfection (treasured up in the eternal and incomprehensible Being) to be all estimated by the capacity and concerns of a silly worm ? That consideration, therefore, being sometimes laid aside, sit down and contemplate God as he is in himself, not disowning (as it is not fit you should) but only waving the present consideration of any more comfortable relation, wherein you may (though most justly) suppose him to stand to you; and see if you cannot take pleasure in this, that he is great and glorious, and to have a Being so every way perfect before your eyes. Try if it will not be pleasant to you to fall down before him, and give him glory; to join your praises and triumphant songs to those of saints and angels: and how much yet also it will add to your satisfaction to behold and acknowledge him exalted above all blessing and praise. How great delight hath been taken in him upon such accounts ! In what transports have holy souls been upon the view and contemplation of his sovereign power and dominion; his wise and righteous government; his large and flowing goodness, that extends in common to all the works of his hands ! Labour to imitate the ingenuous and loyal affection of this kind, whereof you find many expressions in the sacred Volume. For what hath been matter of delight to saints of old, ought surely still as much to be accounted so. To give instances:

You sometimes find them in a most complacential adoration of his wonderful wisdom and counsels. O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! (Rom. 11. 33.) And again, to God only wise be glory, through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. (ch. 16. 27.) To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God be honour and glory for ever &c. (1 Tim. 1. 17.) To the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power now and ever, &c. (Jude 25.) Elsewhere we have them in transports admiring his holiness. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods ! Who is like thee glorious in holiness ! There is none holy as the Lord ; for there is none besides thee, neither is there any rock like our God ! (Exod. 15. 11.—1 Sam. 2. 2.) And this is recommended and enjoined to his holy ones as the special matter of their joy and praise : rejoice in the Lord ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. (Psal. 97. 12.) At other times we have their magnificent

celebrations of his glorious power, and that by way of triumph over the paganish gods; our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased. (Psal. 115.) Their idols are silver and gold, &c. Be thou exalted, O God, in thine own strength. We will sing and praise thy power. (Psal. 21. 13.) Forsake me not until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come, &c. (Psal. 71. 18.) This is given out as the song of Moses and the Lamb; Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, &c. And how do they magnify his mercy and goodness both towards his own people, and his creatures in general. O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, that thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the children of men! (Psal. 31. 19.) Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright: praise the Lord with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery,---the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. (Psal. 33. 1.) I will extol thee my God, O King, I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts, they shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. (Psal. 145. 1. &c.) To insert all that might be mentioned to this purpose, were to transcribe a great part of the Bible. And in what raptures do we often find them, in the contemplation of his faithfulness and truth, his justice and righteousness, his eternity, the boundlessness of his presence, the greatness of his works, the extensiveness of his dominion, the perpetuity of his kingdom, the exactness of his government; Who is a strong God like unto thee, and to thy faithfulness, round about thee! (Psal. 69.) Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and thy faithfulness reaches unto the clouds. (Psal. 36.) Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth, or the world, from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. (Psal. 90. 2.) But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee. (1 Kings 8.) The works of the Lord are great, sought out of them, that have pleasure therein. (Psal. 111.) His work is honourable and glorious, &c. All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints shall bless thee; they shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power, (Psal. 145.) to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious Majesty of his kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

And his glory in the general (which results from his several excellencies in conjunction), how loftily is it often celebrated with the expression of the most loyal desires that it may be every where renowned, and of greatest complacency, in as far it is apprehended so to be. The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever. They shall sing in the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord. Be thou exalted above the heavens, let thy glory be above all the earth. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is excellent, his glory is above the earth and the heavens. * When you read such passages as these (whether they be eulogies or commendations of him, or doxologies and direct attributions of glory to him), you are to bethink yourselves, with what temper of heart these things were uttered! with how raised and exalted a spirit! what high delight and pleasure was conceived in glorifying God, or in beholding him glorious! How large and unbounded a heart, and how full of his praise doth still every where discover itself in such strains; when all nations, when all creatures, when every-thing that hath breath, when heaven and earth are invited together, to join in the concert, and bear a part in his praises! And now eye him under the same notions under which you have seen him so magnified, that in the same way you may have your own heart wrought up to the same pitch and temper towards him. Should it not provoke an emulation, and make you covet to be amidst the throng of loyal and devoted souls, when you see them ascending as if they were all incense! when you behold them dissolving and melting away in delight and love, and ready to expire, even fainting that they can do no more; designing their very last breath shall go forth in the close of a song! I will sing unto the Lord, as long as I live, I will sing praise to my God while I have my being! (Psal. 104. 3. 3.) How becoming is it, to resolve, "This shall be my aim and ambition, to fly the same, and if it were possible, a greater height." Read over such psalms† as are more especially designed for the magnifying of God; and when you see what were the things that were most taking to so spiritual and pious hearts; thence receive instruction, and aim to have your hearts alike affected and transported with the same things. Frame the supposition, that you are meant, that the invitation is directed to you, "O come let us sing unto the Lord, let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise to him with psalms; for the Lord is a great God, and a great king above all Gods, &c. And think with yourselves, is he

* Psal. 104. 31.—138. 5.—57. 7. 11.—148. 13.

† Psal. 8. 48. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. &c.

not as great as he was? Is he not as much our Maker as he was theirs? Is it not now as true, that "The Lord reigneth, and is high above all the earth, and exalted far above all gods." Now since these were the considerations upon which so great complacency was taken in him, set the same before your own eyes. And since these were proposed as the matter of so common a joy, and the creation seems designed for a musical instrument of as many strings as there are creatures in heaven and earth; awake, and make haste to get your heart fixed: lest "the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad, the world and all that dwell therein: lest the sea roar, and the fulness thereof, the floods clap their hands, the fields and the hills be joyful together, and all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord", while you only are silent and unconcerned.

And seriously consider the kind and nature of that joy and delight in God wherewith the hearts of holy men did so exceedingly abound; which is to be collected from the expressed ground and reasons of it, for the most part, wheresoever you have any discovery of that joy itself. This general and principal character may be given of it, that it was a sincerely devout and a loyal joy; not a mean, narrow, selfish pleasure, a hugging of themselves in this apprehension merely, it is well with me or I am safe and happy whatsoever becomes of the world. This was still the burden of the song; the Lord is great and glorious and excellent; is exalted and most high over all. And it is to be observed, that as this was the common and more usual strain and temper of holy souls, in the ages whereof the Scriptures give us any account; so were doubts and fears, and troubled thoughts concerning their own interest in God, a great deal less usual and common in those days. So that in proportion to the other pious and holy exercises of such as were true fearers of God and devoted to him, there is little account given us of any thing of that kind in the sacred writings, and especially in the new testament of our Lord. An argument, that such as were sincerely religious were most taken up about the interest of God and Christ in the world, rejoicing either in the observation of its growth and increase, or in the hope and confidence that it shall grow: and that they were much less concerned about their own interest; yea and that this course did thrive best with them, while they were most intent upon the affairs of their common Lord, their own were well enough provided for.

We cannot hereupon but note therefore by the way, how altered a thing religion is now become. Almost the whole business of it, even among them that more seriously mind any thing belonging to it, is a fear of going to hell; and hence perpetual, endless scruples, doubts and inquiries about marks and

signs, and how to know what is the least degree of that grace which is necessary to their being saved. As if the intention were to beat down the price to the very lowest, and dodge always, and cheapen heaven to the utmost, it may be feared (as too many) with a design not to aim at any thing higher than what is merely necessary to that purpose only, and never to mind being excellent, but only being saved. And yet also it were well, in a comparative sense, if that itself were minded in good earnest by many that profess beyond the common rate; and that whereas their own interest is the thing they most mind, it were not their meanest and least considerable interest, even that of their sense and flesh, and secular advantage; and that under the pretence too (which makes the matter so much the worse) of much love and zeal Godward, and devotedness to his interest; which they supposed involved and wrapt up wholly with theirs. Whence also all their delight and joy is measured only by the aspect of the world, and of public affairs upon them and their private ones. And they are either overwhelmed with sorrow, or transported with joy, according as the state of things doth either frown upon, or favour their concernments. In the days when the interest of Christ lay more entirely and undividedly among one sort of men; and more apparently, their contests being less among themselves, and chiefly with the infidel world; and they had, for the most part, no enemies but those in common of the Christian name and cause: so that any common state of suffering to them, was the visible prejudice of that cause and interest: why, what, did they delight and please themselves in nothing but a warm sun and halcyon seasons? Surely they had matter little enough for that sort of joy. And what, did they therefore dejectedly languish and despond, and give themselves up to sorrow and despair? Nor that neither; unless they had all had but one neck, and that also perfectly in the enemies power, it had been an impossible thing to stifle and extinguish their delight and joy. So fully did Christ make it good to them, that their sorrow should be turned into joy, and their joy should no man take from them. For even that increased it which aimed at its suppression; and the waters thrown upon their flame, became rivers of oil. They had got a secret way of "rejoicing in tribulation, of counting it all joy when they fell into divers temptations, or taking pleasure in reproaches for the sake of Christ," of turning difficulties and hazards into matter of triumph, of taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and glorying to be counted worthy to suffer any thing for so excellent a name. Insomuch, that though their Head and Lord, was in a most ignominious way taken from them, and they left as a despised party of men in the midst of an outrageous world,

under the (seemingly hopeless) profession of addictedness to the interest of a man that died upon a cross among thieves but the other day : and though many of them never saw his face, but had their knowledge of him by report and hearsay, yet believing they rejoiced, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. (1. Pet. 1. 8.) The matter and ground of their joy were not so uncertain and changeable a thing, nor so light and unsubstantial as the world's kindness and favour, and the smooth face of a serene sky. These were true lovers of Christ ; and such as counted him worthy for whom they should do all that lay in their power, and suffer all which it was in the power of any others to do against them upon his account.

They that rejoice and place their delight in the blessed God himself through Jesus Christ, have for the object of their joy the everlasting I AM, him who is the same yesterday, and to day and for ever. And whose excellent glory may be clouded indeed and eclipsed to the world and the eye of sense ; but still shines in itself, and to the eye of faith, with the same bright and undiminished lustre. That delight will then be continued and permanent, and ever springing up in fresh liveliness and vigour, which is taken in this blessed object, considered as it is in itself ; and that hath place in a soul that acts in a steady direct course towards that object, without sinister respects, or any selfish ones, of even the highest kind, otherwise than in that subordination which will be suitable to the vast disproportion and inequality between God's interest and ours ; that is, (looking upon our own external concerns as unworthy to be named in the same day) that though we reckon what there is delectable in God will make for our eternal advantage ; yet to consider that advantage of ours so much less, and to be so much more pleased and satisfied, that he is in himself blessed and glorious, as it is in itself a thing more considerable that he be so, than it is what becomes of us, or of any creature, or of this whole creation. We are not indeed concerned, nor may think it warrantable to put ourselves upon any such severe and unnatural trials of our love and fidelity to him, as to put the question to our own hearts, could we be content to lie in hell, or be in the state of the damned for ever for his glory? For it were a most injurious and vile supposition of somewhat inconsistent with his own most blessed nature, and eternal, essential felicity, (for his happiness cannot but be much placed in the benignity of his nature) to imagine that he ever can be pleased, or esteem himself glorified by the everlasting miseries of any one that truly loves him. We ought to abhor the mention or imagination of such a thing as a blasphemy against his infinite goodness ; the denial whereof were to deny his Godhead. And it were also an absurd and

self-contradicting supposition: for none can be in the state of the damned, but they must be also in a state of extreme enmity to God, and of all wickedness and malignity arrived and grown up to its highest pitch; which indeed is the very horror and inmost centre of hell: wickedness and eternal misery differing (for the most part) but in degree, as grace and glory do. So that to put ourselves upon this trial of sincerity towards God, were to ask ourselves, whether we would be willing to express our sincere love to God, by everlasting hatred of him; and the truth of our grace by being as maliciously wicked as the devil and his angels? The expressions of Moses and Paul so frequently alleged can be wiredrawn to no such sense. This is no place to discuss the importance of them. But it were certainly most imprudent (whatsoever they import) to seek marks of sincere love to God thence, which may be fetched from so many plain texts of Scripture. But it is out of question that we may and ought to mind and take complacency in our own blessedness, in a degree inferior and subordinate to that which we take in the glory of the blessed God, without making the sinful and absurd supposition of their inconsistency: or that we can ever be put to choose the absence or privation of the one as a means to the other. And such complacency and delight in God as arises upon such grounds is of the right stamp and kind.

See then that yours be a well complexioned delight, and such as inwardly partakes of the true nature of religion, that is, that hath in it entire devotedness to God as the very life, soul, spirit of it. And if this be not the thing but merely self-satisfaction which you chiefly have in pursuit under the name of delight in God; you beat the air, and do but hunt after a shadow. For there is no such thing as real, solid delight in God anywhere existing, or ever will be, separately and apart from a supreme love and addictedness of heart to him and his interest as our chief and utmost end. Which temper of spirit towards him, must be maintained and improved, by our fixed intuition and view of his glorious greatness, and absolute excellency and perfection; and the congruity and fitness which we thereupon apprehend, that we and all things (as all are of him) should be wholly to him, that he alone may have the glory.

(5.) And though you are not to prefer the consideration of your own interest in God as a good suitable to you, or to give it the highest place in your delight; yet also you must take heed of neglecting it, or of denying it any place at all. For though we may plainly observe, as hath been said; that it was the usual temper of holy men of old, to be most taken up in admiring God upon the account of his own excellency and glory in itself, considered; and may thence collect that to be the genuine

right temper of a gracious heart when it is most itself: yet also it is as evident, that they were far from neglecting their own interest in God, and that they counted it not a small matter; yea that it had (though not the principal) a very great influence upon their delight and joy in him. No one can read the Bible, and not have frequent occasion to take notice of this. For how often do we find him spoken of under the names of their portion, heritage, &c. And in what raptures of joy do we often find them upon that account! So the Psalmist considers him, when he says, the lines are fallen to him in pleasant places, and he had a goodly heritage. (Psal. 16. 6.) How often do we find them glorying in their relation by covenant, and making their boasts of him as their God; I will love thee, O Lord, my strength, &c. (Psal. 18.) You have *my* no less than nine times repeated in the beginning (the first and second verses) of that psalm, my strength, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, &c. And afterwards how glorious a triumph is there raised, and in what exultation do we behold them upon this! "Who is God save the Lord, and who is a rock save our God?" And again, "The Lord liveth and blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted." And this was some of the last holy breath uttered by that anointed one of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel; he hath made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure: and this is all my salvation and all my desire. (2. Sam. 23. 5.) With this, how well satisfied and pleased did he expire, and go down to the grave! And the people of God are sometime represented as so taken with this apprehension of their peculiar relation to God that they cannot be content to know, but they proclaim it; nor was it enough the present age should know, but they must have it told the following generation; let mount Sion rejoice, &c. Mark—That ye may tell the generation following—For this is our God. (Psal. 48.) See their ostentation of him, this God! As if he had said, "Behold what a God have we! view him well, and take notice how glorious a God he is." And as they glory in the greatness of the God to whom they were related, so they do in the eternity of the relation. This God is our God for ever and ever! &c. And how unexpressible was the inward pleasure wherewith we may suppose those words to have been uttered, God even our own God shall bless us! (Psal. 67. 6.) How delightful an appropriation! as if it were intended to be said, the blessing itself were less significant, it could not have that savour with it if it were not from our own God. Not only therefore allow but urge your spirits thus to look towards God, that you may both delight in him, as being in himself the most excellent one, and also as being yours; for

know, you are not permitted only, but obliged to eye, accept and rejoice in him as such. It is his first and great law, and the form of his covenant which he requires you to enter into with him, to take him for your God. Herein to be shy and decline, is to rebel. And when he offers himself in all his richness to be your portion and your God, how vile ingratitude were it to neglect and overlook the kindness of the overture. It is his glory to have indigent souls satiating themselves in him, drawing from him their vital breath, living upon him as their all: confessing they cannot live, but by his vouchsafed communications. And if you should say you love him, but so he be ever glorious in himself, you care not to be happy; it would sound like a hollow compliment. You are not to deal with a God upon such terms. It becomes you not, nor is suitable to him. It is fit for you to own it to him, that he is your life, that you are a mere nothing in yourself, and must seek your all in him. Your song and your prayer must be directed to him as the God of your life. (Psal. 42. 8.) You do not own him as God, except you own and adore him as your all-sufficient good, and that fulness which filleth all in all. You detract from the glory of his Godhead, if you attribute not this to him; and if accordingly, as one that cannot live without him, you do not seek union with him, and join yourself to him, and then rejoice and solace yourself in that blessed conjunction.

And if you be not sure as yet that he is yours, your delighting in him is not therefore to be suspended and delayed till you be. But in the mean time delight in him as willing to become yours. To disbelieve that he is willing, is to give him the lie. It is the great design of his gospel so to represent him to you. See that your hearts do embrace and close with that as a most delightful and lovely representation: the great and glorious Lord of heaven and earth offering himself in all his fulness to be thine! thy portion and thy God for ever! How transporting should this be to you! Nor, if you suspect the sincerity of your own heart towards him (which is the only thing you can have any pretence to suspect, for it were a blasphemy to his truth and goodness to intimate a suspicious thought of him) may you therefore spend all your time in anxious inquiries, or in looking only upon your own evil heart: but look most, and with a direct and steady eye towards him. Behold and view well his glory and his love, that by this means your heart may be captivated and more entirely won to him.

This makes delight in God a strange thing in the hearts and practice of many. They find too much cause of complaint concerning their own hearts, that they are disaffected, and disinclined Godward. And what is the course they take hereupon? Their re-

ligion is nothing but complaint : and all their days are spent in beholding that they are bad, without ever taking the way to become better. They conclude their ease to be evil and full of danger, because they find they can take no delight in God and they will take no delight in him because they have that apprehension of the danger of their case. And so their not delighting in God resolves into itself. And they delight not in him because they delight not in him. It is strange the absurdity of this is not more reflected on. And what now is to be done in this case ? To rest here is to be held in a circle of sin and misery all your days : and would signify as if delighting in God were a simple impossibility, or as if not to delight in God, were a thing so highly rational as to be its own sufficient self justification ; and that it were reason enough not to delight in him because we do not. There can be no other way to be taken but to behold him more in that discovery of him which his gospel sets before your eyes and in that way seek to have your hearts taken with his amiableness and love, and allured to delight in him. And labour in this way to have that delight increased to that degree, that it may cease to be a question or doubt with you, do I delight in God or no ? Whence when you reflect and find that you do ; then shall you have that additional matter of further delight ; that whereas you before took delight in him because being in himself so excellent a one he hath freely offered himself to you to become yours ; you may now delight in him also, because you are sure he is so : whereof you cannot have a more satisfying assurance than from his so express saying, I love them that love me ; and we love him because he loved us first. (1 Joh. 4. 19.—Prov. 8. 17.)

(6.) Take especial heed of more apparent and grosser transgressions. Nor account your security from the danger of them so much to stand in your being ordinarily out of the way of temptations to them, as in an habitual frame of holiness, and the settled aversion of your heart to them. Endeavour a growing conformity to God in the temper of your spirit, and to be in love with purity ; that your heart may no more endure an impure thought, than you would fire in your bosom. If you be herein careless and remiss, and suffer your heart to grow dissolute, or more bold and adventurous, in admitting sinful cogitations ; or if you have more liking or less dislike of any wicked course wherein others take their liberty, you are approaching the borders of a dangerous precipice. And if some greater breach hereupon ensue between God and you, what becomes of your delight in him ? A sad interruption of such pleasant intercourse cannot but follow, both on his part and on yours. On *his part*, a suspension and restraint of those communications of

light and grace which are necessary to your delight in him. He will be just in his way of dealing towards those of his own family, as well as merciful. It appears how much David's delight in God was intermitted, upon his great transgression, through God's withdrawing from him, when he prays he would restore the joy of his salvation. (Psal. 51. 12.) And on *your part*, will ensue both less liking of God's presence, and a dread of it. Your inclination will not be towards him as before; though the act of sin be soon over, the effect will remain; even a carnal frame of spirit that disaffects converse with God, and cares not to come nigh him. And if that were not, a guilty fear would hold you off; so that if you were willing, you would not dare to approach him. Your liberty taken to sin would soon infer a bondage upon your spirit God-ward, unless conscience be wholly asleep; and you have learned a stupid, insolent confidence to affront God, which surely would signify little to your delight in him. Thou shalt put away iniquity from thy tabernacles. Then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty; and shalt lift up thy face unto God. (Job. 22.) The conscience of unpurged iniquity, will not let you lift up your face or appear in that glorious presence.

(7.) Cherish the great grace of humility; and be ever mean and low in your own eyes. That temper carries in it even a natural disposition to delight in God. How sweet complacency will such a soul take in him! His light and glory shine with great lustre in the eyes of such a one while there is not a nearer, imagined lustre to vie therewith. Stars are seen at noon, by them that descend low into a deep pit. They will admire God but little that admire themselves much: and take little pleasure in him, who are too much pleased with themselves. And how sweet a relish have his love and grace to a humble, lowly soul, that esteems itself less than the least of his mercies! With what ravishing delight, will divine mercy be entertained, when it is so unexpectedly vouchsafed; when this shall be the sense of the soul now caught into the embraces of God's love, What I, vile creature! impure worm! what, beloved of God! Expectation, grounded especially upon an opinion of merit, would unspeakably lessen a favour, if it were afforded, as also expected evils seem the less when they come. But the lowly soul, that apprehends desert of nothing but hell, is surprized and overcome with wonder and delight, when the great God expresses kindness towards it. Besides that he more freely communicates himself to such: To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, &c. (Isa. 66. 1. 2.) And he looks to such with a design of habitation; heaven and earth are not to him so pleasant a dwelling. Down

then into the dust, there you are in the fittest place and posture for delightful converse with God.

(8.) Reckon much upon an eternal abode in that presence where is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore. Enjoy by a serious, believing foresight the delights of heaven, labour to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Look beyond this your present state. Confine not your eye and delight to what is now to be enjoyed, but think of what shall be. Set before your eyes the glorious prospect of the blessed God communicating himself to that vast assembly of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, in clearest discoveries of his glory, and richest effusions of his goodness. The best appearance of things in this world, makes but a dull scene in comparison of this. If you look towards God according to what now appears of his glory in the frame of the universe, and the course of his administrations and government over his creatures, he hath not, it is true, left himself without witness. And you may behold much that would be to you the matter of delightful admiration; if your eye be clear, and can pierce through clouds and darkness and a manifold veil. He hath made this world and is every where in it, but it knows him not. His light shines in darkness, that doth not comprehend it. Beams of his glory do every where break forth, through every creature, providence, law and ordinance of his. But much of his glory that shines in the creation is hid by a train of second causes, through which few look to the first. His laws, men judge of according to their interests and inclinations, while the holy, glorious majesty that enacted them is out of sight. His work in the world is carried on in a mystery. His interest lives, but is depressed. They who are most devoted to him are supported indeed by his invisible hand, but are, in the mean time, low, for the most part, and afflicted. If you now limit and confine your apprehensions of him to his present appearances, the matter of your delight is real, but much diminished. But conceive of him (as your faith can behold him at a distance) in that posture wherein having settled the eternal state of things he will finally shew himself. Conceive him as having now gathered home all that have been recovered to him out of the apostacy, and joined them to those numberless legions of innocent and pure spirits about his throne that never offended. Conceive him as dispensing rewards, pouring out blessings upon the loyal heads and hearts of them that expressed fidelity and duty to him in the time and state of trial and temptation; letting his glory shine out with bright and direct beams, to so many beholding and admiring eyes; giving forth the full and satisfying communications of his love, and making rivers of pleasure flow perpetually to the replenish-

ing the vast enlarged capacities, of so innumerable a multitude of grateful adoring spirits, to whom it is now sensibly to be perceived how his fulness filleth all in all. Take this view of him; and let your faith and hope thus enter into that which is within the veil. And remember there is only a little time between you and that blessed state; that then you are to enter into the joy of your Lord; so that the very element and region wherein you are to live for ever, shall be nothing else but delight and joy. In this way of believing foresight, and by this lawful and allowed prepossession of future blessedness, much surely would be added to your present delight in God. Should not the thoughts of him be pleasant to you from whom you are expecting so great things? If your delight in him be any at all, upon what you have already found and experienced of his goodness; it should be abundantly the more upon what you are by his word encouraged to look for.

II. And having thus given some account in what way delight in God is to be exercised and improved; it were a charitable hope that there would be little need to propound arguments to persuade unto it. But it were a hope not grounded upon common experience, which too plainly tells us, that though such directions as these are plain and obvious, not unknown to christians; but only less considered (whence it was not needless here to recommend them) yet delight in God obtains little place in the practice of the most. There will therefore too probably be still much need of saying something,

Thirdly. By way of excitation to it. And yet because it is not a multitude of words that is likely to do the business, but the weight of things, urged on by a more powerful hand than that of man, and that much may be collected to this purpose from what hath been said of the sinfulness of the omission; I shall with great brevity, offer these things only to be considered.

1. Is it not a merciful vouchsafement that the holy God allows you to place your delight on him, and invites you to it? How much grace and love breathes in these words, "Delight thyself also in the Lord!" Trust in him was recommended before, and now this being added also; how plain is it that your ease and rest is the thing designed! Is it fit to receive so much kindness with neglect? Again, he delights in you, I speak to such of whom this may be supposed. And it is indefinitely said his delights were with the sons of men. (Prov. 8.31.) Think what he is, and what you are; and at once, both wonder and yield. An what else have you to delight in? what thing will you name that shall supply the place of GOD, or be to you in the stead of him? Moreover, who should delight in him but you? his friends? his sons? those of his own house? Think what life

and vigour it will infuse into you; and that, the joy of the Lord will be your strength. (Nehem. 8. 10.) How pleasantly will you hold on your course! and discharge all the other duties of this your present state! You must serve him. Dare you think of throwing off his yoke? How desirable is it then to take delight in him whom I must serve! which only makes that service acceptable to him, and easy to myself! Further, this is a pleasure none can rob you of; a joy that cannot be taken from you. Other objects of your delight are vanishing daily. Neither men nor devils can ever hinder your delighting in God, if your hearts be so inclined. And were you never brought to take pleasure in any person or thing to which you had a former aversion? One that had wronged you might yet possibly win you by after kindness. Give a reason why you should be more difficult towards the blessed God that never wronged you! and whose way towards you hath constantly imported so much good will!

And consider that your condition on earth is such, as exposes you to many sufferings and hardships; which by your not-delighting in him, you can never be sure to avoid, (for they are things common to men) but which, by your delighting in him, you may be easily able to endure. Besides all this, seriously consider, that you must die. You can make no shift to avoid that. How easily tolerable and pleasant, will it be to think, then, of going to him with whom you have lived in a delightful communion before! And how dreadful to appear before him, to whom your own heart shall accuse you to have been (against all his importunities and allurements) a disaffected stranger!

2. To these I add the consideration in the other part of the verse; "And he shall give thee the desire of thine heart." By desire it is plain we are to understand the thing desired which is usual. By the thing desired, we must not be so unreasonable as to think is meant, any thing whatsoever it be, that, even with the greatest extravagancy, we may set our hearts upon; as worldly possessions, riches, honours, &c. For it were most unbecoming that delight in God should be so mercenary; or be propounded as the price of so mean things; yea, and if the matter were so to be understood, delight in God were a means to the attaining of these things as the end; which were to make the blessed God an inferior good to these. Nor can we suppose that one who delights in God should ever esteem any reward or recompence of another kind, greater than what he finds in this very delight itself. And besides, we are very prone to desire things that (as the case may be) would prove very hurtful to us. If God should gratify us with every thing

we fancy he would many times please us to our ruin. And do we believe that when he hath won a person to place his delight and take pleasure in himself, he will requite him with a mischief? Since then we may not understand him to mean that whatsoever we desire, if we delight in him, we shall have; we are to inquire further. And it is plain the things that can be supposed to be desired by such persons as are here spoken to, must be of one of these two sorts: either things of a spiritual nature, that tend directly to the gratification and advantage of of the inward man; or else external good things, that make for the support and comfort of this present life. We will suppose it to be the one or the other of these. And shall shew that whichsoever sort it be that is desired, delighting in God doth naturally infer the satisfaction (some way or other) of such desires.

(1.) Supposing they be spiritual good things that are desired, delight in God is most directly the satisfaction itself of such desire. Whatsoever purely spiritual good we can desire is either God himself, or somewhat in order to him. If it be God himself we desire, so far as we delight in him we enjoy him, and have what we would have; and can only enjoy him more fully, by more entire and composed rest and delight in him. If it be somewhat in order to him, he is still supremely and ultimately desired in that very desire; so that in delighting in him, we have our end, and that upon which this desire doth lastly terminate. And now should not this be a great inducement to us to delight in God, that hereby our desires, the motions of our working hearts directed towards him, do immediately find in him a peaceful and pleasant rest, and turn into a satisfying fruition;

(2.) Supposing the things we desire be those of an inferior kind; delight in God doth not a little to the satisfying of them also. It doth not, as was said, entitle us to the things themselves we desire whatever they be, or how unsuitable soever to us. But,

[1.] It moderates these desires, makes them sober, prudent, and rational, and capable of being satisfied with what is fit for us. He that is much habituated to delight in God is not apt to foolish, extravagant desires. This is the sense of such a one, "Not my will Lord, but thine be done." He may desire the same thing that others do, yet not with the same peremptory and precipitant desire, but with a desire tempered with submission, and with a reserved deference of the matter to the divine pleasure: "This thing, Lord, I desire if thou see good," So that the general object of such a one's desire is only that

which in the divine estimate is fit and good for him. And though he desire this or that particular thing, yet not as it is this thing, but as supposing it possible this thing may be judged fit for him by the supreme wisdom, whereto he hath referred the matter. But if it shall be judged otherwise; this thing falls without the compass of the general object of his desire, and in just construction he desires it not. For he desires it not otherwise than on that condition that God sees it meet for him; and not longer than till he find he does not. In which case the sobriety and submissiveness of his former desire, appears in his cheerful, patient want of the thing which he finds God hath thought fit to deny him. So that even then, his desire is satisfied, that is, it doth not (as often it is with a carnal heart) turn, being crossed, into rage and madness; but into a complacential peace, and rest in the divine will. He is satisfied in what God hath thought fit to do. Yea the very thing is done which he would have done: God hath given him his heart's desire. For let the question be put to such a person, Do you desire such a thing though God judge it will be hurtful to you or unfit for you? And no doubt he will, not in faint words that have no sense under them (as almost any other man would) but from his very heart and soul say, No. And if he deliberate the matter of his own accord, or by any one's inquiry be occasioned to do so, this will be found the sense of his heart, (though his desire hath inclined to this or that thing in particular,) and this would be his prayer in such a case, "Lord, if thy wisdom, which is infinitely more than mine, see this thing not fit, cross me, deny me in this desire of mine." And this general desire at least, which is the measure of the particular one, is sure to be accomplished to one that hath God for his delight. For the promise is express and cannot fail, All things shall work together for good, to them that love God. Rom. 8. 28.

And this love to God, or delight in him, as it entitles such to that his care and concern for them which is expressed in this promise; so it doth in its own nature dispose their hearts to an acquiescence and satisfiedness therein. For love to God, where it is true, is supreme, and prevails over all other love to this or that particular good. Whence it cannot be, but, if this love be in act, (as, the text must be understood to call unto actual and exercised delight in God) it must subdue, and keep the heart so far subject to the divine good pleasure, as that its desire and addictedness to this particular, lesser good (concerning which there may also be a just and rational doubt whether it will be now a good to him yea or no) shall never be a matter of con-

trovery and quarrel with him who is, unquestionably, the supreme and universal Good. How will that one thought overcome, if such a one shall but apprehend God saying to him, "Dost thou love me above all things, and wilt yet contend with me for such a trifle!"

And we may by the way note, that upon this ground of the dubious mutability of external good things, (which, by circumstances, may become evil to this or that person,) as they are not here, so nor can they be anywhere the matter of a general absolute promise, to be claimed indefinitely by any one's faith. The nature of the thing refuses it. For suppose we, that what may, in this or that case, become evil or prejudicial to this or that person, doth now actually become so, and is the matter of an absolute promise, now claimable by such a person, what would follow? That an evil is now the actual matter of a promise! than which what can be said or supposed more absurd? when nothing can further or otherwise be the matter of a promise, than as it is good. Wherefore that promise would, in the supposed case, degenerate (as the matter of it is by the present circumstances varied) and turn into a threatening. Wherefore when that condition or proviso is not expressly added to a promise concerning a temporal good, the very nature of the thing implies, and requires it to be understood. For it is not, otherwise than as qualified by that condition, any way a promise. Now he that is in the present exercise of delight in God, hath his heart so set upon God and alienated from earthly things, as that the present temper of it bears proportion to the natural tenour of such promises; and is not otherwise than by the cessation of this delight, liable to the torture of unsatisfied desire in reference to these lower things: Although the fig-tree shall not blossom---yet I will rejoice in the Lord, &c. (Hab. 3. 17. 18.) And as delight in God doth thus reduce and moderate desires in reference to any inferior good; so that, if it be withheld, they admit a satisfaction without it, and the want of it is easily tolerable: so,

[2.] If it be granted; delight in God adds a satisfying sweetness to the enjoyment. A lover of God hath another taste and relish, even of earthly good things, than an earthly-minded man can have. He hath that sweet savour of the love of God upon his spirit, that imparts a sweetness to all the enjoyments of this world, beyond what such things in their own nature have with them. This makes the righteous man's little, better than the great revenues of many wicked. (Psal. 37. 16.)

Upon the whole therefore, this is, if duly weighed, a mighty and most persuasive argument to delight in God. For it im-

ports thus much, which I add for a close to this discourse. If you place your delight here ; you are most certainly delivered from the vexation and torment of unsatisfied desire. The motions of your souls are sure to end in a pleasant rest. Your lesser desires will be swallowed up in greater, and all in the divine fulness ; so that you will now say, Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none on earth I desire besides thee. (Psal. 73. 25.) If you take no delight in God, your own souls will be a present hell to you. And it may be it is not enough considered, how much the future hell stands also in unsatisfied desire ; which desire (all suitable objects being for ever cut off from it) turns wholly to despair, rage and torture. And that ravenous appetite, which would be preying upon external objects that now fail, turns inward, and as an insatiable vulture, gnaws everlastingly the wretched soul itself. And the beginnings of this hell you will now have within you, while you refuse to delight in God. The sapless, earthly vanities upon which your hearts are set, give you some present content, which allays your misery for a little while, and renders it less sensible to you : but they have nothing in them to answer the vast desires of a reasonable, immortal spirit. Whereby you certainly doom yourselves to perpetual disrest. For in these false, vanishing shadows of goodness, you cannot have satisfaction, and in the blessed God you will not.

OF
CHARITY
IN REFERENCE TO
OTHER MEN'S SINS.

THE PREFACE.

A PROPOSAL was made to me, by some friends, for publishing of these papers; which I cannot doubt, proceeded from charity, both to the reader, whose good they intended in it; and to the author, that they could think so slender a performance was capable of serving it. I cannot, indeed, think it unseasonable, to take any occasion of recommending charity, though this subject led me only to consider one single instance of it. But if the practice of it, in this one, would redress so great an evil, what might we not expect from its universal exercise, in all cases upon which it might have influence? Even the tongues of men and angels, as (with our apostle) they are insufficient to supply its absence; so nor are they more than sufficient, fully to represent its worth. We vainly expect, from either eloquence, or disputation, the good effects, which charity alone (could it take place) would easily bring about without them. How laboriously do we beat our way in the dark! "We grope for the wall, like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon day, as in the night; but the way of peace we have not known." Human wit is stretched to the uttermost; wherein that comes short, the rest is endeavoured to be supplied by anger: and all to bring us under one form, which either will not be; or if it were, could be to little purpose; while in the mean time, this more excellent way is forgotten of our foot, and we are far from it. Which shews, it is God that must cure us (the God of love and peace) and not man.

How soon, and easily would a mutual universal charity redress all? For being on one side only, it could never cement both. And limited only to a party, it is not itself, and acts against itself, divides what it should unite. But a genuine, equally diffused charity, how would it melt down men's minds, mollify their rigours, make high things low, crooked straight, and rough places plain? It would certainly, either dispose men to agree upon one way of common order, or make them feel very little inconvenience or cause of offence in

some variety. But without it, how little would the most exquisite unexceptionable form (universally complied with, in every punctilio) contribute to the churches welfare? No more to its quiet, and repose, than an elegant, well shaped garment, to the ease, and rest of a disjointed, ulcerous body: nor longer preserve it, than the fair skin of a dead man's body would do that, from putrefaction and dissolution.

What piety is to our union with God, that is charity to our union with one another. But we are too apt, as to both, to expect from the outward form, what only the internal, living principle can give; to covet the one with a sort of fondness, and deny the other. One common external form in the church of God, wherein all good men could agree, were a most amiable thing, very useful to its comely, better being, and the want of it hath inferred, and doth threaten evils much to be deplored, and deprecated. But this divine principle is most simply necessary to its very being. Whatsoever violates it; is the most destructive, mortal schism, as-much worse than an unwilling breach of outward order, as the malicious tearing in pieces a man's living body, is worse than accidental renting his cloaths. And indeed, were our ecclesiastical contests, about matters that I could think indifferent, as long as there is such a thing, as distinction of parties, I should readily choose that, where were most of sincere charity (if I new where that were.) For since our Saviour himself gives it us, as the cognizance of christians (by this shall all men know ye are my disciples, if ye love one another) I know not how better to judge of Christianity, than by charity. Nor know I where, among them that profess, there is less of either, than with them that would confine, and engross both to their own several parties; that say, here is Christ, and there he is; and will have the notions of christian, of saint, of church, to extend no further than their own arbitrarily assigned limits, or than, as they are pleased to describe their circle. We know to whom the doing so, hath been long imputed; and it were well, if they had fewer sorts of imitators. Nor doth it savour more of uncharitableness in any, to think of enclosing the truth, and purity of religion, only, within their own precincts, than it doth of pride and vanity, to fancy they can exclude thence, every thing of offensive impurity. We are never like to want occasions, even in this respect, of exercising charity: not to palliate the sins of any, but recover sinners. God grant we may use it more, to this purpose (when the case so requires) and need it less.

JOHN HOWE.

OF CHARITY,

IN RESPECT OF

OTHER MEN'S SINS:

1. Cor. XIII. 6.

Rejoiceth not in iniquity.

THE subject spoken of, must be supplied from the foregoing verses; where we find the matter all along, in discourse, is *Charity*: which it is the principal business of the whole chapter to describe, and praise. And this is one of the characters that serve (as they all do) to do both these at once. For being in itself a thing of so great excellency, to shew its true nature, is to praise it. Whatsoever is its real property, is also its commendation.

Our business here must be,—Briefly to explain and give some general account of both these, namely, charity, and this its negative character, that it rejoices not in iniquity, and—To demonstrate the one of the other; or (which is all one) to shew the inconsistency between that divine principle, and this horrid practice:—upon which the use of this piece of Christian doctrine will ensue.

I. We are to give some account both of this principle, the charity which the apostle here treats of, and of the practice which the text denies of it; rejoicing in iniquity.

First. For the former. The charity or love here spoken of, is the root of all that duty which belongs to the second table. The whole of the duty contained in both, is summed up by our Saviour in love. That of the former in that first and great commandment, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c. Matt. 22. 37. that of the latter in this other which is

like unto it, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Upon which two we are told hang all the law and the prophets. See also Rom. 13. 10. The instances which are given in this chapter, refer to man as the object, and shew that it is the love of our neighbour which is meant.

But though it be so far human, it is however upon other accounts a real part of divine love; which we see 1. Joh. 3. 17. that apostle speaking even of love to our brother: whose hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up the bowels of compassion from him, demands, how dwelleth the love of God in that man? And David called the kindness he intended the relicts of Saul's family, the kindness of God, 2. Sam. 9. 3. This part of love is divine both in respect of its original, and of somewhat considerable in its object.

1. In respect of its original. It is a part of the communicated divine nature, from whence they that partake of it, are said to be born of God. It is most conjunct with faith in the Messiah, and love to God himself, which are both comprehended in that birth. For as it is said in the gospel of John, (chap. 1. 12. 13.) that as many as received him, (namely, Christ) to them he gave power to be called the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And in his 1. Epist. chap. 5. 1. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. So it is in this latter place, immediately added as the double property of this divine production (not more separable from one another than from it) and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him. And hereupon also from the in-being and exercise of this love, (though towards an object that seems very heterogeneous and of much another kind) we come to bear the name of God's children. Love your enemies—that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, Mat. 5. 44. 45. The law indeed of love to other men, though it obliges to love some above others upon a special reason, yet in its utmost latitude, comprehends all mankind under the name of neighbour or brother, as the particular precepts contained in it do sufficiently shew. Which surely leave us not at liberty to kill, defile, rob, slander, or covet from others, than the regenerate (as we count) or our own friends and relatives.

Now that principle from which we are called God's children, must be of divine original; for it is not spoken of them casually, but as their distinguishing character. So that, in this respect, they are said to be of God. It is their very difference from the children of another, and the worst of fathers, 1 Joh. 3. 10. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the

devil: whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. Which also shews it is not universally all love, unto which this dignity belongs. Some more noble-minded pagans that were wont to ascribe divinity unto love, have also carefully distinguished, and told us of a love that was genuine, and another that was spurious; the one akin to virtue, the other to vice; and have noted it as an abusive error of the vulgar, (Max. Tyr. Dissert.) to give the same name to God and a disease. The corruption and degeneracy of love, is indeed less than human; but the first being, and restored rectitude of it, is of an original no less than divine.

2. And even this love, though placed upon man, is divine too in respect of its object, that is, of somewhat we have to consider in it, which is most properly and strictly the object, or the inducement and formal reason why we love. God is the *primum amabile*, the *first goodness* as well as the first Being. As therefore there is no being, so nor is there any goodness, amability, or loveliness, which is not derived from him. We love any thing more truly and purely, the more explicitly we acknowledge and love God in it. Upon the view of those strokes and lineaments of the divine pulchritude, and the characters of his glory, which are discernible in all his creatures, our love should be someway commensurate with the creation, and comprehend the universe in its large and complacential embraces. Though as any thing is of higher excellency, and hath more lively touches and resemblances of God upon it; or by the disposition of his providence and law, more nearly approaches us, and is more immediately presented to our notice, converse, use, or enjoyment, so our love is to be exercised towards it more explicitly, in a higher degree, or with more frequency. As man therefore hath more in him of divine resemblance, of God's natural likeness and image; good men of his moral, holy image, we ought to love men more than the inferior creatures; and those that are good and holy, more than other men; and those with whom we are more concerned, with a more definite love, and which is required to be more frequent in its exercise. But all from the attractive of somewhat divine appearing in the object. So that all rational love, or that is capable of being regulated and measured by a law, is only so far right in its own kind, as we love God in every thing, and every thing upon his account, and for his sake.

The nature and spirit of man is, by the apostacy, become disaffected and strange to God, alienated from the divine life, addicted to a particular limited good, to the creature for itself, apart from God; whereupon the things men love, are their

idols, and their love idolatry. But where, by regeneration, a due propension towards God is restored, the universal good draws their minds, they become inclined and enlarged towards it; and as that is diffused, their love follows it, and flows towards it every where. They love all things principally in and for God; and therefore such men most, as excel in goodness, and in whom the divine image more brightly shines. Therefore it is, most especially, Christian charity that is here meant, that is, which works towards christians as such. For compare this with the foregoing chapter, and it will appear that charity is treated of in this, which is the vital bond of holy, living union in the Christian church supposed in the other. Whereby as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body being many, are one body; so also is Christ v. 12. This principle refined, rectified, recovered out of its state of degeneracy, and now obtaining in the soul as a part of the new creature, or the new man which is after God, as it hath man for its object more especially, and more or less according to what their appears of divine in him, is the charity here spoken of. Now of this divine charity it is said, and which we are now to consider.

Secondly. That it rejoices not in iniquity. Hereof it cannot be needful to say much by way of explication. The thing carries a prodigious appearance with it; and it might even amaze one to think, that on this side hell, or short of that state, wherein the malignity of wickedness attains its highest pitch, any appearance should be found of it. Yet we cannot think, but these eulogies of charity, do imply reprehensions, and tacitly insinuate too great a proneness to this worst sort of ἐπιχαίρειν κακίᾳ or rejoicing in evil. The Gnosticks (or the sect afterwards, known by that name) gave already too great occasion for many more express, and sharp reproofs of this temper; which were not thrown into the air, or meant to nobody. The Scripture saith not in vain, the spirit which is in us lusteth to envy. With which, what affinity this disposition hath, we shall have occasion to note anon. Rejoicing in iniquity, may be taken (if we abstract from limiting circumstances) two ways:—either in reference to our own sins:—or to men's. Our own, when we take pleasure in the design, or in the commission, or in the review, and after-contemplation of them: converse in that impure region, as in our native element, drink it in like water, find it sweet in the mouth, and hide it under the tongue, &c. Other men's; when it is counted a grateful sight, becomes matter of mirth and sport, to see another stab at once the Christian name, and his own soul. The scope and series of the apostle's discourse, doth here plainly determine it this latter way:

or as charity which is the subject of his whole discourse, respects other men; so must this contrary disposition also. *De iniquitate procul dubio aliena, &c.* saith Cajetan upon this place: *It is without doubt, unapt to rejoice in the sins of other men; for neither can it endure one's own.* And this aptness to rejoice in the iniquity of others, may be upon several accounts. It may either proceed from an affection to their sins, from an undue self-love: or from an excessive disaffection to the persons offending.

1. From a great affection, and inclination unto the same kind of sins, which they observe in others. Whereupon they are glad of their patronage; and do therefore not only do such things, but take pleasure in them that do them, Rom. 1. 32. Men are too prone to justify themselves by the example of others, against their common rule. "Others take their liberty, and why may not I?" And so they go (as Seneca says sheep do) *non qua eundum est, sed qua itur, the way which is trodden, not which ought to be.*

2. From an undue, and over indulgent love of themselves. Whence it is, that (as the case may be) they take pleasure to think there are some men, that perhaps outdo them in wickedness, and offend in some grosser kind than they have done. And so they have, they count, a grateful occasion, not only to justify themselves, that they are not worse than other men, but to magnify themselves, that they are not so bad; as the pharisee in his pompous, hypocritical devotion, "God, I thank thee (that attribution to God, being only made a colour of arrogating more plausibly to himself) that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers," &c. Luke 18. 11. whereby the hypocrite, while he would extol, doth but the more notoriously stigmatize himself.

3. From a disaffection they bear to the offenders; whence they are glad of an advantage against them: that they have occasion to glory in their flesh, and insult over their weakness. It must be that rejoicing in other men's sins, which is most contrary to charity, that is here more especially meant. And that is manifestly the last of these; such as proceeds from ill will to the person that offends; whereupon we are glad of his halting (which perhaps we watched for before) and when his foot slip-peth, magnify ourselves against him. Now rejoicing at the sins of other men, upon this account, may be either—secret, when only the heart feels an inward complacency, and is sensibly gratified thereby: or—open, when that inward pleasure breaks forth into external expressions of triumph, and insultation, into derision, scoffs and sarcasms.

II. And how inconsistent this is with the charity which our apostle so highly magnifies, it is now our next business to shew. And it will appear by comparing this rejoicing in other men's sins: with charity itself: and—with what it is, ever, in most certain connexion with.

First. With charity itself; and so we shall consider it,—In its own nature, abstractly and absolutely:—In relation to its original, and exemplary cause. And shall compare this rejoicing in the sins of other men, with it both ways.

1. Consider charity in its own nature; and so it is the loving one another as myself, so as to desire his welfare and felicity as my own: where we must note, that love to ourselves, is the measure of the love we owe to others. But yet we are also to consider, that this measure itself, is to be measured: for we are not to measure our love to others, by the love we bear to ourselves, otherwise, than as that also agrees with our superior rule; which obliges us so to love ourselves, as to design, and seek our own true felicity, and best good: to “lay hold on eternal life, to work out our own salvation.” If in other instances, we were not so to understand the matter (since the particular precepts extend no farther than the general one) any man might without transgression, destroy another man's goods, when he hath learned to be prodigal of what he is master of himself: and might make himself master of another man's life, whensoever he cares not for his own. And so by how much more profligately wicked any man is, he should be so much the less a transgressor.

We are not so absolutely *αὐτεξέσται*, or so much our own, that we may do what we will with ourselves. We are accountable to him that made us, for our usage of ourselves: and in making ourselves miserable, make ourselves deeply guilty also. We were made with a possibility of being happy. He that made us with souls capable of a blessed state, will exact an account of us, what we have done with his creature. He that commits a felony upon his own life, injures his prince and the community to which he belongs. The one is robbed of a subject, the other of a member that might be useful; wherein both had a right. No man is made for himself. And therefore the fact is animadverted on, and punished as far as is possible in what remains of the offender, in his posterity, from whom his goods are confiscate; in his name, which bears a mark of infamy, and is made a public reproach. How unspeakably greater is the wrong done to the common Ruler of the whole world, when a soul destroys itself! loses its possibility of praising and glorifying him eternally in the participation and com-

munion of his eternal glory! how great to the glorious society of saints and angels! from whom he factiously withdraws himself, and who (though that loss be recompenced to them by their satisfaction in the just vengeance which the offended God takes upon the disloyal, apostate wretch) were to have pleased and solaced themselves in his joint felicity with their own. So that he hath done what in him lay, to make them miserable, and even to turn heaven into a place of mourning and lamentation.

The supreme, primary law under which we all are, obliges us to be happy. For it binds us to take "the Lord only for our God; to love him with all our hearts, and minds and souls, and strength," And so to love him, is to enjoy him, to delight, and acquiesce finally, and ultimately in him; and satisfy ourselves for ever in his fulness. So that every man is rebellious in being miserable, and that even against the first, and most deeply fundamental law of his creation. Nor can he love God in obedience to that law, without loving himself aright. Which love to himself, is then to be the measure of the love he is to bear to other men: and so most truly it is said, that charity begins at home. Every man ought to seek his own true felicity, and then to desire another's as his own.

But now consider, what we are to compare herewith. Rejoicing in the sins of other men, how contrary is it to the most inward nature! to the pure essence! how directly doth it strike at the very heart and soul, the life and spirit of charity! For sin is the greatest, and highest infelicity of the creature; depraves the soul within itself, vitiates its powers, deforms its beauty, extinguisheth its light, corrupts its purity, darkens its glory, disturbs its tranquillity, and peace, violates its harmonious, joyful state and order, and destroys its very life. It disaffects it to God, severs it from him, engages his justice, and inflames his wrath against it.

What is it now to rejoice in another man's sin; Think what it is, and how impossible it is to be where the love of God hath any place. What! to be glad that such a one is turning a man into a devil! a reasonable, immortal soul, capable of heaven, into a fiend of hell! To be glad that such a soul is tearing itself off from God, is blasting its own eternal hopes, and destroying all its possibilities of a future well-being! Blessed God! How repugnant is this to charity? For let us consider what it is that we can set in directest opposition to it. Let charity be the loving of another as I ought to do myself; its opposite must be, the hating of another, as I should not, and cannot sustain to do myself. As loving another therefore includes my desire

of his felicity, and whatsoever is requisite to it, till it be attained, and my joy for it when it is; loathness of his future, and grief for his present infelicity, as if the case were my own: so hating another must equally and most essentially include aversion to his future good, and grief for his present (which is the precise notion of envy) the desire of his infelicity, and whatsoever will infer it, till it be brought about, and joy when it is, or when I behold what is certainly conjunct with it. Which is the very wickedness the text animadverts on, as most contrary to charity, the *ἐπιχαιρεκακία* which not only the Spirit of God in the holy Scriptures, but the very philosophy of pagans doth most highly decry and declaim against: which is of the same family you see with envy; and no other way differs from it than as the objects are variously posited. Let the harm and evil of my brother be remote from him, and his good be present, I envy it. Let his good be remote, and any harm or mischief be present and urgent upon him, I rejoice in it. Both are rooted in hatred, the directest violation of the royal law of loving my neighbour as myself, Jam. 2. 8. And it is that sort of *ἐπιχαιρεκακία* which hath most of horror, and the very malignity of hell in it: as the sin of another, wherein this joy is taken, is an evil against the great God (which there will be occasion more directly to consider hereafter), as well as to him that commits it; a wrong to the former, and a hurt to the latter: whereas other infelicities are evils to him only whom they befall.

2. Consider charity in relation to its original, and exemplar. And so it is immediately from God, and his very image. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him, 1 Joh. 4. 16. And what sort of love is this which is made so identical, and the same thing with the very Being, and nature of God; not a turbid, and tumultuous, not a mean, and ignoble, not an imprudent, rash, and violent, least of all, an impure, polluted passion: but a most calm, wise, majestic, holy will to do good to his creatures, upon terms truly worthy of God. Good will, most conjunct with the other inseparable perfections of the Godhead: whence, with expressions of the most benign propensions towards his creatures, he still conjoins declarations of his hatred of sin, upon all occasions: that he is not a God that takes pleasure in wickedness, nor can evil dwell with him: that sin is the abominable thing which his soul loathes, that he is of purer eyes, than to look on iniquity. What can now be more contrary to the pure, and holy love, which shall resemble, and be the image of his, than to rejoice in iniquity? For as God, while he loves the person, hates the sin, men do in this case, love the sin, and hate the person.

And while this horrid, impure malignity is not from God, or like him (far be the thought from us), from whom doth it derive? Whom doth it resemble? We read but of two general fathers, whose children are specified and distinguished, even by this very thing, or its contrary, in a fore-mentioned text, 1. Joh. 3. 10. where, when both the fathers, and their children, are set in opposition to one another, this, of not loving one's brother, is given at once, both as the separating note of them who are not of God's family, and offspring, not of him as the expression is, having nothing of his holy, blessed image and nature in them (and who consequently must fetch their pedigree from hell, and acknowledge themselves spawned of the devil) and as a summary of all unrighteousness, as it is being taken (as often) for the duty of the second table, or as a very noted part of it, taken in its utmost latitude. Agreeably to that of our Saviour, Joh. 8. 44. Ye are of your father the devil—he was a murderer from the beginning—as every one is said to be that hateth his brother, 1. Joh. 2. 15. If therefore we can reconcile God and the devil together, heaven and hell, we may also charity, and rejoicing at other men's sins.

Secondly. The inconsistency of these two will further appear by comparing this monstrous disaffection of mind, with the inseparable concomitants of charity, or such things as are in connexion with it. And the argument thence will be also strong and enforcing, if that concomitancy shall be found to be certain, and the connexion firm, between those things and charity. I shall only give instance in four things, which every one that examines will acknowledge to be so connected; namely, wisdom and prudence:—piety and sincere devotedness to God, and the Redeemer:—purity: and—humility. Moralists generally acknowledge a concatenation of the virtues. Those that are truly Christian are not the less connected, but the more strongly and surely. Which connexion of these now mentioned, with charity, we shall see as to each of them severally; and at the same time, their inconsistency with this vile temper and practice.

1. For wisdom or prudence, it is so nearly allied to charity, that it is mentioned by the same name, Jam. 3. 17. The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, &c. The foregoing words, (v. 16.) shew that love is meant. These words represent the heavenly descent, and the true nature of it, both together. That it is called wisdom, shews its affinity with it, and that it partakes of its nature; dwells in a calm, sedate mind, void of disquieting passions and perturbations which it is the work of wisdom to repress and expel. Indeed

the name is manifestly intended to express, generally, the temper, the genius, the spirit of one that is born from above, and is tending thither. The contrary temper, a disposition to strife, envy, or grief for the good of another (which naturally turns into joy, for his evil, when his case alters) is called wisdom too, but with sufficiently distinguishing and disgracing additions. It is said, (v. 15.) not to be from above, but earthly, sensual, devilish; and to have the contrary effects; where envying and strife is, there is confusion *ἁναστασις* (tumult the word signifies, or disorder, unquietness, disagreement of a man with himself, as if his soul were plucked asunder, torn from itself) and every evil work, v. 16. There can be no charity towards another (as hath been noted) where there is not first a true love to a man's own soul, which is the immediate measure of it; nor that, where there is not prudence to discern his own best good, and what means are to be used to attain it. His true good he is not to expect apart by himself, but as a member of the Christian community. Not of this or that party, but the whole animated body of Christ. In which capacity he shares in the common felicity of the whole, and affects to draw as many as he can into the communion and participation of it. So he enjoys, as a member of that body, a tranquility and repose within himself. But he is undone in himself, while he bears a disaffected mind to the true interest and welfare of the body.

Wherefore to rejoice in what is prejudicial to it, is contrary to prudence and charity both at once. Put on, (saith the apostle) as the elect of God, holy and beloved bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body. (Col. 3.12.16.) implying no true peace or satisfaction can be had, but in vital union with the body. Is he a wise, or is he not a mad man, that rejoices he hath an unbound hand or foot, or an ulcerated finger, or toe rotting off from him? or that is glad a fire or the plague is broken out in the neighbourhood, that equally endangers his own house and family, yea and his own life?

2. Piety and devotedness to God, and the Redeemer, is most conjunct with true charity. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, &c. 1. Joh. 5. 2. For the true reason of our love to the one, is fetched from the other, as hath been shewn. And how absurd were it to pretend love to a christian upon Christ's account and for his sake,

while there is no love to Christ himself? But can it consist with such love and devotedness to God, to be glad at his being affronted by the sin of any man? or to Christ, whose design it was to redeem us from all iniquity, and to bless us, in turning us away from our iniquities; to rejoice in the iniquity that obstructs, and tends to frustrate his design? Do we not know he was for this end manifested, to destroy the works of the devil? And that the works of wickedness are his works? Do we not know, the great God is, in and by our Redeemer, maintaining a war against the devil, and the subjects of his kingdom; in which warfare, what are the weapons, on the devil's part, but sins? Who but sinners his soldiers? And who is there of us, but professes to be on God's part in this war? Can it stand with our duty, and fidelity to him, to be glad that any are foiled, who profess to fight under the same banner? What would be thought of him, who, in battle rejoiceth to see those of his own side fall, here one, and there one? He would surely be counted either treacherous, or mad.

3. Charity of the right kind, is most certainly connected with purity. The end (or perfection) of the commandment (or of all our commanded obedience) is charity, out of a pure heart 1. Tim. 1. 5. Sincere christians, are such as have purified their souls, in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; and must see, that they love one another with a pure heart, fervently, 1. Pet. 1. 22. Pagans have taught, there is no such thing, as true friendly love, but among good men. But how consists it with such purity, to take pleasure in other men's impurities, or make their sin the matter of jest and raillery?

4. A further inseparable concomitant of charity, is deep humility. We find them joined, and are required to put them on together, in the already mentioned context. Put on kindness, humbleness of mind; above all put on charity, (Col. 3.) and do find it among these celebrations of charity, that it vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up, v. 4. Nor can we ever, with due charity, compassionate the wants, and infirmities of others, if we feel not our own which if we do, though we are not, ourselves, guilty of heinous wickednesses, we shall so entirely ascribe it to divine, preserving mercy, as to be in little disposition to rejoice that others are.

III. We may then, upon the whole, learn hence, how we are to demean ourselves in reference to the sins of other men. So, no doubt, as charity doth command, and require: at least, so as it doth allow, or not forbid. We are manifestly concerned, not to offer violence to so sacred a thing; and shall be secure from doing it both these ways. We may therefore under these

two heads, take direction for our behaviour upon such occasions; namely, the actual sins of others, or their more observable inclinations thereto. We shall then say something to those who notwithstanding will take the liberty to rejoice in the sins of other men or take any, the least pleasure in observing them.

First. We take direction for our behaviour upon such occasions.

1. We should faithfully practise as to this case, such things as charity, and the very law of love doth expressly require and oblige us to. As we are,

(1.) To take heed of tempting their inclinations, and of inducing others to sin, whether by word or example. We are, otherwise, obliged to avoid doing so, and this greatly increases the obligation. What we are not to rejoice in upon the account of charity; we are, upon the same account, much less to procure. Especially take heed of contributing to other men's sins, by the example of your own. The power whereof, though it be silent and insensible, is most efficacious in all men's experience. A man would perhaps hear the verbal proposal of that wickedness, with horror and detestation, which he is gradually and with little reluctance drawn into, by observing it in other men's practice. A downright exhortation to it, would startle him. But the conversation of such as familiarly practise it, gently insinuates, and by slower degrees alters the habit of his mind; secretly conveys an infection like a pestilential disease; so that the man is mortally seized before he feels, and when he suspects no danger.

Most of all, let them take heed of mischieving others by their sins, who are men of more knowledge and pretend to more strictness than others. Perhaps some such may think of taking their liberty more safely: they understand how to take up the business more easily, and compound the matter with God. A horrid imagination! and direct blasphemy against the holy gospel of our Lord! If it were true, and God should (do what is so little to be hoped) mercifully give them the repentance, whereof they most wickedly presume, who knows but others may, by that example, be hardened in wickedness, and never repent? Yea, If thy greater knowledge should prompt thee to do, unnecessarily, that which (really, and abstracting from circumstances) is not a sin; but which another took to be so, and thence takes a liberty to do other things that are certainly sinful; yet walkest thou not charitably. Through thy knowledge shall a weak brother perish and be destroyed, for whom Christ died? Rom. 14. 15. with 1. Cor. 8. 10, 11. Suppose the process be, as from sitting in an idol's temple to idolatry so from needless sitting in a tavern, to drunkenness or other consequent debaucheries. But if the thing be, in its

first instance, unquestionably sinful, of how horrid consequences are the enormities of such as have been taken to be men of sanctity, beyond the common rate? What a stumbling block to multitudes! How much better might it have been for many that are of the Christian profession, if such had never been christians! And most probably for themselves also! No doubt it had been more for the honour of the Christian name. How many may be tempted to infidelity and atheism by one such instance! And whereas those scandalized persons do often afterwards, incur this fearful guilt of rejoicing in the iniquity of such, even that also, they have to answer for, with all the rest.

(2.) Charity requires, not only that we do not procure, but that we labour, as much as is possible, to prevent the sin of others. What in this kind, we are not to rejoice at, we should hinder. And indeed what we do not hinder, if it be in our power, we cause.

(3.) We should not be over-forward to believe ill of others. Charity will, while things are doubtful, at least, suspend. See how immediately conjunct these two things are. It thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, (v. 5, 6.) it is not imaginative or surmising. And in the following verse (on the better part, it must be understood,) it believeth all things, hopeth all things: that is, briefly, it is unapt to believe ill without ground, and hopes well, as long as there is any. But it is not so blindly partial, as to shut its eyes against apparent truth (of which more in its place.)

(4.) Much less should we report things at random, to the prejudice of others. That character of an inhabitant in the holy hill, must not be forgotten, that taketh not up a reproach against his neighbour.

(5.) If the matter particularly concern ourselves, and circumstances comply, we must have recourse first to the supposed offender himself, and (as our Saviour directeth) tell him his fault between him and thee alone, (Mat. 18. 15.)

(6.) We ought to compassionate his ease. Not rejoicing in iniquity, may have in it a *μελωδία*. More may be meant; we are sure more is elsewhere enjoined, solemn mourning, and the omission severely blamed. Ye are puffed up, (1 Cor. 5. 2.) (not perhaps so much with pride, as vanity, and lightness of spirit, as a bladder swollen with air, which is the significancy of that word) and have not rather mourned. Perhaps he is burdened with grief and shame. A Christian heart cannot be hard towards such a one in that case. We are to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. (Gal. 6. 2.)

(7.) We should, as our capacity and circumstances invite or

allow (at least by our prayers) endeavour his recovery. And therein use all the gentleness which the case admits, and which is suitable to a due sense of common human frailty. Take the instruction in the apostle's own words, (Gal. 6. 1.) Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

(8.) We must take heed, upon one man's account, of censuring others; for such as we know to be faulty, those, that for ought we know (and therefore ought to hope) are innocent. A practise most absurd and unrighteous, contrary to common reason and justice, as well as charity. Yet that whereto some are apt to assume a license, upon so slender and senseless a pretence, that is, because some that have under a shew of piety, hidden the impurities of a secretly vicious life; others that are openly profane, and lead notoriously lewd and flagitious lives (who though bad enough, are so far the honestest men) do add to all their other wickedness, that folly and madness, as to count all men hypocrites that are not as bad as themselves. And reckon there is no such thing as real religion in the world. A like case as if, because sometimes spectres have appeared in human shape, one should conclude there is, therefore, no such creature on earth, as a very man.

2. But there are also other things that ought to come into practise, in the case of other men's sinning, very suitable to the case, and not unsuitable to charity. Which, though they proceed more directly, rather, from some other principle, yet are not inconsistent with this, (as the graces of God's Spirit, and the duties of christians never interfere, so as to obstruct or hinder one another,)—things which, though charity do not expressly command, yet are otherwise commanded, and which charity doth not forbid. As,

(1.) That we labour to avoid the contagion of their example: that we take not encouragement to sin from their sinning. They are not our rule. We have not so learned Christ.

(2.) That we take warning by it. And endeavour that their example may not only not be tempting to us, but that it may be monitory. We should reckon such things are our examples, for this purpose, (1 Cor. 10. 11.) and were not only, heretofore, recorded and written, but they are also, in our own days, permitted to fall out for our admonition. We that think we stand, should therefore take heed lest we fall. And must remember we are to stand by faith, and are not to be high minded, but fear. It is a costly instruction that is given us in such instances. Consider the dolour and pangs that they may perhaps

endure, who are our monitors. If they do not cry to us to beware, their case doth. Reckon (as the Psalmist (ps. 73.) It is good for you to draw near to God; they that are far from him shall perish. Labour to be sincere, living christians. Let me tell you what I have often inculcated. A mere form of godliness will one time or other betray you. And that it is not being of this or that party, conjoined with a formal, lifeless religion, that will secure you from being public scandals on earth, and accursed wretches in hell. Let every one prove his own work, and make thorough work of it, so shall he have rejoicing in himself, and not in another, (Gal. 6. 4.) (yea, though he may have much cause of mourning for another,) for every one must, at last, bear his own burden and give an account of himself to God.

(3.) Seriously bless God for being kept from gross and scandalous enormities. Such words savour well, spoken with deep humility, and unfeigned sense of divine favour, not with pharisaical ostentation and scorn, "God I thank thee I am not as other men." If the poor man was so transported, and poured out his soul in tears of gratitude to God, upon the sight of a toad, that he was not such a creature; how much more cause is there for it, upon the sight of a gross sinner! For, I should think, "Who made me differ? Why was not I the example? and reduced to such a condition, before which I would prefer the greatest sinless misery in all the world?"

There is a threefold degree of mercy in our preservation from more heinous and reproachful wickedness. We may owe it to nature that less inclines us to some sins, as gluttony, drunkenness, &c. to external succedaneous providence that keeps us out of the way of temptation: or to victorious grace, able to prevail, both against corrupt inclinations of nature, and whatsoever temptations also. God is to be acknowledged in all. He is the Author of nature, the Ruler in providence, the Fountain of grace. Under the first of these notions, he ought more to be eyed and praised, than the most are aware of. I could tell you, if it were seasonable, of some (and no despicable) heathen philosophy, which speaks of such an *εὐφροια*, or goodness of natural temper (though the word hath also another signification,) that is said to carry in it, a sort of seminal probity and virtue: which, when it shall be observed how some others have the seeds of grosser vitiosity, and of all imaginable calamities, more plentifully sown in their natures, there is no little reason to be thankful for. Though all are bad enough by nature, to be children of wrath, and for ever miserable without special mercy; and though again, none have so bad natures, as to be thereby excusable in wickedness (they should endeavour, and

séeek relief the more earnestly), yet some are less bad, and their ease more remediable, by ordinary means; and therefore the difference should be acknowledged with gratitude. And surely there is no small mercy, in being kept out of the way of temptation, by the dispensation of a more favourable providence, that orders, more advantageously, the circumstances of their conditions in the world, so as they are less exposed to occasions of sin, than others are. Which providence I called succedaneous, for distinction's sake; because even the difference of natural tempers, is owing to a former providence. But now who can tell, what they should be, or do, in such circumstances as might have befallen them? It is a singular favour, not to be exposed to a dangerous trial, whereof we know not the issue. Nor yet should any satisfy themselves without that grace, which can stem the tide. Which they that possess, how should they adore the God of all grace?

(4.) Charity doth not forbid, and the case itself requires, that when others do grossly and scandalously sin, we should, at length, upon plain evidence, admit a conviction of the matters of fact. For otherwise, we cannot perform the other duty towards them, unto which, charity doth most expressly oblige, nor discharge a higher duty, which another love requires, that ought to be superior to all other. No charity can oblige me to be blind, partial, unjust, untrue to the interest of God and religion. When we are told in the text, it rejoices not in iniquity, it is added in the next breath, it rejoices in the truth: that is, in equity and righteous dealing. We are not to carry alike to good men and bad: and are therefore sometime to distinguish them, if there be a visible ground for it, or to take notice when they manifestly distinguish themselves. For it is necessary to what is next to ensue: namely, that

(5.) We are to decline their society: that is, when their heinous guilt appears, and while their repentance appears not. Scripture is so plain, and copious to this purpose, that it would suppose them very ignorant of the Bible, for whom it should be needful to quote texts. We must avoid them for our own sake, that we be not infected, nor be partakers in their sin and guilt. For theirs (and so charity requires it), that they may be ashamed, which may be the means of their reduction and salvation: and (which is most considerable) for the honour of the Christian religion, that it may be vindicated, and rescued from reproach, as much as in us lies. It ought to be very grievous to us, when the reproach of our religion cannot be rolled away without being rolled upon this, or that man; if, especially otherwise valuable. But what reputation ought to be of that value with us, as his that bought us with his blood? The great

God is our example, who refuses the fellowship of apostate persons, yea and churches: departs, and withdraws his affronted glory. It is pure, and declines all taint. When high indignities are offered, it takes just offence, and with a majestick shyness retires. None have been so openly owned by the Lord of glory, as that he will countenance them in wickedness. Though Coniah (he tells us, expressing a contempt by curtailing his name) were the signet on his right hand, yet would he pluck him thence. Yea and our Saviour directs, If our right-hand itself prove offensive, we must cut it off and cast it from us, Mat. 5. 30. And to the same purpose (chap. 18.) in the next words after he had said, Woe to the world because of offences: it must be that offences will come, but woe to him by whom the offence cometh. Wherefore if thy hand offend, &c. ver. 7. 8. It must be done as to a hand, a limb of our body, with great tenderness, sympathy and sense of smart and pain; but it must be done. *Delectionem audio, non communicationem*; ; *I hear of love, not communion*, saith an ancient upon this occasion. (*Tertullian*)

(6.) We must take heed of despondency, by reason of the sins of others, or of being discouraged in the way of godliness; much more of being diverted from it. Indeed the greatest temptation which this case gives hereunto, is (to this purpose) very inconsiderable and contemptible, that is, that by reason of the lascivious ways of some, *ἀσελγειαις*, 2. Pet. 2. 2. (as that word signifies, and is fittest to be read; referred to the impurities, of the gnosticks, as they came to be called) the way of truth (that is Christianity itself) is evil spoken of. But this ought to be heard (in respect of the scoffers themselves with great pity, but) in respect of their design to put serious christians out of their way, with disdain. And with as little regard, or commotion of mind, as would be occasioned (so one will express it) to a traveller, intent upon his journey, by the mowes and grimaces of monkeys or baboons. Shall I be disquieted, grow weary, and forsake my way, because an unwary person stumbles, and falls in it, and one ten times worse, and more a fool than he, laughs at him for it? We must in such cases mourn indeed for both, but not faint. And if we mourn, upon a true account, we shall easily apprehend it, in its cause, very separable from fainting and despondency. It is a discouraging thing for any party to be stigmatized, and have an ill mark put upon them, from the defection of this or that person among them, that was, perhaps, what he seemed not, or was little thought to be. But if we be more concerned for the honour of the Christian name, than of any one party in the world, our mourning will not be principally, upon so private an account. All wise

and good men, that understand the matter, will heartily concur with us, and count themselves obliged to do so. None that are such, or any man that hath the least pretence to reason, justice, or common sense, will ever allow themselves to turn the faults of this or that particular person (that are discountenanced as soon as they are known) to the reproach of a party. For others, that are aptest to do so, men of debauched minds and manners; with whom, not being of this or that party, but religion itself, is a reproach. I would advise all serious, and sober minded christians (of whatsoever way or persuasion) if they be twitted with the wickedness of any that seemed to be such and were not, to tell the revilers, "They are more akin to you than to us, and were more of your party (howsoever they disguised themselves) than of any other we know of."

Secondly. If yet, after all this, any will give themselves the liberty to rejoice at the sins of other men, and make them the matter of their sport and divertisement, or take any the least pleasure in observing them, I have but these two things, in the general, to say to them;—You have no reason to rejoice.—You have great reason for the contrary.

1. You have no reason to rejoice: for produce your cause, let us hear your strong reasons.

(1.) Is it that such are like you, and as bad men as yourselves? But

[1.] What if they be not like you? Every one, perhaps, is not; at whose sins (real or supposed) you at a venture take liberty to rejoice; what if your guilt be real, theirs but imagined? Sometimes through your too much haste, it may prove so; and then your jest is spoiled, and then you are found to laugh only at your own shadow. At least, you cannot, many times so certainly know another's guilt, as you may your own; and so run the hazard (which a wise man would not) of making yourselves the ridicule. And supposing your guess, in any part, hit right; what if those others sin by surprize, you by design? they in an act, you in a course? they in one kind of lewdness, you in every kind, they sin and are penitent, you sin and are obdurate? they return, you persevere? they are ashamed, you glory? These are great differences, (if they are really to be found) in any such case. But

[2.] If they be not found, and those others be like you throughout, every whit as bad as yourselves, this is sure no great matter of glorying, that I am not the very worst thing in all the world! the vilest creature that ever God made! Should it be a solace to me also that there are devils, who may perhaps be somewhat worse then they or I? Nor, though they fall in never so entirely with you in all points of wickedness, will that much

mend your matter? Can their wit added to yours, prove there will be no judgment day? or that there is no God? or, if that performance fail, can their power and yours, defend you against the Almighty? Though hand join in hand, the wicked will not go unpunished. Or again,

(2.) Suppose you are not of the debauched crew; is this your reason why you at least think you may indulge yourself some inward pleasure, that wickedness (you observe) breaks out among them who are of a distinct party from you, which you count may signify somewhat to the better reputation of your own?

But are you then of a party of which you are sure there are no ill men? There are too many faults among all parties; but God knows it is fitter for us all to mend, than to recriminate. Yea, but the party we are of, professes not so much strictness. No? What party should you be of, that professes less strictness? What more lax rule of morals have you than other christians? Do you not profess subjection to the known rules of the Bible, concerning Christian and civil conversation? You do not sure profess rebellion and hostility against the Lord that bought you! Doth not your baptismal covenant (which you are supposed to avow) bind you to as much strictness as any other christian? and can there be any other more sacred bond?

But if in other things, than matters of civil conversation, such delinquent persons were of a stricter profession (suppose it be in matters of religion and worship) doth that delinquency prove, that in those other things, you are in the right and they are in the wrong? Doth the wickedness of any person, against the rules of the common, as well as his own stricter profession, prove the profession he is of, to be false? Then, wherein the profession of protestants is stricter than of other christians, the notorious sins of wicked protestants, will conclude against the whole profession. And the wickedness of a christian, because Christianity is a stricter profession than paganism, will prove the Christian religion to be false. Who doubts but there may be found, of the Roman communion, better men than some protestants and of pagans better men than some christians? But then, they are better, only in respect of some things, wherein all christians, or all men, do agree in their sentiments; not in respect of the things wherein they differ. And the others are worse, in things that have no connexion with the matter of difference. Enough is to be found to this purpose, in some of the ancients, writing on the behalf of christians, which we need not, in so plain a case. Nor can it be thought, that men of any understanding and sobriety, will make this any argument, one way or other; or think them at all justifiable, that glory in other men's wickedness, upon this

or any other account. For such therefore, as are of so ill a mind, and think, being of a different party, gives them license, they ought to know, they make themselves of the same party; and that upon a worse account, than any difference in the rituals of religion can amount to. Upon the whole, your reason then (allege what you will) is no reason, and argues nothing but shortness of discourse, and want of reason; or that you would fain say something to excuse an ill practice, when you have nothing to say. But I must add,

2. That you have much reason to the contrary, both upon the common account, and your own.

(1.) Upon the common account. That the Christian world should, while it is so barren of serious christians, be so fertile, and productive of such monsters! made up of the sacred Christian profession, conjoined with (even worse than) paganish lives! And the more of sanctity any pretend to, the more deplorable is the case, when the wickedness breaks forth, that was concealed before, under the vizard of that pretence? Is this no matter of lamentation to you? or will you here, again say, your un-relatedness to their party, makes you unconcerned? If it do not justify your rejoicing, it will sure (you think) excuse your not mourning. Will it so indeed? Who made you of a distinct party? Are you not a christian? or are you not a protestant? And what do you account that but reformed, primitive Christianity? And so, the more it is reformed, the more perfectly it is itself. Who put it into your power to make distinguishing additions to the Christian religion, by which to sever yourselves from the body of other christians in the world, so as not to be concerned in the affairs of the body? If this or that member, say "I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?" Is it not the Christian name that is dishonoured by the scandalous lives of them that bear that name? whose laws are they that are broken, the laws of this or that party? or are they not the laws of Christ? Will you say you are unrelated to him too? or have no concern with him? Can any party be united within itself, by so sacred ties, as all true christians are with the whole body of Christ? I know no way you have to be unconcerned in such cases, as the matter of your humiliation (when they occur within your notice) but by renouncing your Christianity. Nor, indeed, would that serve the turn. For what will you do with your humanity? Are you not still a man, if you would be no longer a christian? And even that, methinks, should oblige us to bewail the depravedness, and dishonour of the nature and order of human creatures! that they who were made for the society of angels, yea, and of the blessed God himself, should be found delighting, and wallowing in worse impurities, than those of the dog or swine.

The more strictness in morals they have (falsely) pretended to, the greater is your obligation, to lament their violating those sacred rules, (which you also profess to be subject to) and not the less. Do I need to tell you, that even among pagans, where a profession of greater strictness had once been entered into, an apostacy to gross immoralities hath been the matter of very solemn lamentation. As in the school (or church should I call it?) of Pythagoras, where, when any that had obliged themselves to the observation of his virtuous precepts, did afterwards lapse into a vicious course, a funeral and solemn mourning was held for them, as if they were dead.

(2.) On your own. For when our Saviour saith, woe to that man, by whom offence cometh, doth he not also say, woe to the world because of offences? And who would not fear, and lament his share in that woe? Are you proof against all hurt by another's sin, what if it encourage you to sin too? What if it harden you in it? How many do some men's sin dispose to atheism? and to think there is nothing in religion? And if you felt in yourselves an inclination to rejoice in them, that, itself argues the infection hath caught upon you; seized your spirits, and corrupted your vitals: so that you have cause to lament even your having rejoiced; to be afflicted, and mourn and weep; to turn your laughter to mourning, and your joy to heaviness, Jam. 4. 9. One would think them indeed but half men and scarce any christians, that can allow themselves so inhuman, and unhallowed a pleasure, as rejoicing in another's sin! It is very unworthy of a man to take pleasure in seeing his fellow-man turning beast. There is little in it of the ingenuity that belongs to human nature, to delight in the harms of others; much less of the prudence, to make sport of a common mischief. And would a christian rejoice in the disadvantages of his own cause? and in the dishonour, and reproach of the very name which he himself bears?

To conclude, one would think no more should be needful to repress in any, this inclination than to consider,—what sin is, wherein they rejoice,—and what charity is, which is violated by their doing so. What to rejoice in sin! that despites the Creator, and hath wrought such tragedies in the creation! that turned angels out of heaven! man out of paradise! that hath made the blessed God so much a stranger to our world, broken off the intercourse, in so great part, between heaven and earth; obstructed the pleasant commerce, which had, otherwise, probably been between angels and men! so vilely debased the nature of man, and provoked the displeasure of his Maker against him! that once overwhelmed the world in a deluge of water, and will again ruin it by as destructive fire! To rejoice in so hateful a

thing, is to do that mad part, to cast about firebrands, arrows, and death, and say, "Am not I in sport?" And to do that which so highly offends against charity! so divine a thing! the offspring of God! the birth of heaven, as it is here below, among us mortals; the beauty, and glory of it, as it is there above, in its natural seat: the eternal bond of living union, among the blessed spirits, that inhabit there, and which would make our world, did it universally obtain in it, another heaven. Consider from whom, and from what region that must proceed, which is so contrary to God and heaven. If any will yet, in despite of divine love itself, laugh on, at so foul and frightful a thing as sin is, it is too likely to prove the Sardonian laughter; that is (as some explain that proverb) of them that die laughing; conclude their lives, and their laughter both together; and only cease to laugh and to live in the same last breath.

THE
Reconcilableness
OF
GOD'S PRESCIENCE
OF THE
SINS OF MEN,
WITH THE WISDOM AND SINCERITY
OF HIS
COUNSELS, EXHORTATIONS,
AND WHATSOEVER MEANS HE USES TO PREVENT THEM.
In a Letter,
TO THE HON. ROBERT BOYLE, Esq.
TO WHICH IS ADDED
A POSTSCRIPT
IN DEFENCE OF THE SAID LETTER.



SIR,

THE veneration I have long had for your name, could not permit me to apprehend less obligation than that of a law, in your recommending to me this subject. For within the whole compass of intellectual employment and affairs, none but who are so unhappy as not at all to know you, would dispute your right to prescribe, and give law. And taking a nearer view of the province you have assigned me, I must esteem it alike both disingenuous and undutiful, wholly to have refused it. For the less you could think it possible to me to perform in it, the more I might perceive of kindness allaying the authority of the imposition; and have the apprehension the more obvious to me that you rather designed in it mine own advantage, than that you reckoned the cause could receive any, by my undertaking it.

The doubt, I well know, was mentioned by you as other men's, and not your own; whose clear mind, and diligent inquiry leave you little liable to be encumbered with greater difficulties. Wherefore that I so soon divert from you, and no more allow these papers to express any regard unto you, till the shutting of the discourse, is only a seeming disrespect or indecorum, put in the stead of a real one. For after you have given them the countenance, as to let it be understood you gave the first rise and occasion to the business and design of them; I had little reason to slur that stamp put upon them, by adding to their (enough other) faults, that of making them guilty of so great a misdemeanor, and impertinency, as to continue a discourse of this length, to one that hath so little leisure or occasion to attend to any thing can be said by them.

THE
RECONCILEABLENESS
OF GOD'S PRESCIENCE,

8c 8c.

CHAP. I.

I. The proposal of the difficulty to be discussed.—disquisition concerning the words prescience or foreknowledge waved. II. Great care to be taken lest we ascribe to God inconsistencies under the pretence of ascribing all perfections. Equal care lest we deny to him any perfection upon the first appearance of its not agreeing with somewhat else which we have found is necessary to ascribe. Our own minds to be suspected: and endeavoured with to the utmost before we conclude, what is, or is not to be ascribed to God; if we meet with a difficulty. III. Such divine attributes as agree to the Deity by the common suffrage of all considering men, to be distinguished from those that are only concluded to belong to him upon the subtile reasonings of but a few. Yet the danger to be carefully avoided, of mistaking any dictate of corrupt affection, for a common notion. IV. His own word, therefore our surest measure, by which we are to judge what belongs to him, and what not: which plainly asserts both his wisdom, and sincerity: as our minds do also naturally suggest to us. V. It also seems plainly both to assert and prove his universal prescience, particularly of such things from which he deports: whence his dehorting is no proof of his not-foreknowing. VI. These therefore to be reconciled, which is not so difficult as to reconcile his dehortations from sinful actions, with his predeterminative concurrence thereto. This undertaking waved as not manageable. VII. Nor necessary. The principal arguments that are brought for it, not concluding—that every thing of positive being must be from God—that otherwise he could not foreknow such actions. The former considered. How we are to satisfy ourselves about the latter. VIII. The undertaken difficulty weighed. Nothing in it of contradiction. Nothing of indecorum.

I. **WHAT** there is of difficulty in this matter I cannot pretend to set down in those most apt expressions wherein it was

represented to me, and must therefore endeavour to supply a bad memory out of a worse invention. So much appears very obvious, that ascribing to the ever blessed God, among the other attributes which we take to belong to an every way perfect Being, a knowledge so perfect as shall admit of no possible accession or increase; and consequently the prescience of all future events, as whereof we doubt him not to have the distinct knowledge when they shall have actually come to pass. Since many of those events are the sinful actions or omissions of men, which he earnestly counsels and warns them against; this matter of doubt cannot but arise hereupon, namely, "How it can stand with the wisdom and sincerity which our own thoughts do by the earliest anticipation challenge to that ever happy Being, to use these (or any other means) with a visible design to prevent that, which in the mean time appears to that all-seeing eye sure to come to pass." So that, by this representation of the case, there seems to be committed together,—either first God's wisdom with this part of his knowledge, for we judge it not to consist with the wisdom of a man, to design and pursue an end, which he foreknows he shall never attain:—or secondly the same foreknowledge with his sincerity and uprightness, that he seems intent upon an end, which indeed he intends not. The matter then comes shortly to this sum. Either the holy God seriously intends the prevention of such foreseen sinful actions and omissions or he doth not intend it. If he do, his wisdom seems liable to be impleaded, as above. If he do not, his uprightness and truth.

My purpose is not, in treating of this affair, to move a dispute concerning the fitness of the words prescience or foreknowledge or to trouble this discourse with notions I understand not, of the indivisibility, and unsuccessiveness of eternal duration, whence it would be collected there can be no such thing as first or second, fore-or afterknowledge in that duration. But be contented to speak as I can understand, and be understood. That is, to call that foreknowledge which is the knowledge of somewhat that as yet is not, but that shall sometime come to pass. For it were a mere piece of legerdemain, only to amuse inquirers whom one would pretend to satisfy; or to fly to a cloud for refuge from the force of an argument, and avoid an occurring difficulty by the present reliefless shift of involving oneself in greater. Nor shall I design to myself so large a field as a tractate concerning the divine prescience: so as to be obliged to discourse particularly whatsoever may be thought to belong to that theological topic. But confine the discourse to my enjoined subject. And offer only such considerations as may some way tend to expedite or alleviate the present difficulty.

II. It were one of the greatest injuries to religion, a subversion indeed of its very foundations, and than by doing which, we could not more highly gratify atheistical minds, instead, and under pretence of ascribing perfections to the nature of God, to ascribe to it inconsistencies, or to give a self-repugnant notion of that adorable Being, the parts whereof should jumble and not accord with one another, And yet equal care is to be taken, lest while we endeavour to frame a consistent notion of God, we reject from it any thing that is truly a perfection, and so give a maimed one. Whereby we should undo our own design, and by our over much caution to make our conception of him agree with itself, make it disagree to him. For to an absolute perfect Being, no other can agree than that, which not only is not made up of contradictions; but which also comprehends in it all real perfections either explicitly, or which leaves room for all, by not positively excluding any of them. Which to do, and afterward, to assign that as the proper notion of God, were itself the greatest contradiction. We need therefore to be very wary, lest we pronounce too hastily concerning any thing, which to our most sedate thoughts, appears simply a perfection in itself, that it carries with it a repugnancy to somewhat else, necessary to be ascribed to him.

We are first to suspect (as there is greatest cause) and inquire whether the ail be not wholly in our own minds. Which in this and such like cases, we certainly shall upon due reflection, find labouring under the natural defect of that incomprehensive narrowness that is in some degree, unavoidably followed with confusion and indistinctness of thoughts. And may perhaps find cause to accuse them of the more culpable evils, both of slothfulness, that withholds them from doing what they can, and self-conceit by which they imagine to themselves an ability of doing what they cannot. It cannot be unobserved by them that have made themselves any part of their own study, that it is very incident to our minds, to grasp at more than they can compass; and then, through their own scantiness (like the little hand of a child) to throw away one thing that hath pleased us, to make room for another, because we cannot comprehend both together. It is not strange, that our so straitly limited understandings, should not be able to lodge commodiously the immense perfections of a Deity; so as to allow them liberty to spread themselves in our thoughts in their entire proportions. And because we cannot, we complain, when we feel ourselves a little pinched that the things will not consist; when the matter is, that we have unduly crowded and huddled them up together, in our incomprehensive minds, that have not distinctly conceived them.

And though this consideration should not be used for the protection of an usurped liberty of fastening upon God, arbitrarily and at random, what we please (as indeed what so gross absurdity might not any one give shelter to by such a misapplication of it?) we ought yet to think it seasonably applied, when we find ourselves urged with difficulties on one hand and the other; and apprehend it hard, with clearness and satisfaction, to ascribe to God, what we also find it not easy not to ascribe. Nor would it be less unfit to apply it for the patronage of that slothfulness wherein our discouraged minds are sometimes too prone to indulge themselves. To which purpose I remember somewhat very appositely in Minucius Felix, that many through the mere tediousness of finding out the truth, do rather, by a mean succumbency, yeild to the first specious shew of any opinion whatsoever than be at the trouble, by a pertinacious diligence, of applying themselves to a thorough search. Though the comprehension of our minds be not infinite, it might be extended much farther than usually it is, if we would allow ourselves with patient diligence to consider things at leisure, and so as gradually to stretch and enlarge our own understandings. Many things have carried the appearance of contradiction and inconsistency, to the first view of our straitened minds, which afterwards, we have, upon repeated consideration and endeavour, found room for, and been able to make fairly accord, and lodge together.

Especially we should take heed lest it be excluded by overmuch conceitedness, and a self-arrogating pride, that disdains to be thought not able to see through every thing, by the first and slightest glance of a haughty eye; and peremptorily determines that to be unintelligible, that an arrogant, uninstructed mind hath only not humility enough to acknowledge difficult to be understood. Whence it is too possible some may be overprone to detract from God what really belongs to him, lest any thing should seem detracted from themselves, and impute imperfection to him rather than confess their own. And may be so overascribing to themselves, as to reckon it a disparagement not to be endured, to seem a little puzzled for the present, to be put to pause, and draw breath awhile, and look into the matter again and again; which if their humility and patience would enable them to do; it is not likely that the Author of our faculties would be unassisting to them, in those our inquiries which concern our duty towards himself. For though in matters of mere speculation, we may be encountered with difficulties, whereof perhaps no mortal can ever be able to find out the solution, (which is no great prejudice, and may be gainful and instructive to us,) yet as to what concerns the object of our religion, it is

to be hoped we are not left in unextricable entanglements; nor should think we are till we have made utmost trial. The design being not to gratify our curiosity, but to relieve ourselves of uncomfortable doubtfulness in the matter of our worship, and (in a dutiful zeal towards the blessed object thereof) to vindicate it against the cavils of ill-minded men.

III. But if the unsuccessfulness of often repeated endeavours make us despair of being able, with so full satisfaction, to reconcile some things which we have thought were to be attributed to God; it will be some relief to us, if we find the things about which the doubt lies, are not of the same order, nor such as with equal evidence and necessity are to be affirmed of him. And when we make a comparison, we may find ourselves at a certainty concerning those his attributes which most commonly, and at the first view, approve themselves to every man's understanding. Among which we little hesitate, (as we are most concerned not to do,) about those which carry with them the import of moral goodness; and which render the object of our religion, at once, both most venerable and lovely. For none do more naturally obtain for common notions concerning him; so as even to prevent ratiocination or argument, with whomsoever the apprehension of his existence hath place.

Every man's mind, it being once acknowledged that there is a God, refuses to conceive otherwise of him, than that he is holy, just, merciful, true, &c. and rejects with abhorrence the notion of an impure, unrighteous, cruel, deceitful Deity. As for those that, by a long train of our own uncertain and lubricous reasonings, we endeavour to deduce; if we find ourselves constrained any where to admit a diffidence, it were rather to be placed here. For it is at first sight evident, since God is most certainly willing to be known of them that are sincerely willing to know him; that what is a natural impression stamped by his own hand on every man's mind, hath more of absolute certainty, than what depends on metaphysical subtlety; whereof so very few are capable, and whereby divers pretenders thereto, do so frequently, (and perhaps very dangerously) ensnare themselves. And it is of far greater importance, such a notion of God be entertained, as whereby he may be rendered amiable, and an inviting object of love (the very life and soul of all religion) than such as shall be the result, and entertainment, only of scholastic wit.

Yet also since it is very manifest that man is now become a degenerate creature, and in an apostacy from God: he is very little to be trusted with the framing his own idea of him; being certainly most unapt to allow any thing a place in it, that would have an unfavourable aspect upon his vicious inclinations

and his guilty state. And the contagion of man's sinfulness having spread itself as far as he hath propagated his own nature; so as no notion in his mind can be more common than the perversion and distemper of his mind itself; the possibility and danger is very obvious, of mistaking a dictate of depraved nature for an authentic common notion. And though these are not impossible to be distinguished, and in some cases very easy, as when men find it imposed unavoidably upon them, to apprehend and acknowledge some things which they are very unwilling should be true (in which case their sentiments have the same right to be believed as the testimony of an enemy on the opposite party's behalf,) we have yet no reason to neglect any other means, whereby we may be more certainly directed how to conceive of God, or what we are to attribute to him, and what not.

IV. Nor can we be at a greater certainty, than in admitting such things to belong to the blessed God as he plainly affirms of himself; or any way, by his word, evidently discovers to belong to him. For as none knows the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him, so the things of God are known to none but the Spirit of God. (1 Cor. 2. 11.) Taking therefore his own word for our measure in the present case (which I will suppose the reader not to think it unreasonable to appeal to; and what is here said, is intended only for those that have that estimate of the writings wont to go under that name) what it says of him (much more what it proves) will no doubt be admitted for certain truth. Though, if it say such things, as, to us, seem not so manifestly to agree with one another, our endeavour must be the more earnest and solicitous (as also it ought to be the more modest) to discuss, and remove the *ἐναντιοφυνές* or whatsoever semblance of disagreement. And whosoever concern themselves to peruse that venerable book, will find every where, on the one hand proclaimed and magnified in it, (what our own minds cannot but have been pre-possessed of,) the most exquisite wisdom of God, whereby he forms and contrives the methods of all his dispensations, and disposes them in the aptest subserviency to his own great and most important ends: that "all his ways are judgment," (Psalm. 32. 4.) and that he "worketh all things according to the counsel of his will." (Eph. 1. 11.) In sum, that all wisdom is appropriated to him, that he is celebrated in the stile of "God, only wise," (Rom. 16. 27.) Nor are we therefore to think it strange, if, many times, we are not able to trace him out, or understand the reason of every thing he thinks fit to do. For the paths of the more perfect wisdom, must therefore be expected to be the more abstruse, and remoter from common apprehension.

How often do we find ourselves so far outgone by wise and designing men, as that we are sometimes constrained to confess and admire their great prudence and conduct (when they have effected their purposes) in those managements, which we have before beheld, either with silent ignorance, or perhaps, not without censure. How much less should the wisest of men regret it, to find all their conjectures exceeded by the infinite wisdom. In the contemplation whereof, we find the great apostle (notwithstanding the vast capacity of his divinely enlightened understanding) exclaiming in a transport, O the depths ! Rom. 11. 33. And when our eyes tell us, from so manifest stupendous effects, how far we are exceeded by him in power, it were reasonable to expect he should surpass us proportionably in the contrivances of his wisdom also. And whereas the conjunction is rare, among men, of deep political wisdom, with integrity and strict righteousness ; this proceeds from the imperfection and insufficiency of the former in great part, that they know not how to compass their designs, unless often, by supplying their want of wisdom, out of the spoil and violation of their justice and honesty. Otherwise, these are things not so altogether out of credit in the world, but that men would rather accomplish their purposes by fair and unexceptionable means, if they could tell how. Only the respect and deference they have for them is less, than what they bear to their own interests and ends.

But besides the natural, inflexible rectitude of the divine will, we are secured, from his all-sufficiency, that we shall never be fraudulently imposed upon by any of his declarations unto the children of men. For there is nothing to be gained by it : and we cannot conceive what inducement he should have, to make use of any so mean and pitiful shifts for the governing of his creatures, whom he spontaneously raised out of nothing, and hath so perfectly within his power. Unless we should be so most intolerably injurious to him, as to imagine a worse thing of him than we would of the worst of men, that he loved falsehood for its own sake. And that, against his so constantly professed detestation of it, the declared repugnancy of it to his nature, and the even tenour of his word (every-where agreeing with itself herein) so often describing him by that property, "God that cannot lie." And, with the same positiveness, avowing his own uprightness, and requiring it, expressing his great love to it, and the high delight he takes to find it in his (intelligent) creatures. The righteous God loveth righteousness, and with his countenance doth he behold the upright. (Psal. 11. 7.) Nor is his testimony the less to be regarded for that it is laudatory, and of himself. For we are to consider the prerogative of

of him that testifies, and that if he were not *ἀνιόπιστος* *faithful to himself* he were not God. Besides that his giving us this, or any representation of himself (to whom it were enough to enjoy his own perfections) is a vouchsafement, and done of mere grace and favour to us, that we may by it be induced to place with satisfaction, our unsuspecting trust and confidence in him. As also, that he says in all this, no other thing of himself, than what our own minds, considering him as God, must acknowledge most worthy of him, and agreeing to him with the most apparent necessity. This part, therefore, of the idea of God hath so firm a foundation, both in the natural complexion of our own minds, and the report which his word makes of him, that on this hand we are hemmed in as by a wall of adamant: and cannot have the thought of defending his prescience, by intrenching upon his wisdom and truth, without offering the highest violence both to him and ourselves.

V. On the other hand also, as it cannot but seem to us a higher perfection to know all things at once, than gradually to arrive to the knowledge of one thing after another; and so proceed from the ignorance of some things to the knowledge of them; and that nothing is more certain, than that all possible perfection must agree to God; so we find his own word asserting to him that most perfect knowledge which seems to exclude the possibility of increase; or that any thing should succeed into his knowledge. For how plainly is it affirmed of him that he knows all things. And even concerning such future things as about which our present inquiry is conversant, the affirmation is express and positive. I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done. Isai. 46. 9. 10. with ch. 41. 22. 23. Nor is the affirmation naked, and unfortified. For in the same sacred records, we have the same thing both affirmed and proved: inasmuch as we find, in a great part thereof, are contained things foretold by most express prophecy, unto which the events recorded in other parts (and many of them in other unquestioned writings besides) have so punctually corresponded, as to leave no place for doubt or cavil, Instances are so plain and well known that they need not be mentioned. And surely what was so expressly foretold could not but have been foreknown. It seems then an attempt also equally hopeless and unrelieving, as it were adventurous and bold, to offer at the protection of his wisdom and sincerity, by assaulting his prescience or certain foreknowledge of whatsoever shall come to pass. And that their defence is not to be attempted this way, will further most evidently appear from hence, that it is not impossible to assign particular instances of some or other most con-

fessedly wicked actions ; against which God had directed those ordinary means of counselling and dehorting men, and which yet it is most certain he did foreknow they would do. As though it was so punctually determined even (Exod. 12. 41.) to a day, and was (though not so punctually) Gen. 15. 3. foretold unto Abraham, how long, from that time, * his seed should be strangers in a land that was not theirs ; yet how frequent are the counsels and warnings sent to Pharaoh to dismiss them sooner ; yea how often are Moses and Aaron directed to claim their liberty, and exhort Pharaoh to let them go, and at the same time told, he should not hearken to them. Exod. 4. &c. Nor indeed is it more seldom said that the Lord hardened pharaoh's heart, lest he should. Though it may be a doubt whether those passages be truly translated ; for the gentler meaning of the hebrew idiom being well known, it would seem more agreeable to the text, to have expressed only the intended sense, than to have strained a word to the very utmost of its literal import, and manifestly beyond what was intended. After the like manner is the prophet Ezekiel (chap. 3. v. 4.) sent to the revolted Israelites. And directed to speak to them with God's own words, the sum and purport whereof was to warn and dehort them from their wicked ways lest they should die ; when as yet it is plainly told him, but the house of Israel will not hearken to thee, for they will not hearken to me. Unto which same purpose it is more pertinent, than necessary to be added, that our Saviour's own plain assertions that he was the Son of God, the many miracles by which he confirmed it, and his frequent exhortations to the Jews to believe in him thereupon, had a manifest tendency to make him be known and believed to be so, and consequently to prevent that most horrid act of his crucifixion (for it is said, and the matter speaks itself, that, if they had known they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.) Notwithstanding that it was a thing which God's hand and counsel had determined before to be done. (Act. 4. 28.) That is, foreseeing wicked hands would be prompt and ready for this tragic enterprise, his sovereign power and wise counsel concurred with his foreknowledge so only, and not with less latitude, to define or determine the bounds and limits of that malignity, than to let it proceed unto this execution. And to deliver him up (not by any formal resignation, or surrender, as we well know, but permitting him) thereunto. Though the same phrase of delivering him, hath elsewhere, another notion of assigning or appointing him to be a propitiation for the sins

* What there is of difficulty or doubt about this prophecy, see fully cleared in the late letter to the Diet.

of men, by dying; which was done by mutual agreement between both the parties, him that was to propitiate, and him who was to be propitiated. In which respect our Saviour is also said to have given himself for the same purpose; (Tit. 2. 14.) which purpose it was determined not to hinder prepared hands to execute in this way.

Now if it did appear but in one single instance only, that the blessed God did foreknow, and dehort from the same act, it will be plainly consequent, that his warning and dehortations from wicked actions in the general, can with no pretence be alleged as a proof against his universal prescience. For if the argument he dehorted from the doing such an action, therefore he did not foreknow it would be able to conclude any thing, it must be of sufficient force to conclude universally; which it cannot do, if but a single instance can be given, wherein it is apparent, he did both dehort and foreknow. It can only pretend to raise the doubt which we have in hand to discuss, how fitly and with what wisdom and sincerity, he can be understood to interpose his counsels and monitions in such a case.

VI. Wherefore nothing remains but to consider how these may be reconciled, and made appear to be no way inconsistent with one another. Nor are we to apprehend herein so great a difficulty, as it were to reconcile his irresistable pre-determinative concurrence to all actions of the creature, even those that are in themselves most malignantly wicked, with the wisdom and righteousness of his laws against them, and severest punishments of them according to those laws. Which sentiments must, I conceive, to any impartial understanding, leave it no way sufficiently explicable, how the influence and concurrence, the holy God hath to the worst of actions, is to be distinguished from that which he affords to the best; wherein such inherently evil actions are less to be imputed to him who forbids them, than to the malicious tempter who prompts to them, or the actor that does them: or wherein not a great deal more. And leave it undeniable, that the matter of all his laws, in reference to all such actions that ever have been done in the world, was a simple and most strictly natural impossibility. Nothing being more apparently so, than either not to do an action whereto the agent is determined by an infinite power; or to separate the malignity thereof, from an intrinsically evil action; and that this natural impossibility of not sinning with the ineluctable fate of his (at first) innocent creatures. Who also (as the case is to be conceived of with the angels that kept not their first station must be understood irreversibly condemned to the suffering of eternal punishment, for the not doing of what it was (upon these terms) so absolutely impossible to them to avoid.

This too hard province the present design pretends not to intermeddle in, as being neither apprehended manageable, for those briefly mentioned considerations, and many more that are wont to be insisted on in this argument.

VII. Nor indeed, is it at all necessary: for though many considerations have been with great subtilty, alleged and urged to this purpose, by former and some modern writers, (which it is besides the design of these papers severally to discuss) these two, which seem the most importunate and enforcing, will, I conceive, be found of little force; and then, the less strength which is in others, will be nothing formidable: that it necessarily belongs to the Original and Fountain Being, to be the first Cause of what soever being; and consequently that what there is of positive being in any the most wicked action, must principally owe itself to the determinative productive influence of this first and sovereign Cause. Otherwise it would seem there were some being that were neither *primum*, *first*, nor *a primo from the first*.

And again (which we are more concerned to consider, because it more concerns our present subject) that it were otherwise impossible God should foreknow the sinful actions of men (many whereof, as hath been observed, he hath foretold) if their futurition were a mere contingency, and depended on the uncertain will of the subordinate agent, not determined by the supreme. But neither of these seem able to infer the dismal conclusion of God's concurring by a determinative influence unto wicked actions. Not the former: for it may well be thought sufficiently to salve the rights and privileges of the first Cause, to assert that no action can be done but by a power derived from it; which in reference to forbidden actions, intelligent creatures may use or not use as they please, without over-asserting, that they must be irresistably determined also, even to the worst of actions done by them. Besides that it seems infinitely to detract from the perfection of the ever blessed God, to affirm he was not able to make a creature, of such a nature, as, being continually sustained by him, and supplied with power every moment suitable to its nature, should be capable of acting unless whatsoever he thus enables, he determine (that is, for it can mean no less thing, impel) it to do also. And except it were affirmed impossible to God to have made such a creature, (that is, that it implied a contradiction, which certainly can never be proved) there is no imaginable pretence why it should not be admitted he hath done it: rather than so fatally expose the wisdom, goodness and righteousness of God, by supposing him to have made laws for his reasonable creatures, impossible, through his own irresistible counter-action, to be observed:

and afterwards to express himself displeas'd, and adjudge his creatures to eternal punishments, for not observing them.

I am not altogether ignorant what attempts have been made to prove it impossible, nor again, what hath been done to manifest the vanity of those attempts. But I must confess a greater disposition to wonder, that ever such a thing should be disputed, than dispute so plain a case. And that a matter whereupon all moral government depends, both human and divine, should not have been determin'd at the first sight. It is not hard for a good wit to have somewhat to say for anything. But to dispute against the common sense of mankind, we know before hand, is but to trifle; as the essay to prove the impossibility of local motion. The notion of the goodness and righteousness of God, methinks, should stick so close to our minds, and create such a sense in our souls, as should be infinitely dearer to us than all our senses and powers. And that we should rather choose to have our sight, hearing, and motive power, or what not besides disputed, or even torn away from us than ever suffer ourselves to be disput'd into a belief, that the holy and good God should irresistibly determine the wills of men to, and punish, the same thing. Nor is it difficult, to urge more puzzling sophisms against the former, than for this latter. But the efforts of a sophistical wit against sense, and more against the sense of our souls, and most of all against the entire sum and substance of all morality, and religion, at once, are but like the attempt to batter a wall of brass with straws and feathers. Nor is the assault, on this part, more feeble and impotent, than the defence is wont to be of the other. For I would appeal to the quick refined sense of any sober and pious mind, after serious, inward consultation with itself; being closely urged, with the horror of so black a conception of God, that he should be supposed irresistibly to determine the will of a man to the hatred of his own most blessed self, and then to exact severest punishments for the offence done, what relief it would now be to it, to be only taught to reply, that man is under the law, and God above it. A defence that doubles the force of the assault. What! that God should make a law, and necessitate the violation of it! and yet also punish that violation of it! And this be thought a sufficient salvo, that himself is not subject to any law! Will a quick-scented, tender spirit, wounded by so unsufferable indignity, offered to the holy God, be any wit eased or relieved, by the thin sophistry of only a collusive ambiguity in the word law? which sometimes signifies the declared pleasure of a ruler to a subject, in which sense any eye can see God can be under no law, having no superior. But not seldom also, an habitual fixed principle and

rule of acting after one steady tenour. In which sense how manifest is it, that the perfect rectitude of God's own holy gracious nature is an eternal law to him, infinitely more stable, and immutable, than the ordinances of day and night ! Or what relief is there in that dream of the supposed possibility of God's making a reasonable creature with an innocent aversion to himself ? For what can be supposed more repugnant ? or what more impertinent ? If innocent, how were it punishable ? A law already made in the case, how can it be innocent ?

But whatsoever strength there may be in arguments, and replies, to and fro, in this matter : that which hath too apparently had greatest actual efficacy, with many, hath been the authority and name of this or that man of reputation ; and the force of that art of imputing a doctrine, already under a prejudicial doom, to some or other ill-reputed former writer. I profess not to be skilled in the use of that sort of weapons. And what reputation ought to be of so great value with us, as that of God and religion ! Though if one would take that invidious course, it were easy to evince, that such a prædeterminative influx to the production of all whatsoever actions, is the dearly espoused notion of one, of as deservedly an ill character, as ever had the name of a Christian writer. And whether he would not take that name for a dishonour to him, I pretend not to know. But let us take this sober account of the present case, that in this temporary state of trial, the efficacious grace of God is necessary to actions sincerely good and holy ; which therefore all ought undespairingly to seek and pray for. But that in reference to other actions, he doth only supply men with such a power, as whereby, they are enabled, either to act, or, in many instances (and especially when they attempt anything that is evil) to suspend their own action. And surely it carries so unexceptionable a face and aspect with it, that no man, that is himself sober, will think the worst name, of whosoever shall have said the same thing, were a prejudice to it ; or should more oblige him to reject it, than we would think ourselves obliged to throw away gold, or diamonds, because an impure hand hath touched them ; or to deny Christ, because the devils confessed him. Though also, if any should impute the so stating of this matter, to any author, that hath been wout to go under an ill name and character, in the Christian church ; there were a great oversight committed ; to say no harder thing of it. For the writers whose names would be supposed a prejudice, have neither said the same thing, nor with the same design. They would have this indetermination of the power afforded to the creature, to be so universal, as to extend equally to evil actions and to good. And have asserted it with a manifest design to exclude efficacious

grace, in reference to the best actions. Whereas this account would make it not of so large extent: (as it were very unreasonable any should;) for though it may well be supposed extendible to many actions, besides those that are intrinsically evil or to any that are not spiritually good, yet nothing enforces (nor can it be admitted) that it should actually, and always extend so far. For who can doubt but God can overrule the inclinations and actions of his creature, when he pleases; and, as shall best consist with his wisdom, and the purity of his nature, either lay on, or take off his determining hand. Nor is it here asserted with any other design, than to exempt the blessed God, as far as is possible; from a participation in the evil actions of his creatures; in the mean time entitling him most entirely to those that are sincerely good. Though it must be left imputable to men themselves (it being through their own great default) if they have not the grace, which might effectually enable them, to do such also. And as for the latter. This supposed indetermination of the human will, in reference, especially, to wicked actions, is far from being capable of inferring, that God cannot therefore foreknow them; or anything more, than that we are left ignorant of the way, how he foreknows them. And how small is the inconvenience of acknowledging that, yea, and how manifest the absurdity of not acknowledging the like, in many cases? since nothing is more certain, than that God doth many things besides, whereof the manner, how he does them, we can neither explicate nor understand! for neither is it difficult to assign instances more than enough of actions done by ourselves of the manner whereof we can give no distinct account, as those of vision, intellection, with sundry other.

Some have been at great pains we well know to explain the manner of God's foreknowledge of these futurities, otherwise than by laying the foundation thereof in his (supposed) efficacious will or decree of them. They that can satisfy themselves with what Thomas and Scotus have attempted, and the followers of them both; that can understand what it is, with the one, for all things to be eternally present to the divine intellect in *esse reali*, and not understand by it, the world to have been eternal. Or, what with the other, that they be all present only in *esse representativo*, and not understand by it, barely that they are all known, and no more, (which seems like the explication of the word invasion by invasion) let them enjoy their own satisfaction. For my own part I can more easily be satisfied to be ignorant of the modus or medium of his knowledge, while I am sure of the thing; and I know not why any sober-minded man might not be so too. While we must all be content to be ignorant of the manner, yea, and nature too, of a thousand things besides, when

that such things there are, we have no doubt. And when there are few things, about which we can, with less disadvantage, suffer our being ignorant; or with less disreputation, profess to be so. It cannot therefore be so affrightful a thing, to suppose God's foreknowledge of the most contingent future actions, well to consist with our ignorance, how he foreknows them, as that we should think it necessary, to overturn and mingle heaven and earth, rather than admit it.

VIII. Wherefore waving that unfeasible, unnecessary, and unenjoined task, of defending God's predeterminative concurrence unto sinful actions; our encounter must only be of the more superable difficulty, to reconcile his prescience of them, with his provisions against them, that is, how fitly the wise and holy God can have interposed his precautions and dissuasions, in their own nature, aptly tending to withhold and divert men, from those evil actions, which he yet foresees they will do. And it is, in the first place, evident, there can be no pretence to allege that there is any such repugnancy in the matter, as shall amount to a contradiction, so much as virtual, or which the things signified, on the one part and the other, can be understood any way to import, that indeed there should be a direct and explicate contradiction between foreknowing and dehorting, we may, at first sight, perceive the terms cannot admit; for there is nothing enuntiated (affirmed or denied) in either. But let the sense of both be resolved into propositions, capable of being confronted to one another, and all that can be made of the former, will only come to this; "You will do such a thing," and of the latter, no more but this; "You ought not to do it;" these are at as great distance, as can be imagined, from grating upon, or jarring with one another. And wherein is the indecorum of it, that both these *effata propositions* should proceed from the same mouth, namely, of a governor, or one that hath authority over others.

We will, for discourse sake, suppose a prince endowed with the gift or spirit of prophecy. This, most will acknowledge a great perfection, added to whatsoever other his accomplishments. And suppose we this his prophetic ability so large, as to extend to most events that shall fall out within his dominions. Is it hereby become unfit for him to govern his subjects by laws? or any way admonish them of their duty? hath this perfection so much diminished him as to depose him from his government? It is not indeed to be dissembled, that it were a difficulty to determine, whether such foresight were, *for himself*, better or worse. Boundless knowledge seems only in a fit conjunction with as unbounded power. But it is altogether unimaginable that it should destroy his relation to his subjects. As what of it

were left, if it should despoil him of his legislative power, and capacity of governing according to laws made by it? And to bring back the matter to the supreme Ruler: Let it for the present be supposed only, that the blessed God hath, belonging to his nature, the universal prescience whereof we are discoursing; we will, surely, upon that supposition, acknowledge it to belong to him as a perfection. And were it reasonable to affirm that by a perfection he is disabled for government; or were it a good consequence, "He foreknows all things, he is therefore unfit to govern the world."

CHAP. II.

I. God's supposed foreknowledge of contingent actions, alters not the natural goodness or evil of them. II. How God may be said to act for any end? his public declarations to men have a more principal end, than their obedience, and felicity. Which is attained, though this fail. The difficulty, therefore, concerning the divine wisdom vanishes. III. That, concerning the sincerity of God considered. That other end, man's obedient compliance, attained in great part. IV. God not obliged to procure his published edicts should reach every individual person. It is owing to the wickedness of the world that they generally do not so. V. He shews special favour to some nations herein, without being injurious to others; yea expresses much clemency and mercy to all. VI. Where his gracious methods succeed not; to be considered he only applies himself to them in common with the rest. VII. Proposed to be inquired; what can be alleged out of his word, that seems less consistent with sincerity, towards them with whom things do not finally issue well? What fit course could be thought of more consistent therewith? As to the former, what appearance such alleged passages can be justly said to have? Propounded to be (afterwards) shewn; that the truth of the thing corresponds to that appearance. VIII. What his declarations to men amount unto? What they are, by them, encouraged to expect? IX. Expressions of passionate earnestness how to be understood? X. The ends to be brought about by God's own action only; and those which should be brought to pass by the intervenient action of man to be distinguished. God's word represents him not as so willing the salvation of all men, as that it shall be effected whatsoever course they take.

I. **AND**, that we may consider the matter more narrowly would the supposition of such foreknowledge in God, make

that cease to be man's duty, which had otherwise been so? and take away the differences of good and evil? Would it nullify the obligation of God's law, and make man's own inclination his only rule? or, if it be said, because it is foreknown, man will do such a thing, therefore he may, where is the connection? For what influence can foreknowledge have, to alter or effect any way, either the nature of the thing foreknown, or the temper of the person that shall do it; any more than the present knowledge of the same thing, now in doing? which knowledge none would deny to God: and which, when it occurs to a man, is no more understood to make an evil action innocent, than the action makes the eye guilty, of him that beholds it only, and detests it at once. Surely what is, in its own nature, whether, good or evil, can never not be so, be it foreknown or not foreknown.

But if what was otherwise man's duty, be still his duty, what can make it unfit that it be declared, and made known to him to be so? and how is that otherwise to be done, than by these disputed means? yea (for this is the case) what can make it less fit, than it would be that God should cease to rule over the world? and quit the right of his government to his revolted creatures, upon no other reason, than only that he foresees they have a mind to invade it? It may now perhaps be said, all this reasoning tends indeed to establish the contrary assertion, that notwithstanding God do foreknow man's sin, it is however necessary he forewarn him of it—but it answers not the objected difficulty, namely, how reasonably any such means are used for an unattainable end. As it is manifest, the end, man's obedience, cannot be attained when it is foreknown he will not obey.

II. It may here, before we proceed further, not be unseasonable to consider, (a matter, as is known, wont to be much vexed in the schools) how God may be said to act for any end at all. And it appears very certain, that he who is so every way absolutely perfect and happy, cannot be thought to intend and pursue an end, after the same manner as we are wont to do, We being conscious to ourselves of indigency, or, at the best, of obligation to the Author of our being, are wont to design this or that end for the relieving of ourselves, or the approving ourselves to him. And, our satisfaction depending upon the attainment of it, we solicitously deliberate about the fittest means to attain it? and are tossed with various passions, of desire and hope and fear and joy and grief according as the end is apprehended more or less excellent, or likely to be attained; varying often our course upon new emergencies, as this or that

may probably promote, or hinder the success of our pursuit. In short, we pursue ends, as being both impatient of disappointment, and uncertain of their attainment.

The blessed God, being indigent of nothing, nor under obligation to any one, cannot be supposed to propound an end to himself as that whereupon his satisfaction depends, which were inconsistent with his already complete felicity, and would argue him but potentially happy. But acting always from an immense self-sufficient fulness of life, and of all perfections, doth ever satisfy himself in himself, and take highest complacency in the perfect goodness, congruity and rectitude of his own most holy will and way. And again, as he doth not seek a yet unattained satisfaction, in any end he can be supposed to propound to himself; so nor can he be thought to deliberate, as we are wont to do, concerning the means of effecting any. For deliberation would imply doubtfulness and uncertainty, which his absolute perfection cannot admit; nor doth need, the whole frame and compass of things intended by him, in their distinct references and tendencies, being, at once, present to his all-comprehending view; so that there can be no place for any intermediate knowledge with him, or for any new resolves thereupon. Known to the Lord are all his works from the beginning of the world. Acts 15. 18.

This being premised; it is now further to be considered, that howsoever one end oftentimes is not attained, unto which the publicly extant declarations of the divine will have a visible aptitude, namely, the obedient compliance of men with them; another, more noble end was, however, attainable, not unbecoming the designment of the divine wisdom, and which it was every way most worthy of God to be more principally intent upon. It is fit the mention of this be prefaced with an obvious remark;—that the misapprehension of the state of things between God and man doth, in great part, owe itself, to our aptness to compare unduly, the divine government with that of secular rulers; and our expectation to find them in all things agreeing with each other. Whereas their cannot but be a vast difference, between the constitution and end of God's government over his creatures, and more especially mankind, and that of man over his fellow Creatures of the same kind. The government of secular, human rulers, can never be, in the constitution of it, altogether absolute, nor ought, in the design of it, primarily to intend the personal advantage of the ruler himself, who as much depends upon his subjects, and hath (at least) as great need of them, as they can be understood to have of him. But as to the blessed God the matter is apparent and

hath its own triumphant evidence, that since he is the original and root of all being, that all things are mere dependencies upon his absolute pleasure, and entirely of him, and by him, all ought to be to him that he alone might have the glory.

Wherefore, it must be asserted, and cannot fail of obtaining to be acknowledged, by every impartial, and sober considerer of things, that there is a much more noble and important end, that all God's public edicts and declarations to men, (the instruments of his government over them) do more principally aim at, than their advantage, namely, the dignity and decorum of his government itself: and that he may be found in every thing to have done as became him, and was most worthy of himself. And what could be more so, than that he should testify the aversion of his own pure and holy nature, to whatsoever was unholy and impure, his love of righteousness and complacency to be imitated herein, together with his steady, gracious propension to receive all them into the communion of his own felicity or blessedness (for the Redeemer's sake) who should herein comply with him? Nor are we to understand that he herein so designs the reputation of his government, as men are often wont to do things out of design for their interest in that kind, that are otherwise, against their (over ruled) inclination. But we are to account these his declarations (although they are acts of an intelligent Agent, and the products of wisdom and counsel, yet also) the spontaneous emanations of his own holy, and gracious nature, such as wherein he most fully agrees, and consents with himself. And is it now to be expected, that because he foresees men will be wicked, and do what shall be unworthy of them, he must therefore lay aside his nature, and omit to do what shall be worthy of himself?

III. And hereupon it may be expected, the more ingenuous and candid, will allow themselves to think the matter tolerably clear, in reference to the former part of the proposed difficulty; that is, will apprehend this way of dealing with men not imprudent, or inconsistent with the divine wisdom, since, though one end, in a great part, fail, yet another, more valuable, is attained. But yet, as to the latter part, the difficulty may still urge, namely, how it can stand with sincerity; whereas that end also which fails, seems to have been most directly intended, that the blessed God should seem so earnestly intent upon it: since it is hardly conceivable, that the same thing should be, at once, seriously intended as an end, and yet, at the same time, give the eye, which seems to design it, no other prospect than of a thing never to be brought to pass.

Wherefore we are next to consider, that we may proceed gradually, and not omit to say what is in itself considerable:

though it is not all (which cannot be said at once) that is to be said:—that the public declarations of the divine will, touching man's duty, do attain that very end, his obedient compliance therewith, in great part, and as to many (although it be foreknown they will prove ineffectual with the most) and are the no less successful, than the apt means of attaining it. Nor, certainly, if it were foreknown the world would be so divided, as that some would obey, and others not obey, was it therefore the fittest course, that these two sorts should, by some extraordinary act of providence, be carefully severed from each other; and those be dealt withal apart from the rest. But rather, that the divine edicts should be of a universal tenour, and be directed to all as they are; the matter of them being of universal concernment, and equally suitable to the common case of all men.

IV. Neither yet was it necessary, that effectual care should be taken, they should actually reach all, and be applied to every individual person. Since it is apparently to be resolved into the wickedness of the world, that they do not so; and that there is not a universal diffusion of the gospel into every part. For it being evident to any one's reflection, that men are in a state of apostacy and defection from their Maker and common Lord, and therefore subject to his displeasure. Whereas the merciful God hath done his own part, and so much beyond what was to be expected from him; issued out his proclamations of peace and pardon, upon so easy and indulgent terms, as are expressed in his gospel; if, hereupon, men also did their part, behaved themselves suitably to the exigency of their case, and as did become reasonable creatures, fallen under the displeasure of their Maker, (whereof their common condition affords so innumerable, so pregnant proofs) the gospel wheresoever it should arrive, would have been entertained with so great a transport of joy, and so ready and universal acceptance, as very soon to have made a great noise in the world: and being found to be of a universal tenour and concernment, and that what it says to one nation, it equally says the same to every one; it could not but be, that messengers would interchangeably have run from nation to nation; some to communicate, others to inquire after those strange tidings of great joy unto all people, lately sent from heaven; concerning the Emmanuel, God with us; God, again upon his return to man, and now in Christ reconciling the world to himself. And thus how easily, and even naturally, would the gospel soon have spread itself through the world? especially the merciful God having so provided, that there should be an office constituted, and set up; a sort of men, whose whole business it should be, to propagate

and publish those happy tidings. But that men should so indulge their sensual, terrene inclination, as not at all to use their understandings, and considering power, about other matter than only what are within the sight of their eye, when by so easy and quick a turn of thoughts they might see and find out who made them, and was the Original of their life and being, and that things are not right, and as they should be, between him and them; and so by what is within the compass of natural revelation, be prepared for what is supernatural. And not that only, but to that stupidity, by which they are unable to inquire after and receive, to add that obstinate malignity by which they are apt to reject and oppose the merciful discoveries and overtures of their offended, reconcilable Creator and Lord. How manifestly doth this devolve the whole business of the little, slow progress of the gospel in the world, upon themselves only! As suppose we a prince of the greatest clemency, benignity, and goodness, from whom a whole country of his subjects have made a most causeless defection; hereupon to send to the whole body of the rebels, a gracious proclamation of free pardon upon their return to their allegiance, and duty; and it only from hence comes to pass, that every individual person of them, distinctly understands not what the message from their prince did import; because, they that heard it would not, many of them, allow themselves to consider and regard it; and others of them, with despiteful violence, fell upon the heralds, barbarously butchering some of them, and ignominiously repelling the rest. Who would not say, that prince had fully done his part, and acquitted himself answerably to the best character, though he should send to the rebels no further overtures. Much more, if through a long tract of time, he continue the same amicable endeavours for their reducement; notwithstanding the constant experience of the same ill success? Who would not cast the whole business of the continued ill understanding, between him and the revolvers, upon themselves. And reckon it impossible, any should be ignorant, of his kind and benign inclinations and intentions, if an implacable enmity, and disaffection to him and his government, were not their common temper?

Though so infinitely do the mercies of God, exceed those of the most merciful prince on earth, as well as his knowledge and power; that wheresoever there are any exempt cases, we must conceive him equally able and inclined to consider them distinctly. And so vastly different, may we well suppose the degrees of happiness and misery to be, in the other world; as that there may be latitude enough, of punishing and rewarding men, proportionably to the degrees of light they have had, and the more

or less malignity, or propension to reconciliation, was found with them thereupon.

V. Nor again was it at all incongruous, or unbecoming, that the blessed God, this being the common temper and disposition of all men, to reject his gracious tenders, should provide, by some extraordinary means, that they might not be finally rejected by all. For what can be more appropriate to sovereignty (even where it is infinitely less absolute) than arbitrarily, to design the objects of special favour? Who blames a prince, for placing special marks of his royal bounty, or clemency here and there as he thinks fit? or that he hath some peculiar favourites, with whom he familiarly converses, whom he hath won, by some or other not-common inducements, and assured their loyal affection: though there be thousands of persons in his dominions besides, of as good parts, dispositions and deserts as they? It belongs to sovereignty, only so to be favourable to some, as, in the mean time, to be just towards all. Yea and it must be acknowledged, such are the dispensations of the holy God towards the whole community of mankind, as import, not only strict righteousness, but great clemency and mercy also. Though they might easily understand themselves to be offenders, and liable to the severities of his justice, they are spared by his patience, sustained by his bounty, protected by his power: their lives and properties are fenced by his own laws. And whereas they are become very dangerous enemies to one another: and each one his own greatest enemy; it is provided by those laws, even for the worst of men, that none shall injure them, that all love them, and seek their good. He interposes his authority on their behalf; and, if any wrong them, he takes for an affront done to himself. By the same laws, they are directed to industry, frugality, sobriety, temperance, to exercise a government over themselves, to bridle and subdue their own exorbitant lusts and passions, their more immediate tormentors and the sources of all the calamities and miseries, which befall them in this world. By all which evidences of his great care, and concern for their welfare, they might understand him to have favourable propensions towards them, and that though they have offended him, he is not their implacable enemy; and might, by his goodness, be led to repentance.

Yea and moreover; he hath sent them a Redeemer, his own Son, an incarnate Deity, who came down into this world, full of grace and truth, upon the most merciful errand. And they have some of them been in transports, when they have but fancied such a descent, for the doing them, only, some lighter good turn; as upon the cure of the cripple. The God's (say they) are come down in the likeness of men! Act. 14.11. "He

being filled with the glorious fulness of the Godhead, hath been a voluntary sacrifice for the sins of men; and if they would believe and obey him, they would find that sacrifice is accepted, and available for them. And though they are disabled to do so, only by their own wicked inclination, even against that also they have no cause to despair of being relieved, if they would (which they might) admit the thoughts of their impotency, and the exigency of their case, and did seriously implore divine help.

VI. Now with whom these methods succeed well, there is no suspicion of insincerity. Let us see what pretence there can be for it, with the rest. It is to be considered, that, as to them he doth not apply himself to every, or to any person immediately, and severally, after some such tenour of speech as this, "I know thee to be a profligate, hopeless wretch, and that thou wilt finally disregard whatsoever I say to thee, and consequently perish and become miserable. But however (though I foresee most certainly thou wilt not, yet) I entreat thee to hear, and obey, and live." Indeed sending a prophet to a promiscuous people, he foretells him of such ill success. Ezek. 3. 7. But it is not told him he should succeed so ill universally, and it is implied, he should not. v. 21.

But the course the great God takes, is only to apply himself to these (as hath been said) in common with the rest. For if it be said he also applies himself to them by the private dictates of his Spirit; he doth not by it, make formed speeches to men. But as to those its common motions, whereby it applies itself unto them, doth only solicit, in a stated manner of operation, in and by their own reason and consciences (as he concurs with our inferior faculties, and with the inferior creatures, suitably to their natures and capacities) speaking no other, than their own language, as they are instructed out of his word, or by other means. Which he usually continues to do, till by their resistencies, they have sealed up their own consciences, and consequently (according to its more ordinary fixed course, and laws of access and recess) shut out the Holy Spirit both at once. Nor is it more to be expected, he should universally alter that course; than that he should alter the courses of the sun, moon, and stars, and innovate upon universal nature. So that what is endeavoured for the reducement of such, as finally refuse to return, by particular applications to this or that person, and beyond what is contained in the public declarations of his written word, is by substituted ministers and inferior agents, that know no more of the event, than they do themselves. And that this was the fittest way of dealing with reasonable creatures, who, that will use his own reason, sees not?

VII. That our disquisition may be here a little more strict

we shall inquire both,—What may be supposed possible to be alleged out of God's word, in reference to them that persist in wickedness till they finally perish, which it can be thought not consistent with sincerity, to have inserted, upon the supposed foresight of so dismal an issue. And what more convenient course we can think of, which sincerity (as we apprehend) would have required.

As to the former. It may, perhaps, be alleged, that he professes to will the salvation of all men. 1. Tim. 2. 4. Not to desire the death of him that dieth. Ezek. 18. 32. Yea and professes himself grieved that any perish. Ps. 51. 12. 13. Now these things, compared with his public declarations and tenders, directed, in a universal tenour, to all men, carry that appearance and shew with them, as if he would have it believed, his end were to save all. Wherewith his foresight of the perdition of so many seems ill to agree. For how can that end be seriously intended which it is foreseen will not be brought about? And how can it be thought to consist with sincerity, that there should be an appearance of his having such an end, unto which, a serious real intention of it doth not correspond? Wherefore we shall here examine, what appearance such expressions as those above recited, can, by just interpretation be understood to amount unto. And then shew that there is really with the blessed God, what doth truly and fully correspond to that appearance; and very agreeably too, with the hypotheses of his foreseeing how things will finally issue, with very many.

And first, that we may understand the true import of the expressions which we have mentioned, and others of like sound and meaning. We are to consider, that though being taken severally and apart, they are not capable of a sense, prejudicial to the cause, the defence whereof we have undertaken, which we shall afterwards more distinctly evince, yet) it were very injurious, to go about to affix a sense unto a single expression, without weighing the general design of the writings, whereof it is a part. It were quite to frustrate the use of words, when a matter is to be represented, that is copious, and consists of many parts and branches; which cannot be comprehended in one, or a few sentences, if we will pretend to estimate, and make a judgment of the speaker's full meaning, by this or that single passage only, because we have not patience or leisure to read the rest, or perhaps have a greater disposition to cavil his words, than understand his meaning. If a course resembling this should be taken, in interpreting the edicts or laws of princes and states (suppose it were a proclamation of pardon to delinquent subjects) and only this or that favourable clause or

fastened upon, without regard to the inserted promises and conditions; the (concerned) interpreters might do a slight, temporary, and easily remediable wrong to the prince, but are in danger, more fatally, to wrong themselves.

The edicts of the great God, that are publicly e^last to mankind (the universal publication whereof, they partly withstand, and which they too commonly deprave, and perversely mis-interpret, where they do obtain) carry no such appearance with them, as if he had ever proposed it to himself, for his end, to save all men, or any man, let them do what they please, or how destructive: course soever they take, and shall finally persist in. If that were supposed his design, his so seemingly serious counsels and exhortations, were as ludicrous, as they could be thought, if it were as peremptorily determined all should perish. For what God will, by almighty power, immediately work, without the subordinate concurrence of any second cause, must be necessarily. And it is equally vain, so reflectively to endeavour the engaging of subordinate agents, to do that which without them is absolutely necessary, as it were to endeavour that, by them, which is absolutely impossible.

VII. That which his declarations to men do amount unto, is, in sum, thus much,—that, whereas they have, by their detection and revolt from him, made themselves liable to his justice, and very great consequent miseries; he is willing to pardon, save and restore them to a blessed state, upon such terms as shall be agreeable (the recompence due to his injured love, being otherwise provided for, at no expense of theirs, to the nature of that blessedness they are to enjoy, the purity of his own nature, and the order and dignity of his government. That is, that they seriously repent and turn to him, love him as the Lord their God, with all their heart and soul, and might and mind; and one another as themselves, (being to make together one happy community, in the participation of the same blessedness,) commit themselves by entire trust, subjection and devotedness to their great and merciful Redeemer, according to the measure of light, wherewith he shall have been revealed and made known to them; submit to the motions and dictates of his blessed Spirit, whereby the impression of his own holy image is to be renewed in them, and a divine nature imparted to them: and carefully attend to his word as the means, the impressive instrument or seal, by which, understood and considered, that impression shall be made, and the very seeds out of which that holy nature, and the entire frame of the new creature shall result and spring up in them; so as to make them apt unto the obedience that is expected from them, and capable of the blessedness they are to expect: that if they neglect to at-

to those external discoveries, and refuse the ordinary aids and assistances of his good Spirit, and offer violence to their own consciences, they are not to expect he should over-power them, by a strong hand, and save them against the continuing disinclination of their own wills. Nor (whatsoever extraordinary acts he may do upon some, to make them willing) is there any universal promise in his word; or other encouragement, upon which any may reasonably promise themselves that; in the neglect and disuse of all ordinary means, such power shall be used with them, as shall finally overcome their averse, disaffected hearts.

IX. It is true that he frequently uses much importunity with men, and enforces his laws with that earnestness, as if it were his own great interest to have them obeyed; wherein, having to do with men, he doth like a man, solicitously intent upon an end which he cannot be satisfied till he attain. Yet withal, he hath interspersed, every where in his word, so frequent, God-like expressions of his own greatness, all-sufficiency and independency upon his creatures, as that if we attend to these his public declarations, and manifests of himself entirely; so as to compare one thing with another, we shall find the matter not at all dissembled; but might collect this to be the state of things between him and us; that he makes no overtures to us, as thinking us considerable, or as if any thing were to accrue to him from us. But that, as he takes pleasure in the diffusion of his own goodness, so it is our interest to behave ourselves suitably thereunto, and, according as we comply with it, and continue in it, or do not, so we may expect the delectable communications if it, or taste otherwise, his just severity. That, therefore, when he exhorts, obtests, entreats, beseeches that we would obey and live; speaks as if he were grieved at our disobedience, and what is like to ensue to us therefrom; these are merciful condescensions, and the efforts of that goodness, which chooseth the fittest ways of moving us, rather than that he is moved himself, by any such passions, as we are wont to feel in ourselves, when we are pursuing our own designs. And that he vouchsafeth to speak in such a way as is less suitable to himself, that it may be more suitable to us, and might teach us, while he so far complies with us, how becoming it is that we answerably bend ourselves to a compliance with him. He speaks, sometimes, as if he did suffer somewhat human, as an apt means (and which to many proves effectual) to bring us to enjoy, at length, what is truly divine. We may, if we consider, and lay things together, understand these to be gracious insinuations; whereby, as he hath not left the matter liable to be so mis-understood, as if he were really affected with solici-

tude, or any perturbation concerning us, (which he hath sufficiently given us to understand his blessed nature cannot admit of,) so nor can they be thought to be disguises of himself, or misrepresentations, that have nothing in him corresponding to them. For they really signify the obedience and blessedness, of those his creatures that are capable thereof, to be more pleasing and agreeable to his nature and will; than that they should disobey and perish; (which is the utmost that can be understood to be meant, by those words, God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth,) but withal, that he so apprehends the indignity done to his government, by their disobedience, that if they obey not (as the indulgent constitution and temper of his law, and government now are, in and by the Redeemer) they must perish. And that he hath also such respect to the congruity and order of things, as that it shall not be the ordinary method of his government over reasonable creatures, to over-power them into that obedience, by which it may come to pass that they perish not. All which may be collected from those his own plain words, in that other recited text, and many besides of like import. When, with so awful solemnity, he professes, that as he lives he takes no pleasure in the death of sinners, but that they may turn and live; and adds turn ye, turn ye, why will you die? (Ezek. 33. 11) that is, that their repentance, and consequent welfare, would be more grateful to him than their perdition, upon their persevering in destructive ways. But yet, that if they were not moved to repent, by these his pleadings and exhortations used with them, they should die, and were therefore concerned, to attend and hearken, to such his reasonings and warnings, as the apt means to work their good; not expecting he should take extraordinary courses with them, in order to it. And that the real respect he had thereunto, should never induce him, to use any indecorous course, to bring it about; but that he had a more principal respect to the rules of justice, and the order of his government, than to their concerns. And that he, notwithstanding, expresses himself aggrieved that any finally perish; if we consider and recollect, what notices he hath furnished our minds with, of the perfections of a Deity, and what he hath remonstrated to us of his own nature, so plainly in his word; we cannot understand more by it, than the calm dispassionate resentment and dislike, which most perfect purity and goodness have, of the sinfulness and miserable ruin of his own creatures.

In all which we have a most unexceptionable idea of God, and may behold the comely conjuncture of his large goodness, strict righteousness and most accurate wisdom all together: as we are also concerned, in making our estimate of his ways, to

consider them : and not to take our measure of what is suitable to God, by considering him according to one single attribute only; but as they all are united, in his most perfect Being. And in that blessed harmony, as not to infer with him a difficulty what to do, or what not. Which sometimes falls out with men, where there is an imperfect resemblance of those divine excellencies, not so exactly contempered together. As it was with that Spartan prince and general in Plutarch, when finding a necessity to march his army, and taking notice of one, for whom he had a peculiar kindness, that through extreme weakness, was not possibly to be removed, he looked back upon him, expressing his sense of that exigency, in those emphatical words, *How hard a matter is it at once ἐλεειν και Φρονεειν, to exercise pity and be wise!* God's own word misrepresents him not, but gives a true account of him, if we allow ourselves to confer it with itself, one part of it with another. Nor doth any part of it, taken alone, import him so to have willed the happiness of men, for any end of his, that he resolved he would, by whatsoever means certainly effect it : as we are wont, many times, with such eagerness to pursue ends upon which we are intent, as not to consider of right or wrong, fit or unfit in our pursuit of them, and so let the cost of our means, not seldom, eat up our end. Nor did that belong to him, or was his part as our most benign, wise, and righteous Governor, to provide that we should certainly not transgress, or not suffer prejudice thereby; but that we should not do so, through his omission of any thing, which it became him to do to prevent it.

X. It may therefore be of some use further to take notice, that a very diverse consideration must be had, of the ends which shall be effected by God's own action only, and of those which are to be brought about (in concurrence, and subordination to his own) by the intervenient action of his creatures. Especially (which is more to our purpose) such of them as are intelligent, and capable of being governed by laws. As to the former sort of these ends, we may be confident they were all most absolutely intended, and can never fail of being accomplished. For the latter, it cannot be universally said so. For these being not entirely his ends; but partly his, and partly prescribed by him, to his reasonable creatures, to be theirs. We are to conceive he always, most absolutely, intends to do, what he righteously esteems congruous should be his own part which he extends and limits, as seems good unto him. And sometimes, of his own good pleasure, assumes to himself the doing of so much, as shall ascertain the end; effectually procuring, that his creature shall do his part also. That is, not only enacts his law, and adds exhortations, warnings, promises, to enforce it, but

also emits that effectual influence, whereby the inferior wheels shall be put into motion, the powers and faculties of his governed creature excited and assisted, and (by a spirit in the wheels) made as the chariots of a willing people. At other times and in other instances, he doth less, and meeting with resistance, sooner retires; follows not his external edicts and declarations, with so potent and determinative an influence; but that the creature, through his own great default, may omit to do his part, and so that end be not effected.

That the course of his economy towards men on earth is, *de facto, in fact* ordered with this diversity, seems out of question. Manifest experience shews it. Some do sensibly perceive that motive influence, which others do not. The same persons, at sometimes, find not that, which at other times they do. His own word plainly asserts it. "He works in us to will and to do, of his own good pleasure." Where he will, he, in this respect, shews mercy; where he will, he hardeneth, or doth not prevent but that men be hardened. And indeed, we should be constrained to rase out a great part of the Sacred Volume, if we should not admit it to be so. And as the equity and fitness of his making such difference (when it appears he doth make it) cannot without profaneness be doubted, so it is evident, from what was before said, they are far removed from the reach and confines of any reasonable doubt; since he forsakes none, but being first forsaken. Nor have men any pretence to complain of subdalous dealing, or that they are surprisingly disappointed, and lurch'd of such help, as they might have expected; inasmuch as this is so plainly extant in God's open manifests to the world, that he uses a certain arbitrariness, especially in the more exuberant dispensation of his grace; and is inserted to that purpose, that they may be cautioned not to neglect lower assistances; and warned, because he works to will and to do of his own pleasure, therefore to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. Phil. 2. 12. 13. Whereupon, elsewhere, after the most persuasive alluring invitations: Turn ye at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit to you, I will make known my words to you, it is presently subjoined, because I called and ye refused, I stretched out my hand and no man regarded. But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. Prov. 1. 23. 26.

From all which it is plainly to be understood, that the general strain and drift of God's external revelation of his mind to man, in his word, and the aspect of even those passages, that can, with most colour, be thought to signify any thing further,

do amount to nothing more than this, that he doth so far really will the salvation of all, as not to omit the doing that which may effect it, if they be not neglectful of themselves, but not so as to effect it by that extraordinary exertion of power, which he thinks fit to employ upon some others.

CHAP. III.

I. Such a will as the word of God represents him to have of man's welfare we ought to believe is in him. The distinction of his will of good pleasure, and of the sign: of his secret will, and revealed (as applied to this matter) animadverted on. II. God truly wills the matter of his own laws, and their welfare for whom he made them. III. Is not made liable to disappointment hereby. Nor can hence an imperfect will be ascribed to him. IV. The second head (proposed Ch. II. p. 262.) discussed; that no other fit course could be taken, that can be pretended more agreeable to sincerity. Two only to be thought on:—to have published no written word, or to have overpowered all by strong hand into compliance therewith. The former not fit. The latter unfit also. The congruity of things makes them necessary, with God. The incongruity, impossible. V. Innumerable congruities obvious to the divine understanding not perceivable by ours. Two things manifestly congruous, to our apprehension; that the course of God's government, be for the most part, steady, and uniform: that he sometimes vary. VI. Both these, many ways represented congruous, in reference to matters within the sphere of nature, and policy. VII. Equally congruous, that matters be in some degree correspondently managed within the sphere of grace. VIII. The congruity of both these in the matters of grace more distinctly expressed. IX. The conclusion.

I. **NOR** is it reasonably to be doubted, (such a will being all that can be pretended to be the visible meaning of the passages before noted) whether there be such a will in God or no: and so somewhat really corresponding (the next thing promised to be discoursed) to the aspect and appearance hercof, which is offered to our view. For what should be the reason of the doubt? He, who best understands his own nature, hav-

ing said of himself what imports no less : why should we make a difficulty to believe him ? Nor indeed can any notices we have of the perfections of the divine nature be less liable to doubt, than what we have of his unchangeable veracity ; whence, as it is impossible to him to lie, it must be necessary, that he be really what he hath represented himself so to be. I must here profess my dislike of the terms of that common distinction the *voluntas beneplaciti, et signi*, between the will of good pleasure and of the sign, in this present case. Under which, such as coined, and those that have much used it, have only rather, I doubt not, concealed a good meaning, than expressed by it an ill one. It seems, I confess, by its more obvious aspect, too much to countenance the ignominious slander, which profane and atheistical dispositions would fasten upon God, and the course of his procedure towards men ; and which it is the design of these papers to evince of as much absurdity and folly, as it is guilty of impiety and wickedness : as though he only intended to seem willing of what he really was not ; that there was an appearance to which nothing did *subesse, exist as a foundation*. And then why is the latter called *voluntas* ? the will unless the meaning be he did only will the sign, which is false and impious ; and if it were true, did he not will it with the will of good pleasure ? And then the members of the distinction are confounded. Or, as if the evil actions of men were, more truly, the objects of his good pleasure, than their forbearance of them. And of these faults the application of the distinction of God's secret will, and revealed, unto this case, though it be useful in many, is as guilty.

II. The truth is (unto which we must esteem ourselves, obliged to adhere, both by our assent, and defence) that God doth really and complacentially will (and therefore doth with most unexceptionable sincerity declare himself to will) that to be done and enjoyed by many men, which he doth not, universally, will to make them do, or irresistibly procure that they shall enjoy. Which is no harder assertion, than that the impure will of degenerate, sinful man is opposite to the holy will of God ; and the malignity of man's will to the benignity of his. No harder than that there is sin and misery in the world, which how can we conceive otherwise, than as a repugnancy to the good and acceptable will of God ? Methinks it should not be difficult to us to acknowledge, that God doth truly, and with complacency, will, whatsoever is the holy, righteous matter of his own laws. And if it should be with any, a difficulty, I would only make this supposition. What if all the world were yet in innocency, yielding entire universal obedience to all the extant laws of God, which have not reference to man's fallen (as those of repentance, faith in a Mediator, &c.)

would it now be a doubt with any, whether God did truly and really will, and were pleased with the holiness and righteousness which were every where to be found in the world? Surely we would not, in this case, imagine the creatures will more pure and holy than the divine; or that he were displeased with men for their being righteous and holy. Now again suppose the world revolted, what then is that holy will of God changed? will we not say it remains the same holy will still? and stands the same rule of righteousness and duty that it was? Doth the change of his rebel creatures infer any with him? or do only the declarations of his former will remain to be their rule, and keep them still obliged, his will itself being become another from what it was? Surely he might as easily have changed his laws.

And if we say his will is changed, how should we know it to be so? If we know it not, surely such a thing should not be said or thought. If we knew it, how should those yet-extant laws and declarations continue to oblige, against the Law-givers known will? and then the easy expedient to nullify the obligation of a law, that were thought too restrictive, were to disobey it. And men might, by sinning once, license themselves to do the same thing (though then we could not call it sinning) always. And so the creature's should be the supreme, and ruling will. Nor had it been a false suggestion, but a real truth, that man, by becoming a sinner, might make himself a God. Or, if it shall be thought fit to say, that the divine will would not, in that supposed case, be said to be changed; but only, that now the event makes it appear not to have been, what we thought it was; that were to impute both impurity and dissimulation to the holy, blessed God, as his fixed attributes. And what we thought unfit, and should abhor, to imagine might have place with him one moment, to affix to him for perpetuity.

III. And whereas it may be thought to follow hence, that hereby we ascribe to God a liability to frustration, and disappointment. That is without pretence. The resolve of the divine will, in this matter, being not concerning the event what man shall do, but concerning his duty what he should, and concerning the connection between his duty, and his happiness. Which we say he doth not only seem to will, but wills it really and truly. Nor would his prescience of the event, which we all this while assert, let frustration be so much as possible to him. Especially, it being at once foreseen, that his will, being crossed in this, would be fulfilled in so important a thing, as the preserving the decorum of his own government. Which had been most apparently blemished, beyond what could consist

with the perfections of the Deity, if either his will concerning man's duty, or the declarations of that will, had not been substantially, the same that they are. We are, therefore, in assigning the object of this or that act of the divine will, to do it entirely, and to take the whole object together, without dividing it, as if the will of God did wholly terminate upon what indeed is but a part (and especially if that be but a less considerable part) of the thing willed. In the present case, we are not to conceive that God, only, wills either man's duty or felicity, or that herein his will doth solely and ultimately terminate. But, in the whole, the determination of God's will is, that man shall be duly governed, that is, congruously both to himself, and him. That such and such things, most congruous to both, shall be man's duty, by his doing whereof, the dignity and honour of God's own government might be preserved, which was the thing principally to be designed; and in the first place. And, as what was secondarily thereto, that hereby man's felicity should be provided for. Therefore, it being foreseen a violation would be done to the sacred rights of the divine government, by man's disobedience, it is resolved, they shall be repaired and maintained by other means. So that the divine will hath its effect; as to what was its more noble and principal design, the other part failing, only, by his default, whose is the loss.

And if yet it should be insisted, that in asserting God to will what by his laws he hath made become man's duty, even where it is not done we shall herein ascribe to him, at least, an ineffectual and an imperfect will, as which doth not bring to pass the thing willed. It is answered, that imperfection were with no pretence imputable to the divine will, merely for its not effecting every thing, whereto it may have a real propension. But it would be more liable to that imputation, if it should effect any thing, which it were less fit for him to effect, than not to effect it. The absolute perfection of his will stands in the proportion, which every act of it bears, to the importance of the things, about which it is conversant. Even as, with men, the perfection of any act of will is to be estimated, not by the mere peremptory sturdiness of it, but by its proportion to the goodness of the thing willed. Upon which account, a mere velleity (as many love to speak) when the degree of goodness in the object claims no more, hath unconceivably greater perfection in it, than the most obstinate volition. And since the event forbids us to admit that God did ever will the obedience and felicity of all, with such a will as should be effective thereof; if yet his plain word shall be acknowledged the measure of our belief, in this matter, which so plainly asserts him some-

way to will the salvation of all men, it is strange if, hereupon, we shall not admit rather of a will not-effective of the thing willed, than none at all.

The will of God is sufficiently to be vindicated from all imperfection, if he have sufficient reason for all the propensions, and determinations of it, whether from the value of the things willed, or from his own sovereignty who wills them. In the present case, we need not doubt to affirm, that the obedience and felicity of all men, is of that value, as whereunto a propension of will, by only simple complacency is proportionable. Yet, that his not procuring, as to all (by such courses as he more extraordinarily takes with some) that they shall, in event, obey and be happy, is upon so much more valuable reasons (as there will be further occasion to shew ere long) as that, not to do it was more eligible, with the higher complacency, of a determinative will. And since the public declarations of his good will, towards all men, import no more than the former, and do plainly import so much; their correspondency to the matter declared is sufficiently apparent. And so is the congruity of both with his prescience of the event. For though, when God urges and incites men, by exhortations, promises, and threats, to the doing of their own part (which it is most agreeable to his holy, gracious nature to do) he foresee, many will not be moved thereby; but persist in wilful neglect, and rebellions till they perish: he at the same time, sees that they might do otherwise, and that, if they would comply with his methods, things would otherwise issue with them. His prescience, no way, imposing upon them a necessity to transgress. For they do it not because he foreknew it, but he only foreknew it because they would do so. And hence he had, as it was necessary he should have, not only this for the object of his foreknowledge that they would do amiss and perish. But the whole case in its circumstances, that they would do so, not through his omission, but their own. And there had been no place left for this state of the case, if his public edicts and manifests, had not gone forth, in this tenour as they have. So that the consideration of his prescience, being taken in, gives us only, in the whole, this state of the case, that he foresaw men would not take that course which he truly declared himself willing they should (and was graciously ready to assist them in it) in order to their own well-being. Whence all complaint of insincere dealing is left without pretence.

IV. Nor (as we also undertook to shew P: 262) could any course (within our prospect) have been taken, that was fit, in itself; and more agreeable to sincerity. There are only these two ways to be thought on besides; either, that God should wholly.

have forborne to make overtures to men in common: or, that he should efficaciously have overpowered all into a compliance with them. And there is little doubt, but upon sober consideration, both of these will be judged altogether unfit. The *former*; inasmuch as it had been most disagreeable—to the exact measures of his government, to let a race of sinful creatures persist, through many successive ages, in apostacy and rebellion, when the characters of that law, first written in man's heart, were in so great measure outworn, and become illegible; without renewing the impression, in another way; and re-asserting his right and authority, as their Ruler and Lord;—to the holiness of his nature, not to send into the world such a declaration of his will, as might be a standing testimony against the impurity, whereinto it was lapsed;—to the goodness of it, not to make known upon what terms, and for whose sake, he was reconcilable; and—to the truth of the thing, since he really had such kind propensions towards men in common not to make them known:—that it had, itself, been more liable to the charge of insincerity, to have concealed from men what was real truth, and of so much concernment to them. And he did, in revealing them, but act his own nature; the goodness whereof is no more lessened, by men's refusal of its offers, than his truth can be made of none effect by their disbelief of its assertions: besides the great use such an extant revelation of the way of recovery, was to be of, to those that should obediently comply with it, even after they should be won so to do. And the *latter* we may also apprehend very unfit too; though, because that is less obvious, it requires to be more largely insisted on. For it would seem that if we do not effect any thing which we have a real will unto, it must proceed from impotency, and that we cannot do it, which, who would say of the great God? Herein therefore, we shall proceed by steps. And gradually offer the things that follow to consideration.

As, that it were indeed, most repugnant to the notion of a Deity, to suppose any thing, which includes in it no contradiction impossible to God, considered according to that single attribute of power only. But yet we must add, that this were a very unequal way of estimating what God can do, that is to consider him as a mere Being of power. For the notion of God so conceived, were very inadequate to him, which taken entirely, imports the comprehension of all perfections. So that they are two very distant questions,—What the power of God alone could do? and—What God can do? And whereas to the former the answer would be,—whatsoever is not in itself repugnant to be done. To the latter, it must only be,—what-

soever it becomes or is agreeable to a Being every way perfect to do. And so it is to be attributed to the excellency of his nature, if amongst all things not simply impossible, there be any, which it may be truly said he cannot do. Or, it proceeds not from the imperfection of his power, but from the concurrence of all other perfections in him. Hence his own word plainly affirms of him that he cannot lie. And by common consent it will be acknowledged, that he cannot do any unjust act whatsoever.

To this I doubt not we may with as common suffrage (when the matter is considered) subjoin, that his wisdom doth as much limit the exercise of his power, as his righteousness or his truth doth. And that it may with as much confidence, and clearness, be said and understood, that he cannot do an unwise, or imprudent act as an unjust. Further, that as his righteousness corresponds to the justice of things, to be done or not done, so doth his wisdom to the congruity or fitness. So that he cannot do what it is unfit for him to do, because he is wise; and because he is most perfectly and infinitely wise, therefore nothing that is less-fit. But whatsoever is fittest, when a comparison is made between doing this or that, or between doing and not doing, that the perfection of his nature renders necessary to him, and the opposite part impossible. Again, that this measure must be understood to have a very large and most general extent unto all the affairs of his government, the object it concerns being so very large. We, in our observation, may take notice, that fewer questions can occur concerning what is right or wrong, than what is fit, or unfit. And whereas any man may in a moment be honest, if he have a mind to it; very few (and that by long experience) can ever attain to be wise. The things about which justice is conversant being reducible to certain rules, but wisdom supposes very general knowledge of things scarcely capable of such reduction. And is, besides, the primary requisite, in any one that bears rule over others: and must therefore most eminently influence all the managements of the Supreme Ruler.

V. It is moreover to be considered, that innumerable congruities lie open to the infinite wisdom, which are never obvious to our view or thought. As to a well-studied scholar, thousands of coherent notions, which an illiterate person never thought of—to a practiced courtier, or well-educated gentleman, many decencies and indecencies, in the matter of civil behaviour and conversation, which an unbred rustic knows nothing of; and to an experienced states-man, those importancies, which never occur to the thoughts of him who daily follows the plough. What government is there that hath not its arcana, profound

mysteries and reasons of state that a vulgar wit cannot divinate? And from whence, the account to be given, why this or that is done or not done, is not, always, that it would have been unjust it should be otherwise, but it had been imprudent. And many things are, hereupon, judged necessary not from the exigency of justice, but reason of state. Whereupon, men of modest and sober minds, that have had experience of the wisdom of their governors and their happy conduct, through a considerable tract of time; when they see things done by them, the leading reasons whereof they do not understand, and the effect and success come not yet in view, suspend their censure; while as yet all seems to them obscure, and wrapt up in clouds and darkness. Yea though the course that is taken have, to their apprehension, an ill aspect. Accounting it becomes them not, to make a judgment of things so far above their reach, and confiding in the tried wisdom of their rulers, who they believe, see reasons for what they do, into which they find themselves unable to penetrate. With how much more submiss, and humble veneration, ought the methods of the divine government to be beheld and adored, upon the certain assurance we have, that all things therein, are managed by that wisdom, which could never in any thing mistake its way? Whereas, there was never any continued administration of human government, so accurate and exact, but that after some tract of time, some or other errors might be reflected on therein.

Again, it may further be said, without presuming beyond due bounds, that though infinite congruities must be supposed to lie open to the divine understanding, which are concealed from ours, yet that these two things in the general are very manifestly congruous to any sober attentive mind, that directly concern, or may be applied to the case under our present consideration, namely, that the course of God's government over the world, be, for the most part, steady, and uniform: not interrupted by very frequent, extraordinary and anomalous actions. And again, that he use a royal liberty, of stepping out of his usual course, sometimes, as he sees meet.

VI. It cannot but appear to such as attend, highly incongruous, should we affirm the antithesis to either of these; or lay down counter-positions to them, and suppose the course of the divine government to be managed agreeably thereunto. For, *as to the former*; what confusion would it make in the world, if there should be perpetual innovations upon nature; continual or exceeding frequent impeditions, and restraints of second causes. In the sphere of nature, the virtues and proper qualities of things, being never certain, could never be understood, or known. In that of policy, no measures, so much as proba-

ble, could ever be taken. How much better is it, in both, that second causes, ordinarily follow their inclinations? And why is it not to be thought congruous, that, in some degree, things should be proportionably so, in the sphere of grace? (whereto by and by we shall speak more directly.) We pray when our friends are sick for their recovery. What can be the sober meaning and design of such prayers? Not that God would work a miracle for their restitution, (for then we might as well pray for their revival after death) but, that God would be pleased so to co-operate, in the still and silent way of nature, with second causes, and so bless means, that they may be recovered, if he see good. Otherwise that they, and we may be prepared to undergo his pleasure. And agreeable hereto ought to be the intent of our prayers, in reference to the public affairs, and better posture of the world. And we may take notice, the divine wisdom lays a very great stress upon this matter, the preserving of the common order of things; and cannot but observe a certain inflexibleness of providence, herein. And that it is very little apt to divert from its wonted course. At which weak minds are apt to take offence: to wonder, that against so many prayers and tears, God will let a good man die; or one whom they love; or that a miracle is not wrought to prevent their own being wronged at any time; or, that the earth doth not open and swallow up the person that hath done them wrong: are apt to call for fire from heaven, upon them that are otherwise minded, and do otherwise than they would have them. But a judicious person would consider, if it be so highly reasonable that my desires should be complied with so extraordinarily, than why not all men's? And then were the world filled with prodigies and confusion. The inconveniencies would soon be to all, equally discernable and intolerable (as the heathen poet takes notice, should Jupiter's ear be over-easy) yea and the impossibility were obvious of gratifying all, because of their many counter-desires.

And *for the other*, it were no less incongruous, if the Supreme Power should so tie its own hands, and be so astricted to rules and methods, as never to do any thing extraordinary, upon never so important occasion. How ill could the world have wanted such an effort of omnipotency, as the restriction upon the flames from destroying Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? or the miracles wrought in our Saviour's and the next following days? Such things are never done; but when the all-comprehending wisdom sees it most congruous: and that the cause will over-recompense the deflection from the common course. If no such thing did ever fall out, what a temptation were it to mankind, to introduce into their belief an unintelligent fate instead of a Deity? Besides that the convincing testimony were want-

ing, which we see is so necessary for the confirmation of any particular revelation from God, which comes not within the compass of nature's discovery, (upon which account also, it is as apparently necessary such extraordinary works should not be over-frequent, for then they become ordinary, and useless to that special end,) so that here the exertions both of the ordinate and absolute power of God (as some distinguish) have their so appropriate, and so visibly apt and congruous uses, that they are discernible to a very ordinary understanding, how much more to the infinite wisdom of God!

VII. Now hereupon we say further, there is the like congruity, upon as valuable (though not altogether the same) reasons that, in the affairs of grace, there be somewhat correspondent: that, ordinarily, it be sought and expected, in the use of ordinary means. And that, sometimes, its sovereignty shew itself in preventing exertions: and in working so heroically, as none have, before hand, in the neglect of its ordinary methods, any reason to expect. And we may fitly add, that where sovereignty is pleased thus to have its exercise and demonstrate itself, it is sufficient that there be a general congruity, that it do so sometimes, as an antecedent reason to the doing of some such extraordinary things, but that there should be a particular, leading congruity or antecedent reason, to invite these extraordinary operations of grace, to one person more than another, is not necessary. But it is most congruous, that, herein, it be most arbitrary; most agreeable to the supremacy of God; to the state of sinful man, who hath infinitely disoblighed him, and can deserve nothing from him; yea, and even to the nature of the thing. For, where there is a parity, in any objects of our own choice, there can be no leading reason to this, rather than that. The most prudent man, that is wont to guide himself by never so exquisite wisdom, in his daily actions, where there is a perfect indifferency, between doing this thing or that, is not liable to censure, that he is not able to give a reason why he did that, not the other. Wisdom hath no exercise in that case.

But that the blessed God doth ordinarily proceed in these affairs, by a steady rule, and sometimes, shew his liberty of departing from it, is to be resolved into his infinite wisdom, it being, in itself, most fit, he should do both the one and the other; and therefore to him most necessary. Whereupon, the great apostle Saint Paul, discoursing upon this subject, doth not resolve the matter into strict justice, nor absolute sovereignty (both which have their place too, in his proceedings with men, as the sacred writings do abundantly testify) but we find him in a transport, in the contemplation of the divine wisdom, that, herein so eminently shines forth. O the depths of the rich-

es both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

VIII. To sum up all, we conclude it obvious to the apprehension of such as consider, that it was more congruous the general course of God's government, over man, should be by moral instruments. And, howsoever it were very unreasonable, to imagine, that God cannot in any case, extraordinarily overway the inclinations, and determine the will of such a creature, in a way agreeable enough to its nature, (though we particularly know not, as we are not concerned to know, or curiously to inquire in what way) and highly reasonable to admit that in many cases he doth. It is notwithstanding manifest, to any sober reason, that it were very incongruous, this should be the ordinary course of his conduct towards mankind, or the same persons at all times. That is, that a whole order of intelligent creatures should be moved, only by inward impulses; that God's precepts, promises and comminations, whereof their nature is capable, should be all made impertinencies, through his constant overpowering those that should neglect them; that the faculties, whereby men are capable of moral government, should be rendered, to this purpose, useless and vain; and that they should be tempted to expect, to be constantly managed as mere machines, that know not their own use.

Nor is it less apprehensible, how incongruous it were also, on the other hand, to suppose that the exterior frame of God's government, should be totally unaccompanied with an internal vital energy; or exclude the inward motions, operations and influences, whereof such a creature is also fitly capable; or that God should have barred out himself, from all inward access to the spirits of men, or commerce with them: that the supreme universal, paternal mind (as a heathen called it) should have no way for efficacious communications, to his own offspring, when he pleases; that (so unsuitably to sovereignty) he should have no objects of special favour, or no peculiar ways of expressing it. It is manifestly congruous that the divine government, over man, should be (as it is) mixed or composed of an external frame of laws, with their proper sanctions, and enforcements, and an internal effusion of power and vital influence, correspondent to the several parts of that frame; and which might animate the whole, and use it, as instrumental, to the begetting of correspondent impressions on men's spirits:—that this power be put forth, not (like that of a natural agent) *ad ultimum to its utmost* (which if we would suppose the divine power to be,

* Rom. 11. 33: See to the same purpose, ch. 16, 25, 26, 27. And Eph. 1, 5, 6, 7, with the 8.

new worlds must be springing up every moment) but gradually, and with an apt contemperation to the subject, upon which it is designed, to have its operations, and withal, arbitrarily, as is becoming the great Agent from whom it proceeds, and to whom it, therefore, belongs, to measure its exertions, as seems meet unto him :—that it be constantly put forth (though most gratuitously, especially the disobligation of the apostacy being considered) upon all, to that degree, as that they be enabled to do much good, to which they are not impelled by it.---that it be ever ready (since it is the power of grace) to go forth in a further degree than it had yet done, wheresoever any former issues of it have been duly complied with. Though it be so little supposable that man should hereby have obliged God thereto, that he hath not any way obliged himself; otherwise, than that he hath implied a readiness to impart unto man what shall be necessary to enable him to obey, so far as, upon the apostacy, is requisite to his relief: if he seriously endeavour to do his own part, by *the power he already hath received*. Agreeably to the common saying, *homini facienti quod in se est.* &c. That, according to the royal liberty wherewith it works it go forth, as to some, with that efficacy, as notwithstanding whatever resistance, yet to overcome, and make them captives to the authority and love of Christ.

IX. The universal, continued rectitude of all intelligent creatures had, we may be sure, been willed with a peremptory, efficacious will if it had been best. That is, if it had not been less congruous than to keep them, some time (under the expectation of future confirmation and reward) upon trial of their fidelity, and in a state wherein it might not be impossible to them to make a defection. And so it had easily been prevented, that ever there should have been an apostacy from God, or any sin in the world. Nor was it either less easy, by a mighty irresistible hand, universally to expel sin, than prevent it; or more necessary or more to be expected from him. But if God's taking no such course, tended to render his government over the world more august and awful for the present, and the result and final issue of all things more glorious at length, and were consequently, more congruous; that could not be so willed, as to be effectually procured by him. For whatsoever obligation strict justice hath upon us, that congruity cannot but have upon him. And whereas it would be concluded, that whatsoever any one truly wills, they would effect if they could, we admit it for true, and to be applied in the present case. But add, That as we rightly esteem that impossible to us, which we cannot justly do, so is that to him, not only, which he cannot do justly, but which, upon the

whole matter he cannot do, most wisely also. That is, which his infinite wisdom doth not dictate, is most congruous and fit to be done.

Things cohere, and are held together, in the course of his dispensation, by congruities as by adamantine bands, and cannot be otherwise. This is, comparing and taking things together, especially the most important. For otherwise, to have been nicely curious about every minute thing, singly considered, that it might not possibly have been better (as in the frame of this or that individual animal or the like) had been needlessly to interrupt the course of nature, and therefore, itself, to him an incongruity. And doth, in them that expect it, import more of a trifling disposition than of true wisdom. But to him whose being is most absolutely perfect; to do that, which, all things considered, would be simply best, which is most becoming him, most honourable and God-like, is absolutely necessary. And consequently, it is to be attributed to his infinite perfection, that, unto him, to do otherwise, is absolutely impossible. And if we yet see not all these congruities which, to him, are more than a law; it is enough that they are obvious to his own eye, who is the only competent Judge. Yet, moreover, it is finally to be considered, that the methods of the divine government, are, besides his, to be exposed to the view, and judgment of other intellects than our own, and we expect they should to our own, in another state. What conception thereof is, already, received and formed in our minds, is but an embryo, no less imperfect than our present state is.

It were very unreasonable to expect, since this world shall continue but a little while, that all God's managements, and ways of procedure, in ordering the great affairs of it, should be attempered, and fitted to the judgment, that shall be made of them in this temporary state, that will so soon be over; and to the present apprehension and capacity of our (now so muddled and distempered) minds. A vast and stable eternity remains, wherein, the whole celestial chorus shall entertain themselves, with the grateful contemplation, and applause, of his deep counsels. Such things as now seem perplex, and intricate to us, will appear most irreprehensibly fair, and comely to angelical minds, and our own, when we shall be vouchsafed a place amongst that happy community. What discovery God affords of his own glorious excellencies, and perfections is principally intended to recommend him, in that state; wherein he, and all his ways and works, are to be beheld with everlasting, and most complacential approbation. Therefore though now we should covet the clearest and most satisfying account of things, that

can be had, we are yet to exercise patience, and not precipitate our judgment of them before the time: as knowing our present conceptions will differ more, from what they will be hereafter, than those of a child from the maturer thoughts of the wisest man. And that many of our conceits, which we thought wise, we shall then see cause to put away as childish things.



The disorder, Sir, of this heap, rather than frame of thoughts and discourse, as it cannot be thought more unsuitable to the subject, than suitable to the author; and the less displeasure, by how much it could less be expected to be otherwise, from him, even in the best circumstances; so it may lay some claim to your easier pardon, as having been, mostly, huddled up in the intervals of a troublesome, long journey. Wherein he was rather willing to take what opportunity the inconveniencies and hurry of it could allow him: than neglect any, of using the earliest endeavour to approve himself (as he is your great admirer)

Most honoured Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

H. W.



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P O S T S C R I P T

TO THE

L E T T E R

OF THE

RECONCILEABLENESS OF GOD'S PRESCIENCE,

&c. &c.

A POSTSCRIPT

To the Letter

OF THE RECONCILEABLENESS OF GOD'S PRESCIENCE, &c.

FINDING that this discourse of the *reconcilableness of God's prescience of the sins of men, with the wisdom and sincerity of his counsels, exhortations, &c.* hath been misunderstood and misrepresented; I think it requisite to say somewhat briefly in reference thereto. I wrote it upon the motion of that honourable gentleman to whom it is inscribed; who apprehended somewhat of that kind might be of use to render our religion less exceptionable to some persons of an inquiring disposition, that might perhaps be too sceptical and pendulous, if not prejudiced. Having finished it, I thought it best the author's name should pass under some disguise, supposing it might so, better serve its end: for knowing my name could not give the cause an advantage, I was not willing it should be in a possibility of making it incur any disadvantage. And therefore, as I have observed some, in such cases, to make use only of the two last letters, I imitated some other, in the choice of the *penultimate, the last but one*. But perceiving that discourse now to fall under animadversion, I reckon it becoming to be no longer concealed. It was unavoidable to me, if I would, upon reasonable terms, apply myself to the consideration of the matter I had undertaken, of shewing the consistency of God's prescience of the sins of men, with the preventive methods we find him to have used against them, to express somewhat of my sense of (what I well knew to have been asserted by divers schoolmen)

God's predeterminative concurrence to the sins of men also. For it had been (any one may see) very idle, and ludicrous trifling, to offer at reconciling those methods with God's prescience and have waved that (manifestly) greater difficulty of reconciling them with his predeterminative concurrence, if I had thought there had been such a thing. And were a like case, as if a surgeon, undertaking a wounded person, should apply himself, with a great deal of diligence and address, to the cure of a finger slightly scratched; and totally neglect a wound (feared to be mortal) in his breast.

And whereas I reckoned God's prescience of all whatsoever futurities, and consequently of the sins of men, most certain and demonstrable (though it was not the business of this discourse to demonstrate it, but, supposing it, to shew its reconcileableness with what it seemed not so well to agree) if I had believed his predeterminative concurrence to the sins of men to be as certain; perfect despair of being able to say any thing to purpose in this case, had made me resolve to say nothing in either. For, to shew how it might stand with the wisdom and sincerity of the blessed God, to counsel men not to sin, to profess his hatred and detestation of it, to remonstrate to men the great danger they should incur by it; with so great appearance of seriousness to exhort, warn, expostulate with them concerning it, express his great displeasure and grief for their sinning, and consequent miseries; and yet all the while act them on thereto, by a secret, but mighty and irresistible influence, seemed to me an utterly hopeless and impossible undertaking. The other, without this (supposing, as to this, the case to have been as some have thought it) a very vain one. But being well assured, that what seemed the greater difficulty, and to carry most of terror and affright in the face of it, was only a chimera. I reckoned the other very superable, and therefore directed my discourse thither, according to the first design of it, which was in effect but to justify God's making such a creature as man, and governing him agreeably to his nature.

Now judging it requisite, that he who should read that discourse concerning this designed subject, with any advantage, should have the same thoughts of the other, which was waved, that I had: I apprehended it necessary to communicate those thoughts concerning that, as I did. Not operously, and as my business, but only on the bye, and as was fit in reference to a thing that was to be waved, and not insisted on. Now I perceive that some persons, who had formerly entertained that strange opinion of God's predeterminative concurrence to the wickedest actions, and not purged their minds of it, have been offended with that letter, for not expressing more respect unto

it. And yet offered nothing, themselves (which to me seems exceeding strange) for the solving of that great difficulty and incumbrance, which it infers upon our religion. Nor do I much wonder, that this opinion of predeterminative concurrence, to sinful actions, should have some stiff adherents among ourselves. For having been entertained by certain dominicans, that were apprehended, in some things to approach nearer us, than others of the Roman church; it came to receive favour and countenance from some of our own, of considerable note for piety and learning, whose name and authority cannot but be expected to have much influence, on the minds of many. But I somewhat wonder, that they who have had no kindness for this letter, upon the account of its dissent from them, in this particular, should not allow it common justice. For because it hath not said every thing they would have had it say, and that would have been grateful to themselves, they impute to it the having said what it said not, and what they apprehended would be most ungrateful to all pious and sober men. The sum is, they give out concerning it, that it denies the providence of God about sin, which all good men ought to abhor from; and insinuate that it falls in with the sentiments of Durandus, which they know many think not well of.

All that I intend to do, for the present, upon this occasion, shall be to shew wherein the letter is mis-represented, and charged with what it hath not in it. To remark what is said against that supposed sense of it, and give the true sense of what it says touching this matter; with a further account of the author's mind herein than it was thought fit to insert into so transient and occasional a discourse as that part of the letter was. Whereby it may be seen, wherein he agrees with those of that opposite persuasion, and what the very point of difference is. Further than this, I yet intend not to go, till I see further need. There have two discourses come to my view that have referred to that letter. The one in manuscript only; which, because it is uncertain to me, whether the reputed author of it will own it or no; and, because it says little or nothing, by way of argument, against the true sense of the letter, I shall take no further present notice of. The other is printed, and offers at somewhat of argument, which therefore I shall more attentively consider. It doth this letter an honour, whereof its author never had the least ambition or expectation, to insert the mention of it into the close of a very learned, elaborate work*; with which it might, yet, easily be imagined, its simplicity, and remoteness from any pretence to learning, would so ill agree, that

* Court of the Gentiles, part 2, page 522

a quarrel could not but ensue. It is from one, who having spent a great part of his time in travelling through some regions of literature, and been peaceable, as far as I have understood, in his travels; it might have been hoped would have let this pamphlet alone, when, for what I can observe, he finds no fault with it but what he makes; and is fain to accuse it of what is nowhere to be found in it, lest it should be innocent.

It is an unaccountable pleasure which men of some humours take, in depraving what is done by others, when there is nothing attempted that doth interfere with them; nothing that can, righteously, be understood to cross any good end, which they more openly pretend to, nor the more concealed end (if they have any such) of their own glory. Common edification seems less designed, when every thing must be thrown down, which is not built by their own hands, or by their own line and measure. I plead nothing of merit in this little essay, only I say for it, that I know not what it can be guilty of towards this learned man, that can have occasioned this assault upon it by his pen. By how much the less it keeps his road, the more I might have thought it out of the way of his notice. I am sure it meant him no harm, nor had any design to pilfer from him any part of his collections. But he says, he may not let it pass. Then there is no remedy. But I wonder what he should mean by he may not. It must either mean, that he thought it unlawful to let it pass, or that he had a mighty strong and irresistible inclination to squabble a little with it. The former cannot be imagined. For then, for the same reason, he would have attempted sundry others of former and latter days, that have said much to the purpose, which this letter doth but touch obiter, and on the bye, in its way to another design. But those were giants, whom it was not so safe to meddle with. Therefore he could very wisely let them pass, though they have wounded his beloved cause, beyond all that it is in the power of his, (or any) art to cure. Whence it is consequent, that the whole business must be resolved into the latter. And this inclination cannot but owe itself to some peculiar aspect and reference he had to the author. Whom, though he was in *incognito, unknown*, yet (as I have been informed) he professes to have discoursed with upon the same subject many times. And so, therefore, he might once more before this public rencounter, if he had thought fit, and nature could have been repelled awhile.

It is true, he hath found me not facile to entertain his sentiments in this matter. And indeed I have deeply dreaded the portentous imaginations which I found had more lightly tintured his mind, as to this thing, concerning the blessed God. Than which, upon deliberation, I do believe, no human wit can ever

devise worse. As I have often freely told divers of my friends, and it is very likely, among them, himself. Though I do not suspect the contagion to have infected his vitals; by a privilege, vouchsafe to some, that they may possibly drink some deadly thing that shall not hurt them. But why must an impatience of this dissent break out into so vindictive an hostility? I will not say I expected more friendly dealing. For, as I do well know it was very possible such a public contest might have been managed with that candour and fairness, as not at all to intrench upon friendship. So, as it is, I need not own so much weakness, as upon many years experience, not to be able to distinguish and understand there are some tempers less capable of the ingenuities that belong to that pleasant relation. But it was only a charitable error of which I repent not, that I expected a more righteous dealing.

He pretends to give my sense, in other words, and then gravely falls to combating his own man of straw which he will have represent me, and so I am to be tortured in effigy. "It can never be proved, that it implies a contradiction, for God to make a creature, which should be capable of acting without immediate concurrence." This he puts in a different character, as if I had said so much. And why might not my own words be allowed to speak my own sense? But that his understanding and eyes, must then have conspired to tell him, that the sense would have been quite another? It is only a predeterminative concurrence to all actions, even those that are most malignantly wicked (p.248) and again, God's concurring by a determinative influence unto wicked actions, (p.249.) which is the only thing I speak of; as what I cannot reconcile with the wisdom and sincerity, of his counsels and exhortations, against such actions. And if he had designed to serve any common good end, in this undertaking of his, why did he not attempt to reconcile them himself? But the wisdom and sincerity of God are thought fit, (as it would seem) to be sacrificed to the reputation of his more peculiarly admired schoolmen. If there be such a universal determination, by an irresistible divine influence, to all even the wickedest actions (which God forbid!) methinks such a difficulty should not be so easily past over. And surely the reconciling such a determinative influence, with the divine wisdom and sincerity, had been a performance worth all his learned labours besides, and of greater service to the Christian name and honour.

But it seems the denying concurrence by such predetermining influence, is the denying of all immediate concurrence. And I am sent to the Thomists, Scotists, Jesuits, and Suarez, more especially to be taught otherwise. As if all these were for determinative concurrence. Which is very pleasant, when the very

heads of the two first-mentioned sects were against it, as we shall see further presently, the third generally, and by Suarez particularly, whom he names, have so industriously and strongly opposed it. Yea and because I assent not to the doctrine of pre-determinative concurrence, I am represented (which was the last spite that was to be done me) as a favourer of the hypotheses of Durandus. And he might as truly, have said of Henry Nicholas, but not so prudently, because he knows whose opinions have a nearer alliance to that family. Now I heartily wish I had a ground for so much charity towards him, as to suppose him ignorant that immediate concurrence, and determinative, are not wont to be used by the schoolmen, in this controversy, as terms of the same signification. If he do himself, think them to be all one, what warrant is that to him to give the same for my sense? When it is so well known they are not commonly so taken, and that determinative concurrence is so voluminously written against, where immediate is expressly asserted. Let him but soberly tell me, what his design was, to dash out the word *determining* from what he recites of that letter, and put in *immediate*, which he knows is not to be found in any of the places he refers to in it. Or what was the spring of that confidence that made him intimate the Scotists, Thomists, the Jesuits, and particularly Suarez, to be against what is said in the letter, in this thing? If he could procure all the books in the world to be burnt, besides those in his own library, he would yet have a hard task to make it be believed in the next age, that all these were for God's efficacious determination of the wills of men unto wicked actions.

I need not, after all this, concern myself, as to what he says about the *no medium* between the extremes of his disjunctive proposition. Either the human will must depend upon the divine independent will of God. &c. (as he phrases it in the excess of his caution, lest any should think the will of God was not a divine will) or God must depend on the human will, &c. Unless he can shew that the human will cannot be said to depend on the divine, as being enabled by it, except it be also determined and impelled by it, to every wicked action. A created being that was entirely from God, with all the powers and faculties which belong to it; that hath its continual subsistence in him, and all those powers continued, and maintained by his influence every moment; that hath those powers made habile, and apt for whatsoever its most natural motions and operations, by a suitable influence, whensoever it moves or operates. Can this creature be said not to depend, as to all its motions and operations, unless it be also unavoidably impelled to do every thing to which it is thus sufficiently enabled?

I again say, was it possible to God to make such a creature that can, in this case, act or not act? It is here oddly enough said, that the author gives no demonstration hereof. Of what? Why that it can never be proved (as the reference to the foregoing word shews) that it implies a contradiction, &c. It seems it was expected that author should have proved by demonstration, that it can never be proved, that it implies a contradiction for God to make a creature, which should be capable of acting (as he feigns him to have said) without immediate concurrence. By what rule of reasoning was he obliged to do so? But if the proving there is such a creature, as in the case before expressed can act without determinative concurrence, will serve turn to prove, that it cannot be proved, it implies a contradiction there should be such a one: I may think the thing was done. And may think it sufficiently proved, that there is such a creature; if it appear (whereof there is too much proof) that there are such actions done by creatures, as for the reasons that were before alleged, it could not stand with the nature of God to determine them unto. And was nothing said tending to prove this, that it could not consist with the nature of God, to determine men unto all the wicked actions they commit? It seems unless it were put into mood and figure, it is no proof. Nor was it the design of those papers to insist upon that subject; but there are things suggested *in transitu*, *in passing* as such a discourse could admit, that (whether they are demonstrative or no) would puzzle a considering person. That God should have as much influence, and concurrence to the worst actions, as to the best. As much or more than the sinner or the tempter. That the matter of his laws to Adam, and his posterity, should be a natural impossibility. And I now add, the irreconcilable-ness of that determination, with God's wisdom and sincerity, &c. These I shall reckon demonstrations, till I see them well answered.

However if mine were a bad opinion, why was it not as comfortable without the mention of Durandus? But that was, with him, an odious name; and fit, therefore, to impress the brand, which he desired I should wear for his sake. This is a likely way to clear the truth. Yet if it serve not one design, it will another, he thinks, upon which he was more intent. Are all for Durandus's way that are against a predeterminative influence to wicked actions? I could tell him who have shewn more strength in arguing against Durandus, than I find in all his arguments: who yet have written, too, against determinative concurrence to such actions, more than ever he will be able to answer, or any man. The truth is, when I wrote that letter, I had never seen Durandus. Nor indeed did I consult any book for the writing of it, (as I had not opportunity, if I had been so inclined) ex-

cept, upon some occasions, the Bible. Not apprehending it necessary, to number votes, and consider how many men's thoughts were one way, and of how many the other, before I would adventure to think any of my own: but I have this day, upon the view of his animadversions, taken a view of Durandus too. And, really, cannot yet guess, what should tempt him to parallel my conceptions with Durandus's, but that he took his, for somewhat an ill-favoured name.* Durandus, flatly, in several places denies God's immediate concurrence to the actions of the creatures. Which I never said nor thought. But do really believe his immediate concurrence, to all actions of his creatures (both *immediatione virtutis*, and *suppositi*, that I may more comply with his scholastic humour, in the use of such terms, than gratify my own) yet not determinative unto wicked actions.

Again, Durandus denies immediate concurrence, universally, and upon such a ground, as whereupon, the denial must equally extend to good actions as to bad; † namely, that it is impossible the same numerical action should be from two or more agents mediately and perfectly, except the same numerical virtue should be in each. But (he says) the same numerical virtue cannot be in God and in the creature, &c. Whereas he well knows the concurrence or influence (for I here affect not the curiosity to distinguish these two terms, as some do) which I deny not to be immediate to any actions, I only deny to be determinative, as to those that are wicked. Yea and the authors he quotes (sect. 11.) Aquinas and Scotus, though every body may know they are against what was the notion of Durandus, yet are as much against himself, if he will directly oppose that letter, and assert determinative concurrence, to wicked actions. They held immediate concurrence, not determinative. The former, though he supposes divine help in reference to the elections of the human will, yet asserts the elections themselves to be in man's own power, and only says that in the executions of those elections men can be hindered. That (whatsoever influence he asserts of the first cause) men still, *habent se indifferenter ad bene vel male eligendum, have to choose indifferently good or evil.* The other, though he also excludes not the immediate efficiency of God in reference to the actions of men, yet is so far from making it determinative, that the reason he gives why, in evil actions, man sins, and God doth not, is that the one of those causes *posset rectitudinem dare actui quam tenetur dare: et tamen non dat. Alia autem, licet non teneatur eam dare: tamen quantum est ex se*

* L. 2. Dist. 1. Q. 5. D. 34. Q. 1. † Dist. 1. Q. 5. ut. supr.

*dalet, si voluntas creata cooperaretur; it could give the re-
titude to an act, which it is bound to give and yet does
not give it. But the other, though it is not bound to give
it yet as far as it can, would give it if the created will, would
co-operate, in the very place which himself refers to. Wherein
they differ from this author toto caelo entirely; and from me
that they make not determinative influence necessary in refe-
rence to good actions, which I expressly do.*

• Thus far it may be seen what pretence or colour he had to make my opinion the same with Durandus's, or, his own, the same with that of Thomas and Scotus. But if he knew in what esteem I have the schoolmen, he would hardly believe me likely to step one foot out of my way, either to gain the reputation of any of their names, or avoid the disreputation. He notwithstanding, supposed his own reputation to be so good (and I know no reason why he might not suppose so) as to make it be believed I was any thing he pleased to call me, by such as had not opportunity to be otherwise informed. And thus I would take leave of him, and permit him to use his own reflections upon his usage of me, at his own leisure. But that civility bids me (since he is pleased to be at the pains of catechising me) first to give some answer to the questions wherein he thus expostulates with me.

Question. 1. Whether there be any action of man on earth so good, which hath not some mixture of sin in it? And if God concur to the substrate matter of it as good, must he not necessarily concur to the substrate matter as sinful? For is not the substrate matter of the act, both as good and sinful the same? To which I answer,

1. It seems then, that God doth concur to the matter of an action as sinful. Which is honestly acknowledged, since by his principles, it cannot be denied; though most, of his way, mince the business, and say the concurrence is only to the action which is sinful, not as sinful.

2. This I am to consider as an argument for God's predeterminative concurrence to wicked actions. And thus it must be conceived. That if God concur by determinative influence to the imperfectly good actions of faith, repentance, love to himself, prayer: therefore to the acts of enmity against himself, cursing, idolatry, blasphemy, &c. And is it not a mighty consequence? If to actions that are good *quoad substantiam*, as to the substance therefore to such as are in the substance of them evil? We ourselves can, in a remoter kind, concur to the actions of others: because you may afford, yourself, your leading concurrence to actions imperfectly good, therefore may you to them that are downright evil? because to prayer, therefore to cursing and swearing? and then ruin men for the actions

you induced them to? You will say God may rather, but sure he can much less do so than you. How could you be serious in the proposal of this question?

We are at a loss how it should consist with the divine wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth to design the punishing man, yet innocent, with everlasting torments, for actions which God, himself, would irresistibly move him to; whereas his making a covenant with Adam in reference to himself and his posterity, implied there was a possibility it might be kept; at least that he would not make the keeping of it, by his own positive influence impossible. And you say, if he might concur to the substrate matter of an action as good, (which tends to man's salvation and blessedness) he must necessarily concur (and that by an irresistible determinative influence, else you say nothing to me) to the substrate matter of all their evil actions, as evil, which tend to their ruin and misery, brought upon them by the actions which God makes them do. I suppose St. Luke 6. 9. with Hos. 13. 9. shew a difference. If you therefore ask me, why I should not admit this consequence? I say it needs no other answer, than that I take wisdom, righteousness, goodness, and truth, to belong more to the idea of God, than their contraries.

Question 2. Is there any action so sinful that hath not some natural good as the substrate matter thereof?

Ans. True. And what shall be inferred? That therefore God by a determinative influence produce every such action whatsoever reason there be against it? You might better argue thence the necessity of his producing, every hour, a new world; in which there would be a great deal more of positive entity, and natural goodness. Certainly the natural goodness that is in the entity of an action, is no such invitation to the holy God by determinative influence to produce it, as that he should offer violence to his own nature, and stain the justice and honour of his government, by making it be done, and then punish it, being done.

Question 3. Do we not cut off the most illustrious part of divine providence in governing the lower world, &c.?

Ans. What! by denying that it is the stated way of God's government, to urge men, irresistibly, to all that wickedness, for which he will afterwards punish them with everlasting torments? I should least of all ever have expected such a question to this purpose, and am ashamed further to answer it. Only name any act of providence, I hereby deny, if you can. In the next place, that my sense may appear, in my own words; and that I may shew how far I am of the same mind with those that apprehend me at so vast a distance from them; and where, if they go further, our parting point must be; I shall set down

the particulars of my agreement with them and do it in no other heads than they might have collected, if they had pleased, out of that letter, as

1. That God exerciseth a universal providence about all his creatures, both in sustaining and governing them.

2. That, more particularly, he exerciseth such a providence about man.

3. That this providence about man extends to all the actions of all men.

4. That it consists not alone in beholding the actions of men, as if he were a mere spectator of them only, but is positively active about them.

5. That this active providence of God about all the actions of men consists not merely in giving them the natural powers, whereby they can work of themselves, but in a real influence upon those powers.

6. That this influence is in reference to holy and spiritual actions (whereto since the apostacy, the nature of man is become viciously dis-inclined) necessary to be efficaciously determinative; such as shall overcome that dis-inclination, and reduce those powers into act.

7. That the ordinary, appointed way for the communication of this determinative influence, is by our intervening consideration of the inducements which God represents to us in his word, namely, the precepts, promises and comminations, which are the moral instruments of his government. No doubt but he may (as is intimated in the letter, p. 278.) extraordinarily act men, in some rarer cases, by inward impulse, without the help of such external means, (as he did prophets or inspired persons) and when he hath done so, we were not to think he treated them unagreeably to their natures, or so as their natures could not, without violence, admit. But it hath been the care and designment of the divine wisdom, so to order the way of dispensation towards the several sorts of creatures, as not only not, ordinarily, to impose upon them, what they could not conveniently be patient of, but so as that their powers and faculties might be put upon the exercises whereof they were capable, and to provide that neither their passive capacity should be overcharged, nor their active be unemployed. And whereas the reasonable nature of man renders him not only susceptible of unexpected internal impression, but also capable of being governed by laws, which requires the use of his own endeavour to understand and obey them; and whereas we also find such laws are actually made for him, and propounded to him with their proper enforcements. If it should be the fixed course of God's government over him, only to guide him by inward impulses; this (as is said, p. 278)

would render those laws and their sanctions impertinencies, his faculties whereby he is capable of moral government so far, and to this purpose, useless and vain. And would be an occasion, which the depraved nature of men, would be very apt to abuse into a temptation to them, never to bend their powers to the endeavour of doing any thing that were of a holy and spiritual tendency (from which their aversion would be always prompting them to devise excuses) more than a mere machine would apply itself to the uses which it was made for, and doth not understand.

Therefore, lest any should be so unreasonable, as to expect God should only surprise them, while they resolutely sit still and sleep; he hath, in his infinite wisdom, withheld from them the occasion hereof; and left them destitute of any encouragement (whatsoever his extraordinary dealings may have been with some) to expect his influences, in the neglect of his ordinary methods, as is discoursed p. 264. and at large in the following pages. And which is the plain sense of that admonition, (Phil. 2. 12. 13.) Yea, and though there be never so many instances of merciful surprisals, preventive of all our own consideration and care, yet those are still to be accounted the ordinary methods which are so *de jure*, which would actually be so, if men did their duty, and which God hath obliged us to observe and attend unto as such.

8. That in reference to all other actions which are not sinful, though there be not a sinful disinclination to them, yet because there may be a sluggishness, and inaptitude to some purposes God intends to serve by them, this influence is also always determinative thereunto; whensoever to the immense wisdom of God shall seem meet, and conducing to his own great and holy ends.

9. That, in reference to sinful actions; by this influence God doth not only sustain men who do them, and continue to them their natural faculties and powers, whereby they are done, but also, as the first mover, so far excite and actuate those powers, as that they are apt and habile for any congenerous action, to which they have a natural designation; and whereto they are not sinfully dis-inclined.

10. That, if men do then employ them to the doing of any sinful action; by that same influence, he doth, as to him seems meet, limit, moderate, and, against the inclination and design of the sinful agent, over-rule and dispose it to good. But now, if, besides all this, they will also assert; that God doth, by an efficacious influence, move and determine men to wicked actions. This is that which I most resolutely deny. That is, in this I shall differ with them, that I do not suppose God to have, by

internal influence, as far, a hand, in the worst and wickedest actions, as in the best. I assert more to be necessary to actions to which men are wickedly disinclined; but that less will suffice for their doing of actions to which they have inclination more than enough. I reckon it sufficient to the production of this latter sort of actions, that their powers be actually habile, and apt for any such action, in the general, as is connatural to them; supposing there be not a peccant aversion, as there is to all those actions that are holy and spiritual; which aversion a more potent (even a determinative) influence is necessary to overcome. I explain myself by instance.

A man hath from God the powers belonging to his nature, by which he is capable of loving or hating an apprehended good or evil. These powers, being, by a present divine influence, rendered habile, and apt for action: he can now love a good name, health, ease, life, and hate disgrace, sickness, pain, death. But he doth also by these powers, thus habilitated for action, love wickedness, and hate God. I say, now, that to those former acts God should over and besides determine him, is not absolutely and always necessary; and, to the latter, is impossible. But that, to hate wickedness universally, and as such, and to love God, the depravedness of his nature, by the apostacy, hath made the determinative influence of efficacious grace necessary. Which therefore, he hath indispensable obligation (nor is destitute of encouragement) earnestly to implore and pray for. My meaning is now plain to such as have a mind to understand it.

Having thus given an account wherein I agree with them, and wherein, if they please, I must differ. It may perhaps be expected I should add further reasons of that difference on my part. But I shall for the present forbear to do it. I know it may be alleged, that some very pious as well as learned men have been of their opinion. And I seriously believe it. But that signifies nothing to the goodness of the opinion. Nor doth the badness of it extinguish my charity, nor reverence towards the men. For I consider, that as many hold the most important truths, and which most directly tend to impress the image of God upon their souls, that yet are never stamped with any such impression thereby; so, it is not impossible some may have held very dangerous opinions, with a notional judgment, the pernicious influence whereof hath never distilled upon their hearts. Neither shall I be willing without necessity to detect other men's infirmities. Yet if I find myself any way obliged further to intermeddle in this matter, I reckon the time I have to spend in this world, can never be spent to better purpose, than in discovering the fearful consequences of that rejected opinion, the vanity of the subterfuges whereby its assertors think

to hide the malignity of it; and the inefficacy of the arguments brought for it. Especially those two which the letter takes notice of. For as so ill-coloured an opinion ought never to be admitted without the most apparent necessity, so do I think it most apparent there is no necessity it should be admitted upon those grounds or any other. And doubt not but that both the governing providence of God in reference to all events whatsoever; and his most certain foreknowledge of them all, may be defended, against all opposers, without it. But I had rather my preparations to these purposes, should be buried in dust and silence; than I should ever see the occasion which should carry the signification with it of their being at all needful. And I shall take it for a just and most deplorable occasion, if I shall find any to assert against me the contradictory to this proposition,—That God doth not by an efficacious influence, universally move and determine men to all their actions; even those that are most wicked.—Which is the only true, and plain meaning of what was said, about this business, in the before-mentioned letter.

OF

THOUGHTFULNESS

For the Morrow :

WITH AN APPENDIX :

CONCERNING THE

IMMODERATE DESIRE

OF FOREKNOWING

THINGS TO COME.

TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
A N N,
LADY WHARTON.

IT was, madam, the character an ancient worthy in the Christian church gave of a noble person of your sex, that, in reference to the matters of religion she was not only a learner, but a judge. And accordingly, he incribes to her divers of his writings (even such as did require a very accurate judgment in the reading of them;) which remain, unto this day, dispersedly, in several parts of his works, dignified with her (often prefixed) name. A greater indeed than he mentions it as an ill character, to be not a doer of the law, but a judge. It makes a great difference in the exercise of the same faculty, and in doing the same thing, with what mind and design it is done. There is a judging, that we may learn, and a judging, that we may not. A judgment subservient to our duty, and a judgment opposite to it. Without a degree of the former no one can ever be a serious Christian: by means of the latter, many never are. The world through wisdom knew not God. A cavilling litigious wit, in the confidence whereof any set themselves above their rule, and make it their business only to censure it, as if they would rather find faults in it, than themselves, is as inconsistent with sincere piety, as a humbly judicious discerning mind is necessary to it. This proceeds from a due savour and relish of divine things, peculiar to them, in whom a heavenly spirit and principle have the possession, and a governing power. They that are after the Spirit, do savour the things of the Spirit. The other from the prepossession and prejudice of a disaffected carnal mind. They that are after the flesh, do only savour the things of the flesh.

The ability God hath endowed your ladyship with to judge of the truth that is after godliness, is that you are better pleased to use, than hear of. I shall therefore be silent herein, and rather displease

many of them that know you, who will be apt to think a copious subject is neglected, than say anything that may offend either against your ladyship's inclination or my own. Here is nothing abstruse and difficult for you to exercise a profound judgment upon: nor anything curious to gratify a pleasant wit. But plain things, suitable to you, upon accounts common to the generality of christians, not that are peculiar to yourself. It is easy to a well-tempered mind, (of how high intellectual excellencies soever) to descend to the same level with the rest; when for them to reach up to the others pitch, is not so much as possible. Our heavenly Father keeps not (as to the substantials of our nutriment distinct tables for his children, but all must eat the same spiritual meat, and drink the same spiritual drink. He hath not one gospel for great wits, and another for plain-er people: but as all that are born of him must meet at length in one end, so they must all walk by the same rule, and in the same way, thither. And when I had first mentioned this text of scripture in your hearing, the savour you expressed to me of the subject, easily induced me, when, afterwards, I reckoned a discourse upon it might be of common use, to address that also (such as it is) in this way, to your ladyship. Accounting the mention of your name might draw the eyes of some to it, that have no reason to regard the authors, and that by this means, if it be capable of proving beneficial to any, the benefit might be diffused so much the further.

The aptness of the materials and subject, here discoursed of, to do good generally, I cannot doubt. Neither our present duty nor peace; nor our future safety or felicity can be provided for as they ought, till our minds be more abstracted from time, and taken up about the unseen, eternal world. While our thoughts are too earnestly engaged about the events of future time, they are vain, bitter, impure, and diverted from our nobler, and most necessary pursuits. They follow much the temper and bent of our spirits, which are often too intent upon what is uncertain, and perhaps, impossible. All good and holy persons cannot live in good times. For who should bear up the name of God in bad, and transmit it to succeeding times? especially when good men are not of the same mind, it is impossible. And more especially, when they have not learned, as yet, to bear one another's differences. The same time, and state of things which please some, must displease others. For some, that will think themselves much injured if they be not thought very pious persons, will be pleased with nothing less, than the destruction of them that differ from them. So that while this is designed and attempted only; generally, neither sort is pleased, The one because it is not done, The other because it is in doing.

It must be a marvellous alteration of men's minds that must make the times please us all; while, upon supposition of their remaining unaltered, there is nothing will please one sort, but to see the other pagans or beggars, who in the mean time are not enough mortified either to their religion, or the necessary accommodations of human life, as to be well pleased with either.

To trust God cheerfully with the government of this world, and

to live in the joyful hope and expectation of a better, are the only means to relieve and ease us; and give us a vacancy for the proper work and business of our present time. This is the design of the following discourses. The former whereof is directed against the careful thoughts, which are apt to arise in our minds concerning the events of future time, upon a fear what they may be. The other, which by way of appendix is added to the former, tends to repress the immoderate desire of knowing what they shall be. Which latter I thought, in respect of its affinity to the other, fit to be added to it; and in respect of the commonness, and ill tendency of this distemper very necessary. And indeed both the extremes in this matter are very unchristian, and pernicious. A stupid neglect of the Christian interest, and of God's providence about it on the one hand; and an enthusiastic phrenzy carrying men to expect they well know not what? Or why? on the other.

Our great care should be to serve that interest faithfully in our own stations, for our little time, that will soon be over. Your ladyship hath been called to serve it in a family wherein it hath long flourished. And which it hath dignified, beyond all the splendour that antiquity and secular greatness could confer upon it. The Lord grant it may long continue to flourish there, under the joint-influence of your noble consort, and your own; and, afterwards, in a posterity, that may imitate their ancestors in substantial piety, and solid goodness. Which is a glory that will not fade, nor vary; nor change with times, but equally recommend itself, to sober and good men in all times. Whereas that which arises from the esteem of a party can neither be diffusive, nor lasting. It is true that I cannot but reckon it a part of any one's praise in a time wherein here are different sentiments and ways, in circumstantial matters relating to religion, to incline most to that which I take to come nearest the truth and our common rule. But, as was said by one that was a great and early light in the Christian church; "That is not philosophy, which is professed by this or that sect, but that which is true in all sects." So nor do I take that to be religion, which is peculiar to this or that party of christians (many of whom are too apt to say here is Christ, and there is Christ, as if he were divided) but that which is according to the mind of God among them all. And I must profess to have that honour for your Ladyship, which I sincerely bear, and most justly owe unto you, chiefly upon the account not of the things wherein you differ from many other serious christians (though therein you agree also with myself) as for those things wherein you agree with them all. Under which notion (and under the sensible obligation of your many singular favours) I am

MADAM,

Your Ladyship's very humble

And devoted servant in the Gospel,

JOHN HOWE,

OF
THOUGHTFULNESS
FOR THE
FUTURE.

Matthew, 6. 34.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

THE negative precept, or the prohibition, in the first words of this verse, I shall take for the principal ground of the intended discourse. But shall make use of the following words, for the same purpose for which they are here subjoined by our Lord, namely, the enforcement of it.

1. For our better understanding the import of the precept, two things in it require explication. How we are to understand the morrow; and what is meant by the thoughtfulness we are to abstain from in reference thereto.

FIRST. By the morrow must be meant: some measure of time or other: and such occurrences, as it may be supposed shall fall within the compass of that time. We are therefore to consider.

First. What portion or measure of time may be here signified by *to-morrow*, for some time it must signify, in the first place, as fundamental to the further meaning. Nor abstractly, or for itself, but as it is the continent of such or such things as may fall within that time. And so that measure of time may,

1. Admit, no doubt, to be taken strictly for the very next day, according to the literal import of the word *to-morrow*. But

2. It is also to be taken in a much larger sense, for the whole of our remaining time, all our futurity in this world. Indeed, the whole time of our life on earth is spoken of in the Scrip-

tures, but as a day. Let him alone that he may accomplish as a hireling his day. (Job. 14. 6.) We are a sort of ἡμερόβιοι *short-lived creatures*, we live but a day, take the whole of our time together. Much less strange is it that the little residue, the future time that is before us, which we do not know how little it may be, should be spoken of but as a day. Experience hath taught even sensual epicures so to account their remaining time: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die." that is very shortly. They were right in their computation, but very wrong in their inference. It should have been, let us watch and pray to-day, we are to die to-morrow, let us labour for *eternity* because time is so short. But say they, "Let us eat and drink to-day, for to-morrow we shall die." A day to eat and drink was, it seems, a great gain. And if the phrase were not so used, to signify all the residue of our future time, yet by consequence it must be so understood. For if we take to-morrow in the strictest sense for the very next day; they that are not permitted, with solicitude, to look forward so far as the very next day; much less may they to a remoter and more distant time. Yea and we may in some sense extend it not only to all our future time, but simply to all future time as that measures the concernments and affairs, not of this world only, but, which is more considerable, even of that lesser select community, the kingdom of God in it, mentioned in the foregoing verse. Which kingdom, besides its future eternal state, lies also spread and stretched throughout all time unto the end of the world. And as to its present and temporal state, or as it falls under the measure of time, it is not un-supposable that it may be within the compass of our Saviour's design, to forbid unto his disciples (who were not only to pursue the blessedness of that kingdom in the other world, but to intend the service of it in this) an intemperate and vexatious solicitude about the success of their endeavours, for the promoting its present interest. That is, after he had more directly forbidden their undue carefulness about their own little concernments, what they should eat, drink or put on; and directed them rather and more principally to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, with an assurance that those other things should be added to them. It seems not improbable he might in conclusion, give this general direction, as with a more especial reference to the private concernments of human life, about which common frailty might make them more apt to be unduly thoughtful: so with some oblique and secondary reference to the affairs of that kingdom too, which they were here to serve as well as hereafter to partake and enjoy. And about the success of which service (being once engaged in it, and the

difficulties they were to encounter, appearing great and discouraging to so inconsiderable persons as they must reckon themselves) they might be somewhat over sollicitous also.

Nor though they might not as yet understand their own work, nor (consequently) have the prospect of its difficulties as yet in view, are we to think our Saviour intended to limit the usefulness of the instructions he now gave them, to the present time, but meant them to be of future use to them as occasions should afterwards occur. As we also find that they did recollect some other sayings of his, and understand better the meaning of them, when particular occasions brought them to mind, and discovered how apposite and applicable they then were. Luke 24. 8. John 2. 22. So that we may fitly understand this prohibition to intend, universally, a repressing of that too great aptitude and proneness in the minds of men, unto undue excursions into futurity, their intemperate and extravagant rangings and roamings into that *unknown country*, that *terra incognita*, in which we can but bewilder and lose ourselves to no purpose. Therefore,

Secondly. And more principally, by *to-morrow* we are to understand the things that may fall within that compass of future time. For time can only be the object of our care, in that relative sense, as it refers unto such and such occurrences and emergencies that may fall into it. And so our Saviour explains himself in the very next words, that by *to-morrow* he means the *things* of *to-morrow*. *To-morrow* shall take care for the things of itself. And yet here we must carefully distinguish, as to those *things* of *to-morrow*, matters of *event* and of *duty*. We are not to think these the equally prohibited objects of our thoughts and care. *Duty* belongs to us, it falls within our province, and there are (no doubt) thoughts to be employed, how I may continue on in a course of duty, unto which I am, by all the most sacred obligations tied for a stated course, that may lie before me, let it be never so long, and be there never so many *to-morrows* in it. There ought to be thoughts used, of this sort, concerning the duties of the *morrow*, and of all my future time. If it please God to give me such additional time I will love him *to-morrow*, I will serve him *to-morrow*, I will trust him *to-morrow*, I will walk with him *to-morrow*. I will, through the grace of God, live in his fear, service and communion, even as long as I have a day to live. Upon such terms doth every sincere christian bind himself to God, even for always, as God binds himself to them on the same terms. This God shall be our God for ever and ever, he shall be our guide even unto death. Psalm 48. 14. The case can never alter with us in this regard, but as the worthiest object of all our thoughts is yesterday, and

to-day the same, and for ever, so should the course of our thoughts be too, in reference to that blessed object. Every day will I bless thee, and praise thy name for ever and ever. Psalm 145. 2. I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. Psal. 104. 33. The thoughts of our hearts should be much exercised this way, how it may be thus with us, in all future time; that to-morrow, in this respect may be as this day, and much more abundant, as is spoken on a much another account, (Isai. 56. 12.) To-morrow shall be as this day, God assisting, and much more abundant as to my love to him, serving of him, conversing with him, doing and designing for him, which are to run through all my days.

But now for the events of to-morrow, they are things quite of another consideration. They do not belong to us, they are not of the $\tau\acute{\alpha}\ \epsilon\Phi'\ \eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$, none of the things within our compass. To employ ourselves with excessive intention of thoughts and cares concerning them, is to meddle without our sphere, beyond what we have any warrant for, farther than as it is in some cases supposable there may be some connexion, and dependance, between such and such events, and my own either sin, or duty. Now events that may occur to us to-morrow, or in our future time, you know are distinguishable into good or bad, grateful and ungrateful, pleasing to us or displeasing. Good or grateful events, you easily apprehend, are not here intended. We do not use to perplex ourselves about good things, otherwise than as they may be wanting, and as we may be deprived of them, which privation or want is an evil. And under that notion our Saviour considers the object of the prohibited thoughtfulness, as his after words shew. Sufficient for the day is the evil of it. And therefore gives caution not equally against all forethoughts, about the events of future time; of which some may be both rational, and pleasant. But against forebodings, and presages of evil and direful things. As lest such thoughts should slide into our minds, or impose and obtrude themselves upon us. "Alas! what shall I do to-live to-morrow? I am afraid I shall want bread for to-morrow, or for my future time." This our Saviour says is paganish, after these things do the Gentiles seek, that (as is intimated) have no father to take care of them. Your heavenly Father knows you have need of these things, (v. 32.) And directs his disciples to a nobler object of their thoughts and care, (v. 33.) Seek you first the kingdom of God: wherein, as their future reward, so their present work and business was to lie. And then adds, Take no thought for to-morrow, as if he had said; it would be indeed an ill thing if you should want bread to-morrow, and it would be worse if

the affairs of God's kingdom should miscarry, or you be excluded it. But mind you your own present work, and be not unduly concerned about these surmised bad events, God will provide. This is then, in short, the object of this prohibited thoughtfulness—future time including whatsoever ungrateful events, we suppose, and pre-apprehend in it.

SECONDLY. We are to inquire about the thoughtfulness prohibited in reference hereto. It cannot be that all use of thoughts about future events, even such, as, when they occur, may prove afflictive, is intended to be forbidden. Which indeed may be collected from the import of the word in the text that signifies another, peculiar sort of thinking, as we shall hereafter have more occasion to take notice. We were made and are naturally, thinking creatures; yea and forethinking, or capable of prospiciency and foresight. It is that by which in part man is distinguished from beast.* Without disputing as some do how far nature, in this, or that man, doth contribute to divination and prophecy; we may say of man indefinitely, he is a sort of divining creature, and of human nature in common, that it much excels the brutal, in this, that, whereas sense is limited to the present; reason hath dignified our nature by adding to it a sagacity, and enabling us to use prospectation in reference to what yet lies more remotely before us. And though we are too apt to a faulty excess herein, and to be over-presaging (which it is the design of this discourse to shew) yet we are not to think that all use of any natural faculty can be a fault; for that would be to charge a fault on the Author of nature. The faculties will be active. To plant them therefore in our natures, and forbid their use, were not consistent with the wisdom, righteousness, and goodness by which they are implanted. It must therefore be our business to shew—what thoughtfulness is *not*:—and then, what *is* within the compass of this prohibition.

First. What is not. There is, in the general, a *prudent*, and there is a *Christian* use of forethought, about matters of that nature already specified; which we cannot understand it was our Saviour's meaning to forbid.

A prudent thoughtfulness which imports reference to an end. Our actions are so far said to be governed by prudence, and to proceed from it as they do designedly and aptly serve a valuable end.

1. The foresight of evils probable, yea even possible, to befall us, is useful, upon a *prudential* account, to several very considerable ends, and purposes; either to put us upon doing the more good in the mean time, or upon the endeavour (within moderate bounds, and as more may be needful) of possessing

* Maimond, Mor. Nev. D. Mer. Casaubon. Enthau.

more,—or that we may avert or avoid imminent evils ; or that what cannot be avoided, we may be the better able to bear.

(1.) That we may be incited hereupon to do all the good we can in the world, in the mean time, before such evils overtake and prevent us. For prudence itself will teach a man to account (and hath taught even heathens) that he doth not live in this world, merely, that he may live ; that he is not to live wholly to himself ; his friends claim a part in him, his neighbours a part, his country a part ; the world a part. He lives not at the rate of a prudent man that thinks of living only to indulge and gratify himself, and consult his own ease and pleasure, and upon this consideration, his prudence should instruct him to do all the present good he can, because there are evils in view that may narrow his capacity, and snatch from him the opportunity of doing much. The evil day (as it is more eminently called) is not far off. He should therefore bethink himself of doing good to his friend (as the son of Syrach speaks) before he die. And there are other evils that may anticipate that day : unto which the preacher hath reference, (Eccle. 11. 2.) when he directs, to give a portion to seven and also to eight, because we know not what evil shall be upon the earth. We cannot tell how soon we may have neither power nor time left to do it in.

(2.) And that we may be provided (as far as it lies within the compass of regular endeavour) of such needful good things, as are requisite for our support in this our pilgrimage ; and especially, upon occasion of a foreseen calamity approaching. This, as prudence doth require, so we cannot suppose our Saviour doth by a constant rule forbid, who sometime enjoined his disciples to carry a scrip with them, though at another time (that they might, once for all, be convinced of the sufficient care of providence, when or howsoever they should be precluded from using their own) he did, extraordinarily, forbid it. And it is evident that, in common cases, it is more especially incumbent on the master of a family to make provision for his household, for the future ; to provide in the more convenient season of the year, as in summer, for the following winter. A document which the slothful are sent to learn from a very despicable instructor. Go to the ant thou sluggard. Prov. 6. 6. &c. And again

(3.) That the approaching evil may, if avoidable, be declined, the prudent man foresees the evil and hides himself, when the simple pass on and are punished, Prov. 22. 3. And, perhaps, for this their simplicity ; that they regardlessly go on with a stupid negligence of all warnings, till the stroke and storm fall. Which, whereas there may be one event to the

wise man and the fool, (as Eccle. 2. 14.) will prove to the one a mere affliction, to the other (upon this as well as other accounts) a proper and most deserved punishment. Because (as is there said) the wise man's eyes are in his head, prompt and ready for their present use, the fool walks in darkness, which must be understood of a voluntary self-created darkness, as if he had plucked out his own eyes. Which is the wickedness of folly, as the same Ecclesiastes's phrase is, ch. 7. v. 25.

(4.) That what cannot be avoided may be the more easily borne. Every man counts it desirable, not to be surprized by evils that are unavoidable and no way to be averted. Prudence will, in such a case, use forethoughts to better purpose, than only to anticipate and multiply an affliction, or consequently, to increase its weight; but much to alleviate and lessen it. By learning to bear it; gradually, and by gentle essays to acquaint the shoulder with the burden. To inure and compose the mind and reconcile it to the several circumstances (so far as they are foreseen) of that less-pleasing state we are next to pass into. Which advantage might be one reason why Solomon in the above mentioned place (though according to the genius of that reasoning book he variously discourses things on the one hand and the other) prefers wisdom to folly as much as light to darkness, (Eccles. 2. 13.) though one event may happen to both. It is an uncomfortable thing to walk in darkness; and (supposing there be that wisdom that can make due use of a prospect) not to see an evil till we meet, and feel it. Unexpected evils carry, as such, a more peculiar sting and pungency with them. When any shall say peace, peace, till sudden destruction comes upon them as travail on a woman with child, 1. Thes. 5. 3. Nor can we reasonably think it was any part of our Saviour's intendment, to advise his disciples unto such a self-revenging security who so often enjoins them watchfulness, because of what should come to pass. Or that he should counsel them to the same thing, for which he blames and upbraids the pharisees and sadducees, their not discerning the signs of the times. Upon all these prudential accounts there is a use of forethoughts about future approaching evils.

2. And there is a further use to be made of them upon an account more purely *Christian*. I would tempt none, under pretence of distinguishing these heads, to think they should oppose them. Christianity must be understood in reference to common prudence to be cumulative not privative. It adds to it therefore: opposes it not, but supposes it rather. And indeed it adds that, upon the account whereof we are far the more liable to afflicting evils, and so are the more concerned to use forethoughts about them. For, whereas there are much rarer in-

stances of suffering merely for the duties of natural religion, which the common reason of man acknowledges equal and unexceptionable, we are plainly told that all that will live godly *in Christ Jesus*, shall suffer persecution, (2.Tim.3.1 2.) though not in all times alike. Here therefore it is necessary we have serious forethoughts, of the evils which seem likely to befall us, for the Christian interest, upon several accounts.

(1.) That we may espouse it sincerely. And enter ourselves the disciples of Christ with a true heart. Which we are not likely to do if we understand not his terms, and do not consider the state of the case. What is done without judgment, or upon mistake, is not like to be done in truth. If we fall in with Christ and Christianity upon supposition of only halcyon days, in our time, and that we shall never be called to suffer for him; we shall most probably, deceive ourselves; and prove false to him. It will appear our bargain was void in the making, as to any tie we can have upon him. We are to reckon, when we take on the yoke of Christ, of bearing, also, his cross; and be in a preparation of mind to lose and suffer all things for him. And to use forethoughts of this kind is what he enjoins us, (Luke 14. 28.) under the expression of counting the cost, what it may amount unto to be a resolved sincere christian. And he tells us withal, what the cost is to forsake all, (v. 33.) to abandon father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters, and one's own life, v. 26. And all this (as is often inculcated) as that without which a man cannot be his disciple, that is, not become one, as there the phrase must signify! So that though he have come to him, that is, have begun to treat (if a man come to me) and do not so, in his previous resolution, nothing is concluded between Christ and him.

(2.) That, upon this constant prospect of the state of our case we may endeavour our own confirmation, from time to time, in our fidelity to him. For new, and unforethought occasions, that we have not comprehended in their particulars, or in equivalence, may beget new impressions, and dispositions to revolt. Besides all that had come upon those faithful confessors, (ps. 11) that they were sore broken in the piece of dragons, and covered with the shadow of death, (v. 19.) notwithstanding which they appeal to God, that their heart was not turned back, and that their steps had not declined from his way: and offer themselves to his search, whether they had forgotten him, or stretched out their hands to a strange God. They add, yea for thy sake we are killed all the day long. They reckon upon nothing but suffering, and that to utmost extremity, all the rest of their day, and yet are still of the same mind. Patience must be laid in, that may be drawn forth unto long-suffering. And we are to

endure to the end, that we may be saved. And therefore suffering to the last, is to be forethought of, through the whole course of which state of suffering we must resolve, through the grace of Christ, never to desert his interest. Otherwise we are so deceived, as he that goes to build a tower, without counting what his expence will be, before-hand; or he that is to meet an enemy in the field, without making a computation of the equality or inequality of the forces on the one side and the other; as our Saviour further discourses in the above-mentioned context.

(3.) That we may cast with ourselves how, not only not to desert the Christian interest, but most advantageously to serve it. Suppositions ought to be made of whatsoever difficulties seem not unlikely to be in our case, that we may bethink ourselves how we may be of most use to the interest of our great Master and Lord, upon such, and such emergencies. For such a supposition he himself suggests Mat. 10. 23. If they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another. And it is likely he gives this direction not with respect merely to their being safe, but serviceable, as the following words seem to intimate, for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the son of man be come. As though he had said, "You will have work to do whither ever you come, and will scarce have done all within that allotment of time you will have for it, before the vengeance determined upon this people prevent you of further opportunity among them:" as Tertullian discourses at large, and not irrationally, upon this subject and Augustine to the like purpose.*

(4.) That we may be the more excited to pray for the preservation and prosperity of the Christian interest. Those we should always reckon the worst days, that are of worst abode unto it, though we expect our own share in the calamities of such days. When his interest declines, and there are phenomena in providence, appearances and aspects very threatening to it, there ought to be the more earnest and importunate praying. And that there may be so, our eye should look forward, and be directed towards the events as from whence we are to take arguments and motives to prayer. And we should reckon therefore they are presignified that we may be excited. And a duti-

* Expos. in Evang. Johan. c. 10. If they persecute you in one city, fly, &c. Yet Lord, thou sayst, the hireling fleeth, who is this hireling? He that flies seeking his own things, not the things of Jesus Christ. Thou hast fled (though present) because thou wast silent, wast silent, because thou wast afraid, fear is the flight of the mind &c.

ful love to his great name be awakened in us. What shall be done to thy great name? What shall become of thy kingdom among men? Nor can we ever pray "thy kingdom come" without a prospect to futurity. Yea and all prayer hath reference to somewhat yet future. If therefore all forethoughts about the concernments of future time were simply forbidden, there were no place left for prayer at all. Hitherto then we see how far taking thought about the future is not forbidden.

Secondly. We are next therefore to shew wherein it is. And it appears from what hath been said, it is not evil in itself, for then it must be universally so, and no circumstance could make it good or allowable in any kind. Therefore it must be evil only either by participation or by redundancy. And so it may be, either as,—proceeding from evil, or,—as tending to evil: that is in respect either of the evil causes from which it comes, or of the ill effects to which it tends. Under these two heads we shall comprehend what is to be said for opening the sense wherein it may be understood to fall under the present prohibition.

1. All such thoughtfulness must be understood to be evil and forbidden as hath an ill root and original. As, before, our Saviour, in this sermon of his, forbids somewhat else under this notion because it cometh of evil. What doth so, partakes from thence an ill savour. Those are evil thoughts that participate and as it were, taste of an evil cause which may be manifold.

As,
 (1.) It may proceed from a groundless and too confident presumption that we shall live to-morrow, and that our *to-morrow* shall be a long day, or that we have much time before us in the world; which as it really is a great uncertainty, ought always to be so esteemed, Men presume first, and take somewhat for granted which they ought not, and make that their hypothesis, upon which they lay a frame of iniquity of this kind, and make it the ground of much forbidden thoughtfulness and care. They forget in whose hands their breath is, assume to themselves the measuring of their own time, as if they were lords of it, take it for granted, they shall live so long; and accordingly form their projects, lay designs, and then grow very solicitous how they will succeed and take effect. By breaking another former law, they lead themselves into the transgression of this, that is, first boast of to-morrow against the prohibition, (*Prov. 27. 1*) and then proceed unduly to take thought for to-morrow. The case which we find falls under animadversion, *Jam. 4. 19, &c.* To-morrow we will go to such a city, and buy and sell, and get gain; when as (saith that apostle) you do not know what shall be on the morrow; for what is your life, is it not a vapour? &c.

Would we learn to die daily, and consider that, for ought we know, to-morrow in the strictest sense, may prove the day of our death, and that then, in that very day must our thoughts perish, we should think less intensely on the less fruitful subjects. Our thoughts would take a higher flight, not flutter in the dust, and fill our souls with gravel, as is our wont; and less no doubt offend against the true meaning of this interdict of our Saviour in the text.

(2.) There may be an undue forbidden thoughtfulness about to-morrow, proceeding from a too curious inquisitiveness, and affectation of prying into futurity. Men have nothing here but gloom, and cloudy darkness before them. Fain they would with their weak and feeble beam pierce the cloud, and cannot; it is retorted and doth not enter. They think to re-enforce it by a throng, and thick succession of thoughts, but do only think themselves into the more confusion; cannot see what is next before them. What new scene shall first open upon them, they cannot tell. And (as is natural to them that converse in dubious darkness) their thoughts turn all to fear. And they therefore think the more, and as their thoughts multiply, increase their fear. Whereas they should retire, and abstain from conversing in so disconsolate a region, among shades and spectres, which are their own creatures, perhaps, for the most part; and wherewith they first cheat, and then fright themselves. They should choose rather to converse in the light, of former, and present things, which they know; and of such greater and more considerable futurities as God hath thought fit plainly to reveal. And be contented there should be arcana, and that such future things remain so, as God hath reserved and locked up from us. It is not for you to know the times and seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power, saith our Saviour (departing) unto his disciples, (Act. 1. 7.) when he was now going up into glory. Fain they would have known how it should speed afterwards with them, and his interest. Wilt thou now (say they) restore the kingdom to Israel? It is not for you (says he) to know, &c. If God should any way give us light into futurity it is to be accepted, if we are sure it is from him; and be regarded according to what proofs there are that it is so. As, sometimes, he doth premonish of very considerable events, that are coming on; and, according to what of evidence there is in any such monition, ought the impressions to be upon our spirits. But when out of our own fancies we will supply the want of such a discovery, and curiously busy (much more if we hereupon torment) ourselves to no purpose; this we cannot doubt is forbidden us. But we shall say

more of it hereafter apart by itself. And with this we may most fitly connect,

(3.) That such thoughtfulness about the future is to be concluded undue and forbidden, as proceeds from a too conceited self indulgent opinion of our own wisdom, and ability to foresee what shall happen. For from our very earnest desire to foreknow, may easily arise a belief that we do, or can do so. As a dream cometh from multitude of business, the over-busy agitation, and exercise of our minds about what shall be, makes us dream, and in our dream we seem to ourselves to see visions; and have before us very accurate schemes and prospects of things. How inventive are men and ingenious in contriving their frames and models either direful and dismal, or pleasant and entertaining, as the disposition of their minds is, compared with the present aspect of affairs, which variously impresses them this way or that! If they be terrible and dismal, but raised only upon a conceited opinion of our own great skill and faculty in foreseeing, they have their afflicting evil in themselves our own creature (of itself ravenous) tears and torments us: If they be pleasant and delectable, yet they may become afflicting by accident. For some one unthought of thing, falling out contrary to our expectation, may overturn our whole model and fabric, as a touch doth a house of cards, and then we play the child's part in deploring, as we did in erecting it: fret and despair that things can ever be brought to so good a posture again. But whether they be the one or the other, their sinful evil (which we are now considering) they owe to one and the same culpable cause, that we are so overwise, and take upon us with such confidence to conclude of what shall be: as if our wisdom were the measure of things, or could give laws to providence from which it can never vary. It is not in itself a fault to be afraid of what is formidable, or pleased with what is pleasant (except it be with excess.) But it is our fault to be either frightened with shadows, or to surfeit ourselves with a temporary short pleasure drawn out from them that may, afterward, revenge itself upon us with the sharper torture. When as all their power to hurt us they receive from ourselves. And have no more of reality or existence, than a strong imagination, and confidence of our own undeceivable wit, and sagacity gives them. Who in all the world have minds so vexed with sudden passions of fear and hope, joy and sorrow, anger and despair, as your smattering pedants in policy, such as set up for dons; and who fancy themselves men of great reach, able to foretel remote changes, and see things whose distance makes them invisible to all but themselves? that hold a continual council-

table in their own divining heads, think themselves to comprehend all reasons of state. Are as busy as princes and emperors, or their greatest ministers; mightily taken up in all affairs, but those of their own private stations. And thereby qualified to be state weather-glasses, but prove no better for the use they pretend for, than a common almanack, where you may write wet for dry throughout the year, and as much hit the truth. They that shall consider the abstruseness of designs and transactions that relate to the public, and how much resolutions about them depend upon what it is fit should be commonly unknown; so that they that judge without doors must think and talk at random: and withal that shall consider the uncertainty of human affairs, and that they who manage them are liable to ignorances, mistakes, incogitancies, and to the hurry of various passions as well as other men; especially that shall consider the many surprising interpositions of an over-ruling hand, and what innumerable varieties of paths lie open to the view, and choice of an infinite mind, which we can have no apprehension of; might easily, before-hand, apprehend the vanity of attempting much in this kind, as common experience daily shews it, afterwards. So that multitudes of presaging thoughts, and agitations of mind, which proceed from the supposition of the contrary, cannot be without much sin against this precept of our Lord. And which would mostly be avoided, would we once learn to lay no great stress of expectation upon anything that may be otherwise; and to reckon (with that modesty which would well become us) that we can foresee nothing in the course of ordinary human affairs upon more certain terms.

(4.) Here is especially forbidden such thoughtfulness as proceeds from a secret distrust of providence, from a latent, lurking atheism, or (which comes all to one as to the matter of religion) an only epicurean theism that excludes the divine presence and government, that is, call it by the one of these names or the other; whatsoever thoughtfulness proceeds from our not having a fixed, steady, actual belief of the wise, holy, righteous, and powerful providence that governs all affairs in the world, and particularly all our own affairs, no doubt highly offends against this law. When we have thought God out of the world, what a horrid darkness do we turn it into to ourselves! what a dismal waste and wilderness do we make it! We can have no prospect but of darkness and desolation alway before us. Did we apprehend God as every-where present and active; (*Deum-ire per omnes terrasque tractusque maris---*) that heavens, earth and seas are replenished with a divine powerful presence; were our minds possessed with the belief of his fulness filling all in all, and of his governing power and wisdom,

extending to all times as well as places ; there were neither time nor place left for undue thoughtfulness of what is, or shall be. But by a secret disbelief of providence, or our not having a serious fixed lively practical belief of it, we put ourselves into the condition of the more stupid pagans, and are not only as strangers to the common-wealth of Israel, and the covenants of promise, and without Christ and hope, but even as without God in the world, or atheists in it, as the word there signifies, Ephes. 2. 12. And when we have thus by our own disbelief shut out God, how over-officiously do we offer ourselves so succeed into his place ! And now how immense a charge have we taken upon us ! We will govern the world and order affairs, and times and seasons. A province for which we are as fit as he whom the poetic fable places in the chariot of the sun. And so, were it in our power, we should put all things into a combustion. But it is too much for us, that our impotency serves us to scorch ourselves, and set our own souls on fire. How do our own thoughts ferment, and glow within us, when we feel our inability to dispose of things, and counterwork cross events, or even shift for ourselves ? For what are we to fill up the room of God ! or supply the place of an excluded deity ! No wonder if troublous thoughts multiply upon us, till we cannot sustain the cumbersome burden. The context shews this to be the design of our Lord, to possess the minds of his disciples, when he prohibits them thoughtfulness, with a serious believing apprehension of providence such a providence as reacheth to all things ; even the most minute, and inconsiderable ; to the birds that fly in the air, the flowers that grow in men's gardens, the grass in their fields, and (elsewhere) the hairs on their own heads. And certainly if we could but carry with us apprehensive minds of such a providence every-where acting, and which nothing escapes ; it must exclude the thoughtfulness here intended to be forbidden.

(5.) Such as proceeds from an ungovernable spirit, a heart not enough subdued to the ruling power of God over the world. Not only distrustfulness of providence but rebellion against it, may be the (very-abundant) spring of undue thoughtfulness. A temper of spirit impatient of government, self-willed, indomitable ; that says, I must have my own will and way, and things must be after my mind, and manner, can never be unaccompanied with a solicitude that they may do so, as undutiful and sinful as its cause. A mind unretractably set, and pre-engaged one way, cannot but be filled with tumult, and mutinous thoughts upon any appearing probability that things may fall out otherwise. In reference to an afflicted suffering condition (how ungrateful soever it be to our flesh) a filial subjection to the Father

of our spirits is required under highest penalty. Shall we not be subject to the Father of spirits and live? Heb. 12. 9. To mutiny is mortal, as though he had said, you must be subject, your life lies on it. The title which the sacred penman there fixes on God, the Father of spirits is observable, and ought to be both instructive, and grateful to us. He is the great Paternal Spirit. We (in respect of our spirits) are his off-spring (as the apostle elsewhere from a heathen poet urges, Act. 17.) In this context the fathers of our flesh, and the Father of spirits are studiously contradistinguished to one another. The relation God bears to us as our Father terminates on our spirits. And his paternal care and love cannot but follow the relation, and principally terminate there too. He must be chiefly concerned about our spirits, that they be preserved in a good and healthful state. If therefore it be requisite for the advantage of our spirits, that our flesh do suffer, we are not to think he will stand upon that, or oppose the gratification of our flesh to the necessity of our spirits. And in this case shall not the wisdom and authority of the Father, judge and rule, and the duty of the son oblige him to submit and obey? And whereas it is added (and live?) it implies we are not, upon other terms, to expect a livelihood, to subsist and be maintained. A son in a plentiful, well-governed family, as long as he can be content to keep to the orders, and rule of the family, and live under the care of a wise and kind father, he may live without care, or taking thought; but if he will go into rebellion he puts himself into a condition thoughtful enough. He is brought to the condition of the prodigal that knew not what shift to make to live, till he advises with himself, and comes to that wise resolution of returning. I will arise and go to my father---If we speak of the life of our spirits, in the moral sense (which in the natural sense we know are always immortal) it consists, as our bodily life doth in an *ἐννομία*, in that holy order, and temperament, which depends upon our continued union with God, and keeping in with him (as the bodily crisis is preserved as long as the soul holds it united with itself.) A holy rectitude, composure, and tranquillity is our life, carries with it a lively sprightly vigour. To be spiritually minded is life and peace, Rom. 8. 6. But if we refuse to submit to the order of God, and offer to break ourselves off from him, this hath a deadly tendency. It tends to dissolve the whole frame, and would end in death if sovereign victorious grace, did not prevent. To be sure an attempt to rebel gradually discomposes our whole soul, and brings in a crowd of thoughts that will be as uncomfortable to ourselves, as they are undutiful towards God; and consequently impair and

enfeble life : which our Saviour implies to consist in a good healthy, comfortable internal habit of mind and spirit, when he denies it to stand in externals. A man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses, Luk. 12. 15. All which inward composure and tranquillity depend upon our willing submitting to be governed. What a blessed repose and rest! how pleasant a vacancy of disasing vexatious thoughts doth that soul enjoy that hath resigned itself, and gives a constant unintermitted consent to the divine government! when it is an agreed undisputed thing, that God shall always lead and prescribe, and it follow and obey.

Some heathens have given us documents about following God that might both instruct and shame us at once. It would save us many a vain and troublesome range, and excursion of mind, and thoughts, could we once learn constantly to do so. If upon a journey, in an intricate way full of various turnings and windings, a man have a good and sure guide before him; as long as he follows he needs not be thoughtful or make trials here and there. But if he will outrun his guide, and take this or that by way because it seems pleasant, he puts himself to the needless labour of coming so far back, unless he will err continually. As long as we are content that God govern the world and us, all is well.

(6.) All such thoughtfulness is undue as proceeds from a dislike of God's former methods in what he hath heretofore done. When, because things have not gone so as to please us formerly therefore we are thoughtful and afraid they may as little please us hereafter. Here the peccant cause is an aptness to censure and correct providence: as they Mal. 2. 17. Where is the God of judgment? (we may reckon it a branch from that former root, an unsubject spirit, only shooting backward :) a disposition to find fault with the paths God hath taken, as if he had made some wrong steps, or in this or that instance, had mistaken his way. But he that reproveth God, let him answer it, Job 40. 2. Men are apt to fancy that things might have been better so or so. Hereupon how do thoughts flutter and fly out to futurity! "What if he should do to-morrow, as he did yesterday; in future, as in former time, what a world should we have of it?" There had been some rough unpleasant passages even to Moses himself in the course of God's dispensation towards Israel, while they were under his conduct. But in the review of all, when he was now to leave them, how calm and pacate is his spirit! When in that most seraphic valedictory song of his, (Deut. 32.) his sentence upon the whole matter is, his works are perfect, for all his ways are judgment, (v. 1.) Judgment is

(with us who must argue and debate things before we determine) the most exquisite reason, or rather the perfection, and final result of many foregoing reasonings. So that Moses's testimony concerning all God's ways is that they were always chosen with that exact judgment, as if he had long reasoned with himself concerning every step he took: that certainly he had a very good reason for whatever he did, all as perfectly seen by him at one view, as if (like us) he considered long, before he judged what was to be done.

Could we once learn to sing tunably the song of Moses and the Lamb, Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty, just and true are all thy ways, O King of Saints: to like well all his former methods, to admire the amiableness and beauty of providence in everything, or generally to approve and applaud all things he hitherto hath done, to account he hath ever gone the best way that could have been gone, in all that hath past; we should never have dubious thoughts about what he will do hereafter. And this is no more than what the truth of the matter challenges from us, to esteem he hath some valuable reason for everything he hath done. For sometimes we can see the reason, and are to judge so explicitly upon what we see. And when we cannot, it is highly reasonable it should be with us the matter of an implicit belief that so it is. For though to pretend to pay that observance to fallible man, must argue either insincerity, or folly; the known perfection of the nature of God, makes it not only safe, but our duty to hold always that peremptory fixed conclusion concerning all his dispensations. Indeed concerning some men of known reputed wisdom, it is not only mannerly but prudent, to account they may see good reason for some doubtful actions of theirs, when we cannot be sure they do. Much more may we confidently conclude that God ever doth and must do so. It is not a blind obsequiousness but a manifest duty, which the plain reason of the thing exacts from us. And he justly takes himself affronted and counts it an impious insolence when things look not well to our judgments, then to question his, as he complains in that mentioned place, Mal. 2. 17. Ye have wearied me with your words, yet ye say, wherein have we wearied thee? In that ye say, every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them, and where is the God of judgment? But how free is that happy soul from sinful, anxious thoughts, with whom that conclusion neither is notionally denied, nor doth obtain merely as a notion, but is a settled practical and vital principle, He hath done all things well.

(7.) Such as proceeds from an over addictedness to this world,

and little relish of the things of the world to come. All that ariseth from a terrene mind, that savours not heavenly things. The heart is the fountain of thoughts. From thence they arise, and receive their distinguishing tincture. They are as the temper of the heart is. If that be evil, thence are evil thoughts, (Mat. 15. 19.) if it be earthly, they run upon earthly things, and savour both of it, and the things they are taken up about. This was the case of the disciples, Mat. 16. 22. 23. When our Saviour had immediately before, inquired the common opinion concerning him, and approved theirs, and confirmed them in it, that he was Christ the son of the living God; they draw all to the favouring the too-carnal imagination and inclination of their own terrene hearts. They think he cannot want power, being the son of the living God, to do great things in the world, and make them great men. And reckon his love and kindness to them must engage the divine power which they saw was with him for these purposes. And it is likely when he directs his speech to Peter, and speaks of giving him the keys, which he might know had theretofore been the insignia of great authority in a prince's court, he understood all of some secular greatness; and that there were dignities of the like kind, which the rest might proportionably share in, as it appears others of them were not without such expectations when elsewhere they become petitioners to sit at his right and left hand in his kingdom (the places or thrones of those phylarchs, or princes of tribes that sat next to the royal throne.) Now hereupon when our Saviour tells them what was first coming, and was nearer at hand, that he must be taken from them, suffer many things, be delivered over unto death, &c. Peter very gravely takes on him to rebuke him, Master favour thyself, this shall not be unto thee: no by no means! Full of thoughts, no doubt his mind was at what was said. And whence did they proceed but from a terrene spirit? and that the notion of worldly dignity had formed his mind, and made it intent upon a secular kingdom. It was not abstractly his care for Christ himself he was so much troubled at; as what would become of his own great designs and hopes. Therefore our Saviour calls him satan, the name of that arch-enemy, the usurping God of this world, who had as yet too much power over him, and tells him, "Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men," as though he had said a satanical spirit hath possessed thee, get thee behind me. And so seeks to repress that unsavoury steam of fuliginous earth-sprung thoughts, which he perceived arose in his mind.

It were a great felicity to be able to pass through this present

state with that temper of mind as not to be liable to vexatious disappointments. And whereas the things that compose and make up this state are both little and uncertain, so that we may as well be disappointed in having, as in not having them. Our way were, here, not to expect, but to have our minds taken up with the things that are both sure and great, that is, heavenly, eternal things: where we are liable to disappointment neither way. For these are things that we may upon serious diligent seeking both most surely obtain and possess, and most satisfyingly enjoy. And the more our minds are employed this way, the less will they incline the other. As no man that hath tasted old wine presently desireth new, for he saith the old is better. The foretastes of heaven are mortifying towards all terrene things. No one that looks over that 11. to the Hebrews would think those worthies, those great heroes there reckoned up, troubled themselves much with thoughts of what they were to enjoy or suffer in this world. To see at what rate they lived, and acted, it is easy to collect they were not much concerned about temporary futurities. Whence was it? they lived by that faith that was the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, that exalted, raised, and refined their spirits, and carried them above an empty, unsatisfying, vain world. And again,

(8.) All such thoughtfulness is forbidden as proceeds from want of self-denial, patience and preparedness for a suffering state. A heart fortified and well postured for suffering is no susceptible subject of those ill impressions. They fall into weak minds, tender, soft, and delicate, that reckon themselves created, and embodied in flesh, only to taste and enjoy sensible delights: and that they came into this world to be entertained, and divert themselves with its still-fresh, and various rarities. We are deeply thoughtful because we cannot deny ourselves, and bear the cross; and have not learned to endure hardship, as good soldiers of Christ Jesus. Our shoulders are not yet fitted to their burden. Some perhaps think themselves too considerable, and persons of too great value to be sufferers. I am too good, my rank too high, my circumstances too-little vulgar. Hence, contempt, disgrace and other more sensibly pinching hardships are reckoned unsuitable for them, and only to be endured by persons of lower quality; so that the very thoughts of suffering are themselves unsufferable. Whereupon, when the exigency of the case urges, and they can no way decline, they cannot but think strange of the fiery trial, and count a strange thing is happened to them. The matter was very unfamiliar unto their thoughts, and they are as heifers wholly unaccustomed

to this yoke. And now upon the near prospect of so frightful a spectacle, as unavoidable suffering; a mighty resistless torrent of most turbid thoughts, breaks in upon them at once. And they are (as a surprised camp) all in confusion. Sorrowful, fearful, discontentful, repining, amazed thoughts do even overwhelm and deluge their souls. And all these thoughts do even proceed from want of thinking. They think too much now, because, before they thought too little. Whereas did we labour by degrees to frame our spirits to it, to reconcile our minds to a suffering state, (as they do horses intended for war, by a drum beaten under their nose, a pistol discharged or trumpet sounded at their very ear,) did we inure ourselves much to think of suffering, but yet to think little and diminishingly of it, and little of ourselves, who may be the sufferers; I am (sure) not better than those that have suffered before me in former times, such as "of whom the world was not worthy;" we should be in a good measure prepared for whatever can come, and so not be very thoughtful about anything that shall.

2. That thoughtfulness is forbidden too which tends to evil, such as hath an evil tendency.

(1.) Such as tends to evil negatively, that is to no good; all that is to purpose. For we are apt when we see things go otherwise than we would have them, to exercise our contriving thoughts as deeply as if we were at the head of affairs, and had them in our own hand and power, and could at length turn the stream this way or that. But do we not busy our ourselves about matters all the while wherein we can do nothing? when things are out of our power, are not of the $\tau\acute{\alpha}\ \epsilon\Phi'\ \eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$, belong not to us, are without our reach, and we can have no influence upon them this way or that, yet we are prone over-earnestly to concern ourselves.—And as men (in that bodily exercise) when the bowl is out of their hands variously writhe and distort their bodies, as if they could govern its motion by those odd and ridiculous motions of theirs; so are we apt to distort our minds into uncouth shapes and postures, to as little purpose, more pernicious, and upon a true account not less ridiculous. As our Saviour warns us to beware of idle words, such as can do no work (as the greek imports) so we should count it disallowed us too (for the same reason) to think idle thoughts. The thoughtfulness our Saviour intends to forbid, you see how he characterizes, such as will not add a cubit, not alter the case one way or other, that is, that is every way useless to valuable or good purposes. The thinking power is not given us to be used in vain; especially, whereas it might be employed about matters of great importance to us at the same time. Which serves

to introduce a further character of undue thoughtfulness, namely,

(2.) Such as tends, to divert us from our present duty. Our minds are not infinite, and cannot comprehend all things at once. We are wont so to excuse our not having attended to what another was saying to us, that truly we were thinking on somewhat else. Which is a good excuse, if neither the person nor thing deserved more regard from us. But if what was propounded were somewhat we ought to attend to, it is plain we were diverted by thinking on what, at that time, we ought not. When men are so amused with their own thoughts that they are put into a state of suspence, and interruption from the proper business of their calling, as christians, or men, or when their thoughts run into confusion, and are lost as to their present work, such are, certainly, forbidden thoughts. When they think of everything but what they should think of. A few passant thoughts would surely serve turn for what is not my business. I have business of my own that is constant and must be minded at all times, be they what they will. But when the times generally do not please us, upon every less grateful emergency we overdo it in thinking! It is rational and manly to behave ourselves in the world as those that have a concern in it, under the common Ruler of it, and for him: and not to be negligent observers how things go in reference to his great and all-comprehending interest. But the fault is, that our thoughts are apt to be too intense, and run into excess, that we crowd and throng ourselves with thoughts, and think too much to think well, consider so much what others do or do not, that we allow no place nor room for thoughts what we are to do ourselves, even in the way of that our constant duty, which no times, nor state of things can alter or make dispensable: that is, to pray continually with cheerful trust: to live in the love, fear, and service of God: to work out our own salvation: to seek the things that are above: to govern and cultivate our own spirits: to keep our hearts with all diligence: to do all the good we can to others, &c. As to these things we stand astonished, and as men that cannot find their hands. We should endeavour to range, and methodize our thoughts, to reduce them into some order (which a crowd admits not) that we may have them distinctly applicable to the several occasions of the human and Christian life. And with which useful order whatever consists not, we should reckon is sinful and forbidden.

(3.) Such as not only confounds, but torments the mind within itself, gives it inward torture, distracts and racks it, as the word in the text more peculiarly signifies (*μεριμνήν*) to pluck

and rend a thing in pieces, part from part, one piece from another. Such a thoughtfulness as doth tear a man's soul, and sever it from itself. There is another word of very emphatical import too which is used in forbidding the same evil, (Luk. 12.29) *μη μετεωρίζεσθε*, be not in suspence, do not hover as meteors, do not let your minds hang as in the air, in a pendulous, uncertain, unquiet posture; or be not of an inconsistent mind as a critical writer phrases it, (Heinsius,) or as we may add, that agrees not, that falls out and fights with itself, that with its own agitations sets itself on fire, as meteors are said to do. Thoughts there are that prove as fire-brands to a man's soul, or as darts and arrows to his heart, that serve to no other purpose but to inflame and wound him. And when they are about such things (those less-considerable events of to-morrow) that all this might as well have been spared, and when we disquiet ourselves in vain, it cannot be without great iniquity. God who hath greater dominion over us than we have over ourselves, though he disquiet our spirits for great and important ends; put us to undergo much smart and torture in our own minds, cause us to be pricked to the heart, and wounded, in order to our cure, and have appointed a state of torment for the incurable; yet he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. It is a thing he wills not for itself. Those greater ends make it necessary, and put it without the compass of an indifferent choice. Much less should we choose our own torment as it were for torments sake, or admit thoughts which serve for no other purpose. It is undutiful; because we are not our own; we violate, and discompose the temples of the Holy Ghost, where since he vouchsafes to dwell, we should as much as in us is provide he may have an entirely peaceful and undisturbed dwelling. It is unnatural, because it is done to ourselves. A felony de se. Whoever hated his own flesh? No man cuts and wounds and mangles himself; but a mad-man, who is then not himself, is outed and divested of himself. He must be another thing from himself, before he can do such acts of violence even to the bodily part, how much more valuable, and nearer us, and more ourself is our mind and spirit? But this is the case in the matter of inordinate thoughts and care. We breed the worms that gnaw and corrode our hearts. Worms? yea the serpents, the vultures, the bears and lions. Our own fancies are creators of what doth thus raven, and prey upon ourselves. Our own creature rents and devours us.

(4.) Such as excludes divine consolation, so that we cannot relish the comforts God affords us, to make our duties pleasant, and our afflictions tolerable; or is ready to afford. In the mul-

titude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul, Ps. 94. 19. Those thoughts, if they were afflicting and troublesome, they were not so without some due measure or limit, while they did not so fill the whole soul as to exclude so needful a mixture. But how intolerably sinful a state is it when the soul is so filled, and taken up, prepossessed already, with its own black thoughts, that there is no room for better! And its self-created cloud is so thick and dark that it resists the heavenly beams, and admits them not in the ordinary way to enter and insinuate. When the disease defies the remedy, and the soul refuses to be comforted, as Ps. 77. 2. This seems to have been the Psalmist's case, not that he took up an explicit, formed resolution against being comforted; but that the present habit of his mind and spirit was such that it did not enter with him; and that the usual course did not succeed in order to it, for it follows, "I thought on God and was troubled," which needs not to be understood so, as if the thoughts of God troubled him, but though he did think of God he was yet troubled. The thoughts of God were not the cause of his trouble, but the ineffectual means of his relief. Still he was troubled notwithstanding he thought of God, not because. For you see he was otherwise troubled, and says, "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord." He took the course which was wont not to fail, but his mind was so full of troublous thoughts before, that when he remembered God, it proved but a weak essay. The strength of his soul was pre-engaged the other way, and the stream was too violent to be checked by that feebler breath which he now only had to oppose it. Though God can arbitrarily, and often doth, put forth that power as to break and scatter the cloud, and make all clear up on a sudden; yet also, often, he withholds in some displeasure that more potent influence, and leaves things to follow, with us, their own natural course, lets our own sin correct us, and suffers us to feel the smart of our own rod. For we should have withstood beginnings, and have been more early in applying the remedy before things had come to this ill pass. Because we did not when we better could, set ourselves to consider, and strive and pray effectually, the distemper of our spirits is now grown to that height that we would and cannot. In that great distress which befel David at Ziglax, when he finds his goods rifled, his nearest relatives made captives, that city itself the place of his repose, the solace of his exile, reduced to a ruinous heap; his guard, his friends, the companions of his flight, and partakers of all his troubles and dangers, become his most dangerous enemies, for they mutiny and conspire against him, and speak

of stoning him: the common calamity imbitters their spirits, and they are ready to fly upon him, as if he had done the Amalekites part, been the common enemy, and the author of all that mischief; in this most perplexing case he was quicker in taking the proper course, immediately turns his thoughts upwards while they were flexible, and capable of being directed, and comforted himself in the Lord his God. All that afflicting thoughtfulness which is the consequent of our neglecting seasonable endeavours to keep our minds under government and restraint, while they are yet governable; and which hereupon renders the consolations of God small, and tasteless to us, is certainly of the prohibited sort.

(5.) Such as tends to put us on a sinful course for the avoiding dangers that threaten us. When we think of sinning to-day, lest we should suffer to-morrow. If it be but one particular act of sin by which we would free ourselves from a present danger, or much more if our thoughts tempt and solicit us to a course of apostacy, which (Ps. 85. 8.) is a returning to folly. The thing now speaks itself, the thought of foolishness is sin, (Prov. 24. 9.) When upon viewing the state of affairs a man's thoughts shall suggest to him, I can never be safe I perceive in this way; great calamities threaten the profession, I have hitherto been of. And hence he begins to project the changing his religion, to meditate a revolt. In this case *deliberasse est descivisse, to deliberate is to revolt*. A disloyal thought hath in it the nature of the formed evil to which it tends. Here is seminal apostacy. The cockatrice egg, long enough hatched, becomes a serpent; and therefore ought to be crushed betime. A man's heart now begins sinfully to tempt him, (as he is never tempted with effect, till he be led away by his own heart and enticed Jam. 1. 14.) And now is the conception of that sin, which, being finished, is eventually mortal, and brings forth death, v. 15.

(6.) Such as tends unto visible dejection and despondency, such as in the course of our walking shall make a shew, and express itself to the discouragement of the friends of religion or the triumph of its enemies. It may be read in a man's countenance many times when he is unduly thoughtful. Cares furrow his face and form his deportments. His looks, his mien, his behaviour shew a thoughtful sadness.

Now when such appearances exceed our remaining constant cause of visible cheerfulness, the thoughtfulness whence they proceed cannot but be undue and sinful. As when the ill aspect of affairs on our interests clothes our faces with fear and sorrow; our countenances are fallen, and speak our hearts sunk,

so that we even tell the world we despair of our cause, and our God. This, besides the distrust, which is the internal, evil cause spoken of before, tends to a very pernicious effect; to confirm the atheistical world, to give them the day, to say with them the same thing, and yield them the matter of their impious boast, there is no help for them in God. And all this, when there is a true, unchangeable reason for the contrary temper and deportment. For still that one thing "the Lord reigns," hath more in it to fortify and strengthen our hearts and compose us to cheerfulness, and ought to signify more with us to this purpose, than all the ill appearances of things in this world can do to our rational dejection. The Psalmist, (Ps. 96, 11, 12, 13) reckons all the world should ring of it, that the whole creation should partake from it a diffusive joy. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad: let the sea roar and the fulness thereof; let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice, before the Lord, for he cometh, he cometh to judge the earth, &c. He accounts all the universe should even be clothed hereupon with a smiling verdure. And what? are we only to except ourselves, and be an anomalous sort of creatures? shall we not partake in that common dutiful joy, and fall into concert with the adoring loyal chorus? Will we cut ourselves off from this gladsome obsequious throng? And what should put a pleasant face and aspect upon the whole world, shall it only leave our faces covered with clouds, and a mournful sadness?

Briefly, that we may sum up the evil of this prohibited thoughtfulness, as it is to be estimated from its ill effects to which it tends, whatsoever, in that kind, hath a tendency either dishonourable and injurious to God, or hurtful to ourselves, we are to reckon into this class, and count it forbidden us. Wherefore it remains that we go on to the other part of the intended discourse, namely,

II. The enforcement of the prohibition. For which purpose we shall take into consideration the following part of the verse; "To-morrow shall take thought for the things of itself, sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." The evil forbidden is careflessness about the future, as we read it, taking thought, which is a more general expression than the greek word doth amount to. All thinking is not caring. This is one special sort of thoughts that is here forbidden, careful thoughts, and one special sort of care, not about duty but event, and about event wherein it doth not depend upon our duty, that is, considered abstractly from it, and so the thing intended is, that doing all that lies within the compass of our duty to promote any good event, or to hinder

bad, that then we should cease from solicitude about the success. From such solicitude, most especially, as shall be either distrustful, or disquieting, or more generally, that shall be, any way, either injurious to God, or prejudicial to ourselves.

Now for the pressing of this matter upon our practice, these subjoined words may be apprehended to carry, either but one and the same argument, in both the clauses; or else two distinct ones; according as the former shall be diversly understood. For, these words, "To-morrow shall take care for the things of itself," are understood by some to carry, but this sense with them, as though he had said, "To-morrow will bring its own cares with it, and those perhaps afflicting enough, and which will give you sufficient trouble when the day comes. To-morrow will oblige you to be careful about the things thereof, and find you business and molestation enough." Which is but the same thing in sense with what is imported in the following words: "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." Or else those former words may be understood thus,—“to-morrow shall take care for the things of itself;” that is, “to-morrow and the things of to-morrow shall be sufficiently cared for otherwise, without your previous care. There is one that can do it sufficiently, do not you impertinently and to no purpose concern yourselves.” It is implied there is some one else to take that care, whose proper business it is. The great God himself is meant, though that is not expressly said, the design being but to exclude us; and to say who should not take care, not who should. That is therefore left at large, and expressed with that indifferency, as if it were intended to signify to us, that it was no matter who took care so we did not. That we should rather leave it to the morrow to put on a person and take care; than be ourselves concerned; that whose part soever it is, it was none of ours. A form of speech not unexampled elsewhere in Scripture. “Let the dead bury their dead” only follow thou me; as if he said: sure somebody will perform that part. It will be done by one or other, more properly than by you, who have devoted yourself to me, and are become a sacred person (not permitted by the law to meddle with a dead body, as a learned person glosses upon that place.) And, in common speech, especially of superiors to inferiors, such *antanaclases*, (as the figure is called) are frequent. And the same word used over again, when in the repetition (though here it be otherwise) we intend not any certain sense; more than that we would, with the more smartness and pungency, repress an inclination we observe in them to somewhat we would not have them do, or more earnestly press the thing we would have done.

So that we need not in that expression trouble ourselves to imagine any such mystical meaning, as, let them that are dead in sin bury them that are dead for sin; or that it intends more, than, be not concerned about that matter. And to shew the absoluteness of the command, it is given in that form of words that it might be understood he should not concern himself about that business in any case whatsoever, as if he had said, suppose, what is not likely, that there were none else that would take care; or none but the dead to bury the dead; yet know, that at this time I have somewhat else to do for you: when it is, in the mean time tacitly supposed, and concealed, that the matter might well enough be left to the care of others. So here, while it is silently intimated that the things of the morrow shall be otherwise sufficiently cared for, by that wise and mighty providence that governs all things, and runs through all time, yet our intemperate solicitude is, in the mean time, so absolutely forbidden, that we are not to be allowed in it, though there were none, but the feigned person of the morrow, to take care for what should then occur. Yet the main stress is laid upon the concealed intimation all the while, as a thing whereof he was secure, and would have his disciples be too, that the business of providing for the morrow would be done sufficiently without them. And now according to this sense of those words, there are two distinct considerations, contained in this latter part of the verse, both which we shall severally make use of, for the purpose for which they are propounded by our Saviour, namely, the pressing of what he had enjoined in the former part of the verse. And we may thus distinctly entitle them, the unprofitableness and the hurtfulness of this forbidden care.

First. The former may well bear that title; the inutility or unprofitableness of our care. To-morrow shall take care for the things of itself, that is, they shall be sufficiently cared for without you. Now under that head of unprofitableness, we may conceive these two things to be comprehended:—that we do not need to attempt any thing: and—that we can effect nothing by that prohibited care of ours: that we neither need, nor (to any purpose) can concern ourselves about such matters.

1. That we do not need. They are under the direction of his providence who can manage them well enough himself. And unto this head several things do belong, which if they be distinctly considered, will both discover and highly aggravate that offence of immoderate thoughtfulness. As,

(1.) That, through that needless care of ours, we shall but neglect (as was formerly said) our most constant indispensable duty. That will not be done as it ought. We should study to

be quiet, and do our own business, as is elsewhere enjoined, upon another account. We have a duty incumbent, which, what it is we are told, in the general, and at the same time encouraged against interrupting care, Psal. 37. 3. Trust in the Lord and do good, and you shall dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Some perhaps are apt to have many a careful thought of this sort. "Alas! We are afraid the condition of the land may be such as we shall not be able to live in it." No, (it is said) never trouble your thoughts about that. Only neglect not your own part. Trust in the Lord, and do good, and it will be well enough. You shall dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.

(2.) We shall make ourselves busybodies in the matters of another, (1. Pet. 4, 15.) as it were, play the bishops in another's diocese, as the word there imports. We shall but be over officious, and undecently pragmatical in intermeddling. Our great care should be, when we count upon suffering, that we may not suffer indecently, or with disreputation (in their account who are fittest to judge) much less injuriously to a good cause, and a good conscience. Which we cannot fail to do, if we suffer out of our own place and station, and having intruded ourselves into the affairs and concerns that belong to the management of another hand. And,

(3.) It is to be considered who it is that we shall affront, and whose province we invade in so doing, namely, of one that can well enough manage all the affairs of to-morrow, and of all future time, the Lord of all time, in whose hands all our times are, and all time. A province in the administration whereof there is no danger of defect or error. And,

(4.) It is to be considered that we shall do so, not only without a call, but against a prohibition. It is reckoned, among men, a rudeness, to intrude into the affairs of another uninvited, how much more if forbidden? It gives distaste and offence: and the reason is plain, for it implies a supposition of their weakness and that they are not able to manage their own affairs themselves. And as we thereby cast contempt upon another, so, at the same time, we unduly exalt and magnify ourselves, as if we understood better. Such a comparison cannot but be thought odious. But now take this as an addition to the former consideration, and the matter rises high, and carries the same intimation with it in reference to the All-wise and Almighty God. No? Is not he likely to bring matters to any good pass without us? And are we therefore so concernedly looking over the shoulder; thrusting in our eye, and sending forth our cares to run and range into his affairs and business? This is a wearisome impertinence. A prudent man would not endure it.

Nor are those words unapplicable to this purpose, "seems it a small thing to you to weary men, but you will weary my God also?" Isa. 7. 13. They were spoken to a purpose not unlike. For observe the occasion. There were at that time the two kings with their combined power, of Syria and Israel come up against Jerusalem and the house of David, meaning the king Ahaz. It is said hereupon of him, and the people with him, "Their hearts were moved as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." Full of thoughts, of cares and fears they were, no doubt. O! what will become of this matter? what will be the event? And the prophet comes with a comfortable message to them from God. But their hearts were so pre-possessed with their own fears, it signifies nothing. A confirmation is offered, and refused. The pretence was, he would not tempt God by asking a sign even when he was bidden. A hypocritical pretence, made only to cover a latent distrust. Thereupon, saith the prophet, is it a small thing to weary men (meaning himself who was but the messenger) but that you will weary my God also? that is who sent him; and who went not about to put the affrighted prince, and his people, upon anything, but to trust him and be quiet: no agitation of whose minds was required to their safety. They are not directed, as if all lay upon them, to hold a council, and contrive, themselves, (at this time) the means of their preservation. Nor should they, with disturbed minds. Neither are we (in the sense that hath been given) required or allowed to use our care in reference to the things of to-morrow. The stress of affairs lies not upon us. The events that belong to to-morrow, or the future time, whatever it be, will be brought about, whether we so care or care not. Our anxiety is needless in the case. What will not to-morrow come and carry all its events in it that belong to it, without us? will not the heavens roll without us? and the sun rise and set? the evening come and also the morn? the days, and all that belongs to the several days of succeeding time? will not all be brought about without our care think we? how was it before we were born?

2. There is also comprehended besides, under that head of unprofitableness, our impotency to effect anything by our care. As we do not need, so nor are we able. That is unprofitable, which will not serve our turn, nor do our business. This forbidden care leaves things but as we found them. It is true, that may be some way useful, that is not absolutely necessary, but if besides that no necessity there be also an absolute uselessness, the argument is much stronger. All this prohibited care of ours cannot contribute anything, to the hindering of bad events or

promoting of good. And that, neither as to our own private affairs nor, much less as to those that are of public concernment.

(1.) Not as to our own private affairs, which the series of our Saviour's discourse hath directer reference unto, what we shall eat, and drink, and how be clothed. How to maintain and support life, and add to our days and the comfort of them. We cannot add (it is said) so much as one cubit (v. 27.) to our stature. So we read that word, which perhaps (by the way) as a noted expositor observes, may better be read *age*. The word signifies both. It would seem indeed something an enormous addition to have a cubit added to the stature of a grown man, but the same word (*ἡλικία*) signifying also *age*, that seems here the fitter translation. It is therefore as if he had said, "Which of you by taking thought can make the least addition to his own time? Nor is it unusual to speak of measures of that kind, in relation to time, as a span, a hand-breath, and the like. And so is cubit as capable of the same application. Our anxiety can neither add more nor less.

(2.) Much less can it influence the common and public affairs. Our solicitude, what will become of these things? how shall the christian or protestant interest subsist? much more how shall it ever come to thrive and prosper in the world? so low, so depressed and despised as it may seem? how will it be with it to-morrow? or hereafter in future time? what doth it contribute? I speak not to the exclusion of prayer, nor of a dutiful, affectionate concernedness, that excludes not a cheerful, submissive trust; and what will more than this avail? If we add more, will that addition mend the matter; or do we indeed think, when the doing of our duty prevails not, that our anxiety and care beyond our duty shall? Can that change times and seasons, and mend the state of things to-morrow or the next day? Will to-morrow become, by means of it, a fairer or a calmer day, or be without it a more stormy one? We might as well think by our care, to order the celestial motions, to govern the tides, and retard or hasten the ebbs and floods; or by our breath check and countermand the course of the greatest rivers. We, indeed and all things that time contains and measures, are carried as in a swift stream, or on rapid floods. And a man, at sea, might as well attempt, by thrusting or pulling the sides of the ship that carries him, to hasten or slacken its motion, as we by our vexatious care to check or alter the motions of providence this way or that. Do we think to posture things otherwise than God hath done? Will we move the earth from its centre? Where will we find another earth whereon to set our foot?

Secondly. We have to consider not only the unprofitableness but hurtfulness of this forbidden care. It not only doth no good, but it is sure to do us a great deal of harm. That is the consideration intimated in the latter words, "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." We shall but accumulate evils unto ourselves by it, to no purpose. Our undue solicitude cannot add to our time or comforts (as was said) but it may much diminish, and detract from them. Whereas every several day that passeth, may have enough in it, and be of itself sufficiently fraught with perplexity, trouble, and sorrow. All that, added to the foregoing burden of excessively careful forethoughts, may overwhelm and sink us. There are sundry particular considerations that fall in here also.

1. That by this means we shall suffer the same thing over and over, which we needed not suffer more than once. It obtained for a proverb among the †Arabians, "An affliction is but one to him that suffers it, but to him that with fear expects it, double." I shall suffer the evil of to-morrow this day and to-morrow too. Yea, and by this course, I may bring all the evil of all my future time, into each several day, and may suffer the same affliction a thousand times over, which the benignity of providence meant, only, for my present exercise, when he should think it most fit and seasonable to lay it on.

2. I may, by this means, suffer, in my own foreboding imagination, many things that really, I shall never suffer at all, for the events may never happen, the forethoughts whereof do now afflict me. And what a foolish thing it is to be troubled before-hand at that which for ought I know will never be, and to make a certain evil of an uncertain!

3. And it is further to be considered, that all the trouble I suffer in this kind is self trouble. We therein but afflict ourselves. And it adds a great sting to affliction that I am the author of it to myself. For besides the unnaturalness of being a self-tormentor (which was formerly noted) it is the more afflicting, upon review, by how much more easily it was avoidable. We are stung with the reflection on our own folly, as any man is apt to be, when he considers his having run himself into trouble, which, by an ordinary prudence he might have escaped. With what regret may one look back, upon many by-past days, wherein I might have served God with cheerfulness in my calling, "walking in the light of the Lord," which I have turned into days of pensive darkness, to myself, by only my own

† The collection of Arabian proverbs illustrated by the notes of Jos. Scalig. and Erpen.

black and dismal thoughts ! And so by having drawn unjustly the evils of future time into my present day, I come to draw justly the evils of my former time (and of a worse kind) into it also. What God inflicts, I cannot avoid, but am patiently to submit to it ; which carries its own relief in it, but I owe no such patience to myself, for having foolishly been my own afflicter, with needless and avoidable trouble.

4. I shall suffer hereby in a more grievous kind, than, if only the feared evil had actually befallen me. It being the nature of external evils (which the prohibited thoughtfulness chiefly refers to) that they commonly afflict more in expectation, than in the actual suffering of them (as was a wise heathen's observation) as external good things please more, in the expectation, than they do in the fruition : when (as he also observes) as to the good and evil things of the contrary kind, the case is contrary. And how often do we find those evils in the bearing, light, and to have little in them, that looked big, seemed formidable, and carried a dreadful appearance with them at a distance ? What a fearful thing is poverty to a man's imagination and yet who live merrier lives than beggars ? We therefore, by this anticipation, suffer in a worse kind. And if we do not make an affliction, of no affliction, we make of a lighter one a more grievous. We turn a future outward affliction, into a present inward and mental one. The affliction of forbidden care falls upon the mind, whereas the object of that care, is only an affliction to the outward man. How much more of suffering is an intelligent spirit capable of, than a mere lump of animated flesh or clay ? Can my body ever feel so much as my soul can ? Pleasure and pain are always commensurate to the principle of life by which we are capable of the one or the other. How unspeakably greater are the pleasures of the mind than those of the body ! and so, consequently, are mental afflictions, than corporal. The providence of God, it may be intends some affliction to our outer man to-morrow ; but, in the mean time, our expectations, and anxious thoughts are torturing our spirits to-day, while, perhaps, we have burden enough otherwise.

5. And as the affliction of anxious forethought and care, is more grievous in the kind, so it is likely to be very intense, in the degree, of that kind : beyond what the other sort of affliction may be. For whereas the other may be, more directly from God, and this (as was said) from myself. God afflicts with wisdom, mercy and moderation. But this self-affliction proceeds from the want of prudence, and is without mercy. So that the moderating principles are wanting. Men, commonly, know no limit or measure in their thus afflicting themselves :

never think it enough. Their own passions are their tormentors, which, having broke loose from under the government of their reason and prudence, run into wild rage and fury. What a misery is it to have such fierce creatures preying upon us! God would never use us so unmercifully, as we do ourselves. Or, if he suffer wicked men to be our afflictors, that know no pity, they cannot reach our spirits: and his mercy towards us is still the same. He can restrain or over-rule them at pleasure; or infuse such consolations, as, when we are thus afflicting ourselves, we cannot expect; and which that self-affliction doth naturally exclude. It is unconceivable what evils we superadd to our own days, beyond that which he counts sufficient. Nor do we design our own good in it, as he doth when he afflicts. Which design and end, measure and limit the means, that they may not exceed the proportion requisite thereto.

6. All this superadded evil we bring upon ourselves against a rule (which is fit to be again noted) for both the considerations that are subjoined, must be considered, as relative to the precept. We break first the law, before we break our own peace. Our Redeemer and Lord hath interposed his authority, as a bar against our troubling ourselves; and so fenced our peace and comfort for us, that we have no way to come at our own trouble, but by breaking through the boundary of this law. This then is a very pestilent addition to the evil of *this day*, that we draw upon ourselves by our taking thought for *to-morrow*. For we mingle the evil of sin with that of affliction. We deal very ill with ourselves in this, to taint our affliction with so foul a thing; which might have been mere affliction without that imbittering accursed mixture.

And it is to be considered, that this draws a consequence with it, (besides the depraving nature of sin, and the corroding nature, especially, of this sin,) it is, *as it is sin*, punishable. And so, as we bring the evil of *to-morrow*, into this day; we may bring the evil of this day into *to-morrow*. God may be offended, and frown *to-morrow*, because we were no more apt to be governed by him *to-day*. And as we drew an imaginary cloud from the next day into this, it may, the next, return upon us in a real storm. But whether it be so or no, it highly aggravates the matter that,

7. We herein offend, not only against the justice of the law, but against the mercy of it, the kindness, goodness and compassion imported in it. This, as it was intimated before, so needs to be more deeply considered by itself. It ought indeed to be acknowledged concerning the general frame and system,

of all the divine laws, that they are visibly, and with admirable suitableness, contrived for the good and felicity of mankind, and seem but obligations upon us to be happy. Such as in the keeping whereof there is great reward. Ps. 19. 11. And, in this particular one, how observably hath our Lord, as it were studied our quiet, and the repose of our minds ! How (especially) doth the benignity and kindness of the holy Law-giver appear in it ! upon comparing this consideration with the precept itself. Take no thought for to-morrow, sufficient for the day is the evil of it. As though he had said I would not have you over-burdened ; I would have you be without care. It imports a tenderness of our present comfort ; which he many other ways expresses of our future safety and blessedness. As though he should say, I would have you go comfortably through the world, where you are in a pilgrimage and a wayfaring condition ; I would not have you oppressed, nor your spirits bowed down with too heavy a burden. And it is elsewhere inculcated. Casting all your care on him, for he careth for you, (1 Pet. 5. 7.) In nothing be careful (Phil. 4. 6.) but, in all things, let your requests be made known to God, with thanksgiving ; and the peace of God (so it immediately follows) which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds. Commit thy way to the Lord, devolve it on him, as the word signifies, Ps. 37. 5. trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass. If we be so wise as to observe his rule and design, we shall be wise for ourselves. And that tranquillity and calmness of spirit, which many heathens have so highly magnified, and which their philosophy sought, our religion will possess and enjoy. But if we neglect, and disregard him herein ; we shall bring an evil into to-day that neither belongs to this day, nor to any other. It is true indeed, God doth often point us out the day, wherein we must suffer such and such external evils, and as it were say to us, " Now is your day of suffering." Sometimes by his providence alone, when I have no way of escape ; sometimes by the concurrence of his word and providence, when the one hems me in, on the one hand, the other on the other. He hath now set me a day for suffering, in this or that kind, but none for sinning in this kind, nor in any other. Why shall I draw in evils to this day, from to-morrow, that belong neither to this day nor to to-morrow.

The sum is, whether we regard our innocency or our peace, whether we would express reverence to God, or a due regard to ourselves. If we would do the part either of pious and religious or of rational and prudent men, we are to lay a restraint upon ourselves in this matter. Have we nothing to employ our

thoughts about, that concerns us more? nothing wherein we may use them to better purpose? Is there nothing wherein we are more left at liberty? or nothing about which we are more bound in duty to think? Unless we reckon that thoughts are absolutely free, and that we may use our thinking power as we please; and that the divine government doth not extend to our minds? (which if it do not, we confound God's government, and man's, and there is an end of all internal sin and duty; and of the first and most radical differences of moral good and evil) we can never justify ourselves in such a range of thoughts and cares, as this we have been speaking of. And it is very unreasonable to continue a course we cannot justify. A transient action done against a formed judgment would be reflected on with regret and shame by such as are not arrived to that pitch as not to care what they do. But to persist in a condemned course of actions, must much more, argue a profligate conscience enfeebled and mortified to that degree as to have little sense left of right and wrong. Where it is so, somewhat else is requisite to a cure, than mere representing the evil of that course. What that can do hath been tried already. And when men have been once used to victory, over their own judgments, and consciences; every former defeat makes the next the easier; till at length, light and conscience become such contemptible baffled things, as to signify nothing at all, to the governing of practice, this way or that.

The only thing that can work a redress, is to get the temper of our spirits cured; which will mightily facilitate the work and business of conscience, and is necessary, even where it is most lively and vigorous. For to be only quick at discerning what we should be, and do, signifies little against a disinclined heart. Therefore for the rectifying of that, and that our inclinations, as well as our judgments, may concur, and fall in with our duty in this matter, I will only recommend in order hereto by way of direction (among many that might be thought on) these two things.

(1.) That we use more earnest endeavour to be, habitually, under government, in reference to our thoughts, and the inward workings of our spirits. For can we doubt of the obligation of the many precepts that concern, immediately, the inner man? to love, to trust, to fear, to rejoice in God, &c.? What becomes of all religion, if the vital principles of it be thought unnecessary? Do not all the laws of God that enjoins us any duty, lay their first obligation upon our inward man? Or do they only oblige us to be hypocrites? and to seem what we are not? And why do we here distinguish; and think that, by some precepts,

God intends to oblige us; and by others he means no such thing, but to leave us to our liberty? Or would not those which we will confess more indispensable (namely, such as have been instanced in) exclude the careful thoughts, we speak of, about the events of to-morrow? For can a heart much conversant in the explicit acts of love to God, trust in him, the fear of him, &c. be much liable to these forbidden cares?

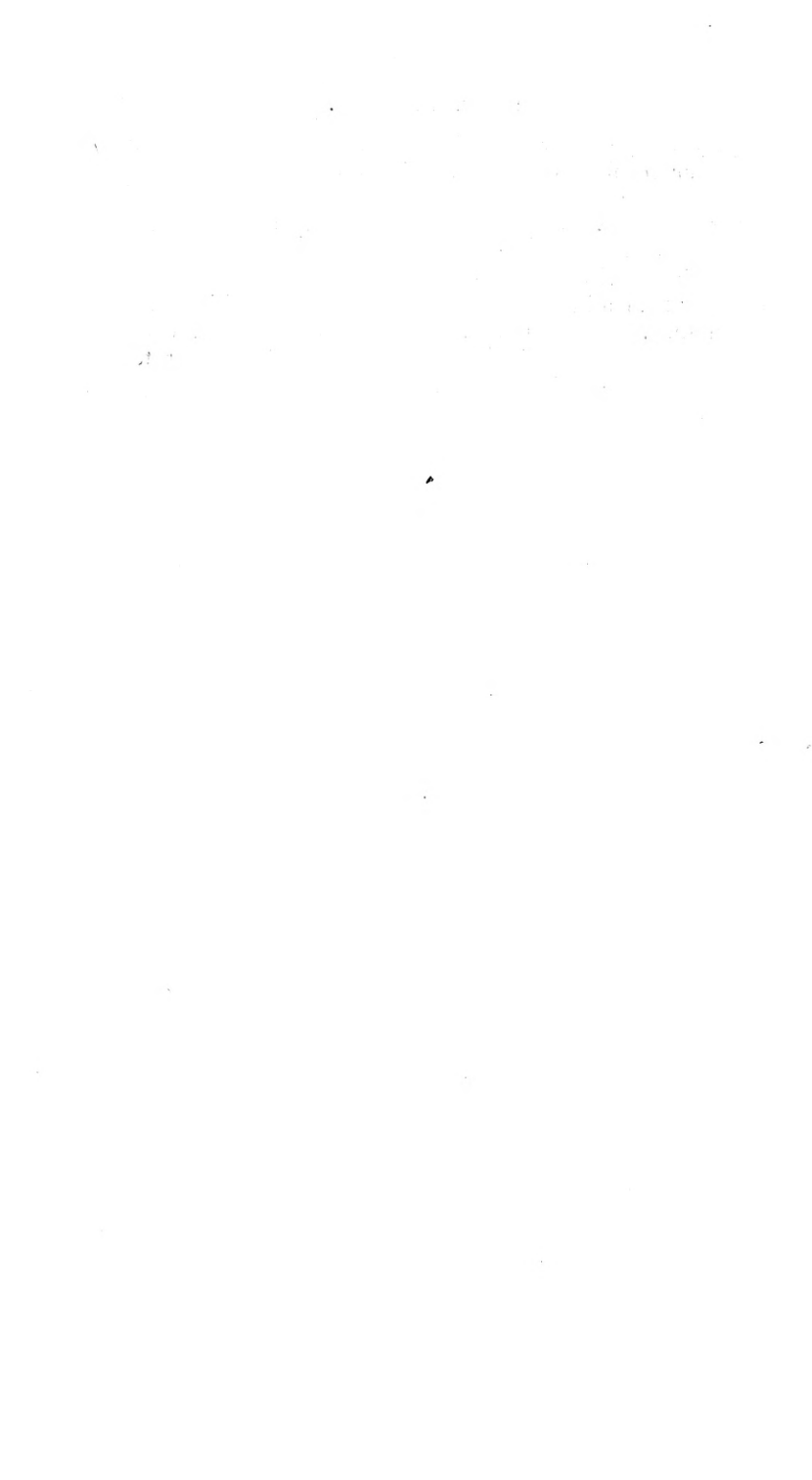
Nor, surely, can it be matter of doubt with us, whether God observe the thoughts and motions of our souls? For can we think that he will give rules about things wherein he will exercise no judgment? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vanity; (Ps. 94.) and are any more vain than these? Do we christians need a heathen instructor to tell us, "We ought always so to live, as under view; and so to think, as if there were some one that may, and can, inspect and look into our innermost breast. To what purpose is it that we keep anything secret from man? nothing is shut up to God. He is amidst our minds, and comes among our most inward thoughts." (Seneca.) Let us labour to accustom and use our spirits to subjection, to have them composed and formed to awful apprehensions of that authority and government which the Father of spirits claims, and hath established immediately over themselves. This, though it be more general, will yet reach this case.

(2.) That we aim at being, in the temper of our spirits, more indifferent about all future events, that lie within the compass of time. Let us not account them so very considerable. Time will soon be over, and is too narrow a sphere for us to confine our minds unto. We should endeavour a greater amplitude of thoughts. As he that hath large, and noble designs, looks with great indifference, upon smaller matters wherein they are not concerned. One that fears God, and works righteousness, believes a world to come, and lives in entire devotedness to the Redeemer, (the constitution of whose kingdom relates entirely to that other world) hath little cause to concern himself about interveniences, which, as to his part in that world, will not alter his case. We are not the surer of heaven, if the sun shine out to-morrow; nor the less sure, if it shine not.

For the obtaining of this dutiful and peaceful indifferency, it concerns us to be much in prayer. For, both, that happy temper of mind is part of the wisdom, which if we want, we are to ask of God. (Jam. 1. 5.) and it directly eases us of the burden of our affairs to commit them in that way; as is signified in that mentioned scripture, Phil. 4. 6. Nor was anything more agreeable, than that our Lord teaching us (in that admirable summary of petitions given in this same sermon on the mount)

to pray every day for our daily bread, should here forbid us to take thought for the morrow. As also, in the gathering of manna, no care was to be extended further than the present day.* We have easy access daily. Story tells us, the poor Chinese could not enter into the presence of their Tartarian prince, with never so just a complaint, without submitting, first, to a hundred bastinados, as the condition of their admittance. Would we thankfully accept, and use as we might, the constant liberty we have upon the easiest terms, how much would it contribute both to our innocency and quiet!

* Both which remarks are noted by some expositors.



AN
APPENDIX
TO THE
FOREGOING DISCOURSE,
CONCERNING
The immoderate Desire
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THERE is yet another very vicious habit of mind, besides this of taking thought about the events of future time; namely, an intemperate appetite of foreknowing them. Which hath such affinity, and lies so contiguous, and bordering to the former, that it will not be incongruous to add somewhat concerning it; and, which is of so ill and pernicious an import, that it will deserve some endeavour to shew how we may discern and repress it. And it may be requisite to discourse somewhat to this purpose, both for the vindication of God's wisdom and goodness, in confining our knowledge of the events of future time, within so narrow bounds and limits; and that serious christians may the more effectually consult the ease and quiet of their own minds, by keeping themselves contentedly, as to this matter, within the bounds which he hath set them. This appetite of foreknowing is only to be animadverted on so far as it is inordinate, and a distemper. Our business therefore here must be, to specify and distinguish this distemper: and to offer somewhat for the cure of it.

I. For the finding out and specifying of it. It is not to be doubted but there may be a faultiness in the defect: a too great listlessness, and indisposition to look forward. Which indisposition will appear blamable, when it proceeds either— from a sensual slothfulness of temper that addicts us wholly to

the present. It is too much a-kin to the beast, to be totally taken up with what now pleases. When all the soul lies in the senses, and we mind nothing but the grateful relishes of our present and private enjoyments, are quite unconcerned about the state of the world, or the Christian interest, or what shall hereafter come of the affairs of our country, in civil or religious respects: when we are held in a lazy indifferency concerning the state of things in succeeding times and ages; are conscious of no desire of any hopeful prospect for posterity, and those that shall come after us; and it is all one with us whether we know them likely to be civil or barbarian, Christian or pagan, freemen or slaves, because we care not which of these we be ourselves, so we can but eat on, and enjoy our own undisturbed ease and pleasure; this is a fatal mortification of the appetite of foreknowing. For it destroys it quite, when it should but rectify and reduce it within due bounds. And in what degree that, or any other inclination ought to die, it much imports what kills it; because that which doth so, succeeds into the dominion, and hath all the power in me which it before had. And surely no worse thing can rule over me, than a sensual spirit; that binds me down, and limits me to this spot of earth, and point of time. Or if it proceed—from a weak and childish dread of all futurity: as children apprehend nothing but bugbears, and hobgoblins, and frightful images, and appearances in the dark; this ill disposition is very intimately conjunct with the former. When a sensual mind, finding itself already well entertained with the gratifications of the present time, cleaves to it, and every thought of a change is mortal. It is death to admit the apprehension of a new scene. It is as true indeed, that the same temper of mind, in more ungrateful, present circumstances, runs all into discontent and affectation of change; as will be further shewn hereafter in the proper place. But in this region of changes, it is most imprudent and incongruous, to let the mind be unchangeably fixed upon any external state and posture of things; or irreconcilably averse to any. It is becoming, it is laudable and glorious, with a manly and a truly Christian fortitude, to dare to face futurity how formidably soever any thing within the compass of time may look. For, certainly, so far as we ought to be mortified to the knowledge of future things, it ought to proceed from some better principle, than only our being afraid to know them.

But, that distemper of mind which is now more principally to be noted and reprov'd, lies rather in the excess. That therefore it may be distinctly characterized and understood, I shall endeavour to shew—when this appetite of foreknowing the

events of future time is not to be thought excessive; or how far a disposition to inquire into such matters is allowable and fit, and—when, by its excess, it doth degenerate into a distemper so as to become the just matter of reprehension and redress.

First. Therefore (on the negative part) we are not to think it disallowed us; yea it cannot but be our duty, to have a well proportioned desire, of understanding so much of future event, as God hath thought fit to reveal in his word. As he hath there foretold very great things concerning the state of the Christian church and interest to the end of the world. Which predictions it cannot be supposed, are made public and offered to our view to be neglected and overlooked. Only we must take care that our endeavour to understand them, and the time and labour we employ therein, be commensurate to the circumstances of our condition, to our ability and advantage for such more difficult disquisitions, and be duly proportioned between them, and other things, that may be of equal or greater moment to us.

Nor, again, is it liable to exception, if we only desire to make a right use of other additional indications and presages also; whether they belong to the moral, natural, or political world or (if any such should be afforded) to the more peculiar sphere of extraordinary and immediate divine revelation.

1. It is not only innocent, but commendable to endeavour the making a due improvement of moral prognostics; or to consider what we are to hope, or fear, from the increase and growth of virtue, or vice in the time wherein we live. And herein we may fitly guide our estimate, by what we find promised, threatened or historically recorded in the Holy Scriptures (or other certain history) in reference to like cases. Only because God may sometime, arbitrarily vary his methods; and the express application of such promises, threatenings and histories to our times is not in Scripture, we should not be too positive in making it.

2. The like may be said of such unusual phenomena as fall out within the sphere, but besides the common course of nature: as comets or whatever else is wont to be reckoned portentous. The total neglect of which things, I conceive, neither agrees with the religious reverence which we owe to the Ruler of the world; nor with common reason and prudence.

It belongs not to the present design, as to comets particularly, to discourse the philosophy of them. Their relation to our earth, as meteors raised from it, is a fancy that seems deservedly exploded; but it seems to require great hardiness to deny they have any relation as tokens. Their distance from us may well argue the former. But, the constant luminaries of heaven,

that in other kinds, continually serve us, might by their distance (most of them) be thought quite unrelated to us as well as they. And if we should suppose all, or most, of those useful luminaries primarily made for some other nobler use, that makes not the constant benefit we have by them less in itself. The like may be thought of the use which these more extraordinary ones may be of to us, in a diverse kind; that they should cause what they are thought to signify. I understand not, nor am solicitous how they are themselves caused; let that be as naturally as can be supposed, (of the rejected effluvia of other heavenly bodies, or by the never so regular collection of whatsoever other celestial matter,) that, hinders not their being signs to us, more than the natural causation of the bow in the clouds, though that, being an appropriate sign for a determinate purpose, its signification cannot but be more certain. And, if we should err in supposing them to signify any thing of future event to us at all, and that error only lead us into more seriousness; and a more prepared temper of mind, for such trouble as may be upon the earth; it will, sure, be a less dangerous error, than that on the other hand would be, if we should err in thinking them to signify nothing; and be thereby made the more supine and secure, and more liable to be surprized by the calamities that shall ensue; besides, that we shall be the less excusable, in departing from the judgment of all former times and ages, upon no certainty of being more in the right. And why should we think such things should serve us for no other purpose, than only to gratify our curiosity, or furnish us with matter of wonder, invite us to gaze and admire? when (as an ancient well observes*) "things known to all in the common course of nature are not less wonderful, and would be amazing to all that consider them, if men were not wont to admire only things that are rare. It is neither fit, indeed, we should be very particular, or confident in our interpretations and expectations upon such occasions; or let our minds run out in exorbitant emotions, as will be further shewn in the positive account which is intended of this sort of distemper. But I conceive it is very safe to suppose, that some very considerable thing, either in a way of judgment or mercy may ensue; according as the cry of persevering wickedness or of penitential prayer is more or less loud at that time.

3. There are, again, very strange and extraordinary aspects of providence that sometimes offer themselves to our notice, in the course of human affairs, and in the political world, where God presides over rational and free agents. And these also must

*August. de Civit. Dei, l. 21. c. 8.

be allowed to have their signification of what is likely to be future. For, otherwise, if we were to reckon they imported nothing, either of good or evil (so much as probable) to be expected from them; we should be to blame, if our minds should admit any impression from them, either of hope or fear (which both refer to the future) though in never so moderate a degree. And should be obliged to put on an absolute stoicism, in reference to whatsoever may occur beyond what human nature is capable of; and which would have more in it of stupidity, than prudence, or any human or Christian virtue. When, therefore, the face of providence seems more manifestly threatening, clouds gather; all things conspire to infer a common calamity, and all means and methods of prevention, are from time to time frustrated; if we so far allow ourselves to think it approaching, as that we are hereby excited to prayer, repentance, and the reforming of our lives; this sure is better than a regardless drowsy slumber.

And again, if in order to our preservation from a present utter ruin, there fall out, in a continual succession, many strange and wonderful things which we looked not for, without which we had been swallowed up quick; we be hereupon encouraged unto trust, and dependance upon God, and the hope we shall be preserved from being at length quite destroyed whatever present calamities may befall us; and be the more fortified in our resolution not to forsake him, whatsoever shall: this seems no immodest or irrational construction and use of such providences. Yea, and at any time, when there is no very extraordinary appearance of a divine hand in the conduct of affairs; it unbecomes us not to use our reason and prudence, in judging by their visible posture and tendency, as they lie under human management, what is like to ensue; upon supposition the over-ruling providence do not interpose, to hinder or alter their course: (as we find they often run on long, in one current, without any such more remarkable interposition) only we are to be very wary, lest we be peremptory in concluding; or put more value than is meet upon our own judgment (as was noted before) both because we know not when, or how, a divine hand may interpose; and may be ignorant of many matters of fact, upon which a true judgment of their natural tendency may depend, and our ability to judge, upon what is in view, may be short and defective. Others that have more power, and can do more, may also have much more prudence, and can discern better. But observing such limitations, it is fit we should use, to this purpose, that measure of understanding which God hath given us. In what part of the world soever he assigns us our station, we are to consider he hath made us reasonable creatures, and that

we owe to him what interest we have in the country where we live. And therefore, as we are not to affect the knowledge which belongs not to us; so, nor are we to renounce the knowledge which we have; to abandon our eyes, and be led on as brutes or blind men. But to endeavour, according as we have opportunity, to see where we are, and whither we are going; that we may know accordingly how to govern our spirits; and aim to get a temper of mind suitable to what may be the state of our case. And for aught we know, this may be all the prophecy we shall have to guide us. As it was the celebrated saying of a Greek poet, quoted by divers of the sager heathens, "He is the best prophet that conjectures best." Nor is it so reasonable to expect, that in plain cases (which do ordinarily happen) God should, by any extraordinary means, give us notice of what is to fall out.

4. But we are not suddenly to reject any premonitions of that kind, that appear to deserve our regard, if there be any such. It is indeed a part of prudence not too hastily to embrace or lay much stress upon modern prophecies. But I see not how it can be concluded, that because God hath of latter time, been more sparing, as to such communications; that therefore prophecy is so absolutely ceased, that he will never more give men intimations of his mind and purposes that way. He hath never said it: nor can it be known by ordinary means. Therefore for any to say it, were to pretend to prophesy, even while they say prophecy is ceased. The superstition of the vulgar pagans was, indeed, greatly imposed upon by the presence of divination; but among their more ancient philosophers none ever denied the thing, except Xenophanes and Epicurus, as Cicero* and Plutarch† inform us, and concerning the latter Laertius.‡ It seems he did it over and over; and, indeed, it well agreed with his principles about the Deity to do so. Cicero himself, after large discourse upon the subject, leaves at last, the matter doubtful according to the manner of the academy which he professes to imitate. Yet a great father in the Christian church, understands him to deny it, but withal observes that he denied God's prescience too (as one might, indeed that he doubted it at least) in that discourse. Plato discourses soberly of it, asserting, and diminishing it at once, (as we shall afterwards have more occasion to note,) the generality were for

* De divinat. † De Placit. Phil.

‡ Μαλιχὴν δὲ ἀπασαν ἐν ἄλλοις ἀναίρειαι ὡς καὶ ἐν τῇ μικρᾷ ἐπιτομῇ.

He hath abolished every act of divination in others, as well as in this small epitome.

† In vita Epic.

it, as is evident. And indeed the many monitory dreams related in Cicero's books upon that subject, and by Plutarch in several parts of his works, shew that notices of things to come were not uncommon among the pagans; and in a way that seemed more remarkable, and of more certain signification, than their so much boasted oracles. How they came by them, from whom, or upon what account, we do not now inquire. But since the matter was really so, it seems no incredible thing, that some or other in the Christian church, even in these latter ages, should, upon better terms, partake somewhat of some such a privilege.* Nor is it difficult to produce many instances, within the latter centuries, that would incline one to think it hath been so.

But whosoever shall pretend it, I see not what right they can claim to be believed by others, till the event justify the prediction; unless they can, otherwise, shew the signs which are wont to accompany and recommend a super-natural revelation. Where any such is really afforded, it is like it may produce a concomitant confidence, that will exclude all present doubt in their own minds, without external confirmation. But then, as the apostle speaks in another case, if they have faith, they must have it to themselves. They can never describe their confidence to another, so as to distinguish it from the impression of a mere groundless (and often deluded) imagination. Nor are others to grudge at it, if some particular persons, be in this or that instance privileged with so peculiar a divine favour, as to have secret monitions of any danger approaching them, that they may avoid it, or direction concerning their own private affairs, which none else are concerned to take cognisance of. But, if the matter be of common concernment, the concurrence of things is to be noted; and a greater regard will seem to be challenged, if several of these mentioned indications do fall in together. As, supposing a gradual foregoing languor and degeneracy of religion, in the several parts of the Christian world. And Christianity (with the several professions, which it comprehends) looks less like a religion; or a thing that hath any reference to God. But rather, that men have thought fit to make use of this or that various mode of it, as a mark of civil distinction, under which to form and unite themselves into opposite parties, for the serving of secular interests and designs. It, generally, makes no better men than paganism. A spirit of atheism, profaneness, and contempt of the Deity, and of all things sacred, more openly shews and avows itself, than perhaps, heretofore, in any pagan nation. And not in a time of gross darkness, such

* Savanrola, G. Wischard, of Scotland, and several others.

as formerly, for several ages, had spread itself over the whole face of the Christian church; but in a time of very clear and bright light. Worse and more horrid principles, even in the ancient sense of mankind, apparently destructive of common order, and of all human society, are inserted into the religion of christians; and obtain with them that have, in great part obtained the power in the Christian world, and would wholly engross the Christian name. Better principles, in others, are inefficacious and signify nothing, too generally, to the governing of their lives and practice. Men are let loose to all imaginable wickedness, as much as if they were not christians, and many (namely, that more vastly numerous and bulky party) the more for that they are so. Yea, and not let loose, only; but obliged by their very principles, to those peculiar acts, and kinds of wickedness, and violence, which directly tend to turn Christendom into an Aceldama, and involve the Christian world in ruin and confusion. When multitudes stand, as it were prepared, and in a ready posture, to execute such vengeance, as is highly deserved by others, and make judgment begin at (that which our profession obliges us rather to account) the house of God to rebound afterward, with greater terror and destructiveness upon themselves who began it.

If now some eminent servant of God much noted, and of great remark, for knowledge, wisdom, and sanctity, remote from all suspicion of levity, or sinister design, shall have very expressly foretold such a time and state of things as this, and what will be consequent thereupon; and with great earnestness and vehemency inculcated the premonition; and if, in such a time, God shall set again and again a monitory torch, high and flaming in the heavens over our heads; methinks it doth not savour well to make light account of it, or think it signifies nothing. For, (to speak indeed, as himself doth allow and teach us to conceive;) the majesty of God doth in such concurrent appearances seem more august. His hand is lifted up, and he doth as it were *accingere se, preparare and address himself* to action, raise himself up in his holy habitation, (Zech. 2. 13.) whereupon, all flesh is required to be silent before him. A posture both of reverence, in respect of what he hath already done; and of expectation, as to what he may further be about to do. And of what import or signification soever, such things, in their concurrence, may be to us, it surely ought to be attended to, and received with great seriousness, yea, and with thankfulness. Especially, if there be ground to hope well concerning the issue (as there will always be to them that fear God) and we can see the better, what special sort and kind of duty, we are more peculiarly, to apply ourselves to, in the mean time.

And whereas we know a mind and wisdom, govern all affairs and events through the whole universe. It is fit we should meet mind with mind, wisdom with wisdom. That, on our part, an obsequious, docile mind should advert to, and wait upon that supreme, all ruling, divine mind, in all the appearances, wherein it looks forth upon us. And with a dutiful veneration, cry hail to every radiation of that holy light; accounting, whatever it imports, it opportunely visits the darkness wherein we converse, and should be as gratefully received as the sun, peeping through a cloud, by one travelling in a dusky day. His is the teaching wisdom. It is well for us if we can be wise enough to learn; and unto that, there is a wisdom requisite also, Whoso is wise, and will observe those things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. (Ps. 107.) And again, I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye; (Ps. 32. 8.) which implies our eye must diligently mark his, and that (as it follows) we be not as the horse or mule that have no understanding, &c. v. 9. And whereas, all the works of God, even those that are of every days observation, do some way or other represent God to us; and should constantly suggest unto us serious thoughts of him; those that are more extraordinary, ought the more deeply to impress our minds. And excite in those higher acts of a religious affection, which the circumstances of our present state admit not that they can be constant in the same degree. As though subjects ought always to bear a loyal mind towards their prince; upon such greater occasions, when he shews himself in solemn state, it is becoming there be correspondent acts of more solemn homage. But upon the whole, since all the certain knowledge we can have of such futurities as naturally, and in themselves are not certain, must be by God's own revelation only; and all probable pre-apprehension of them, by the use of our own reason and prudence, upon any other *apt Media* that occur to us. While we can confine our desire of seeing into the future within these limits, it will be just and innocent. And therefore we may now go on,

Secondly. To the positive discovery wherein this appetite is inordinate and degenerates into a distemper of mind. And it may, in general, be collected from what hath been now said, namely, that when we remain unsatisfied, with what God is pleased to reveal about such things; and with what a well governed prudence, can any other way discern; and have an itch and hankering of mind, after other prognostics, that lie not within this compass, and are no proper objects either for our faith or our reason. This is the distemper we are to get redressed, and

are concerned to take heed lest we indulge or cherish. And that we may yet be somewhat more distinct in making this discovery. These that follow, will be plain indications, that our inquisitiveness and thirst after the knowledge of future things is a distemper of mind, and ought to be considered, and dealt with accordingly. As,

1. If it be accompanied with discontent, and a fastidious loathing of our present lot and portion in the world. Which is so much the worse if when our affectation and desire of change, proceeds really, and at the bottom from private self-respect; we endeavour to delude others, or flatter ourselves into a belief that it is only the public good we are intent upon, and the better state of God's interest in the world. And worst of all, if our desires be turbulent, vindictive, and bloody, that is, if not only they are so fervent towards our own hoped advantages, that we care not through what public confusions, and calamities our private ends be promoted and carried on; but should like it the better to see at the same time our heart's desire upon them we have allowed ourselves to hate; yea, though it be never so true that they hate us, and have been injurious to us. Thus with the study and desire of a new state of things, which in itself may be, in some cases, innocent; and, limited to due methods and degrees of the desired change, not only innocent but a duty (for there is no state of things in this world so good, but being still imperfectly so, we ought to desire it were better) a twofold vicious appetite may fall in, that of avarice, and revenge, of good to ourselves beyond what comes to our share; and of hurt to other men. Which complicated disease must taint and infect every thought and look, that is directed forward towards a better state of things.

If this be the case, it must be great negligence and indulgence to ourselves not to discern it. For the incoherence and ill agreement of what is real, and what is pretended would soon appear to one not willing to be mistaken. Sincere devotedness to God and his interest, would be always most conjunct with that complacential faith in his governing wisdom and power, and entire resignation of ourselves and all his and our own concerns to his pleasure and goodness, that we will never think his procedure too slow; or suspect him of neglecting his own interest; or of that which he judges (and which therefore is, most truly) ours. And it is ever accompanied with that placid benignity, and universal love to other men (enemies themselves being by the known rules of the gospel included) as that we would not wish their least injury, for our own greatest advantage. And should most earnestly wish, that if God see good,

the advantage of his interest in the world, might be so carried on as to comprehend and take in therewith, their greatest advantage also. And if we should see cause to apprehend it may fall out to be otherwise; that, surely, ought to be our temper, which the prophet expresses (and appeals to God concerning it) upon a very frightful prospect of things, "I have not desired the woful day O Lord thou knowest," Jerem. 17. 16. So remote it should be from us to press forward with a ravenous, cruel eye towards a tragical bloody scene; or to accuse the divine patience which we should adore, and (perhaps, as much as any others) do also need.

2. If there be a greater inclination to look forward into the future things of time than those of eternity. If in the former we find a con-naturalness, and they seem most agreeable to us, these other are tasteless, and without sap and savour. If it would be a great and sensible consolation, to be assured such a state of things as we would choose, shall very shortly obtain. But to think of a state approaching, wherein all things shall be perfectly and unexceptionably well for ever, is but cold comfort. Blessed God! what a mortal token is this? Do we apprehend nothing of distemper in it? Do we see ourselves the men of time (as the hebrew expresses what we read men of this world, Ps. 17. 14.) and do not our hearts misgive at the thought? How little likely is it we are designed for that blessed eternity to which our spirits are so little suitable? When, as it is said of them that are for the state wherein mortality shall be swallowed up of life, that he that hath wrought them for that selfsame thing is God? (2 Cor. 5. 4. 5.) Can the felicity of heaven belong to them that value it not as their best good? but count a terrestrial paradise of their own devising better?

3. If we be so intent upon this or that future event, as that hereby the due impression is worn off, of much greater and more important things that are already past. What so great things have we to expect in our time, as we know have come to pass in former time? What so great, as that the Son of God came down into our world! did put on man! lived a life's time among us mortals! breathed every-where heavenly love, and grace, and sweetness; and with these grateful odours perfumed this noisome, impure, forlorn region of darkness and death! died a sacrifice for sinners! and overcame death! ascended in triumph to the throne of God, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high! What so great as the mystery of Godliness, that God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory! (1 Tim. 3. 16.) Are any

of those little futurities, whereof we have but an uncertain expectation, fit to be compared with these things which we certainly know to have come to pass, ? Or have we anything so important and great to fix our eye upon, as a Redeemer now in his exaltation ? invested with all power in heaven and earth, to whom every knee must bow, and every tongue confess ! The arbiter of life and death to men ! who hath established so admirable a frame of religion for the reduction of ^{an}apostate man ! made it triumph over the obstinate infidelity of the Jews, and the idolatry of the Gentile world ! And what the glorious issue of his administration will be, we already know ; and are not left about it to suspenceful dubious inquiry. Nor do need a more certain revelation than we have. Is all this to be waved and overlooked ? while we stand at a gaze, expecting what shall be the height of the French monarchy, or the fate of the Dutch republic, or of this or that particular person, now upon the stage ! It must surely be an ill symptom, and an indication of a sickly mind, when things have all their value and regard with us, not as they are great but as they are new. And are only considerable to us, because they are yet future and unknown.

4. If we more earnestly covet to foreknow the approach of an external state of things that would be better, in our account, than to feel the good effect upon our spirits, of one that we take to be worse, and that is externally afflictive to us. This excludes the apprehension of a wise providence, governing the world ; That pursues a design in what it doth or permits. As if we thought God did afflict us for afflictions sake, as more intending, therein, his own pleasure than our profit, Or as if we would impute a levity to providence, and reckoned it inconstant and desultory, even beneath the ordinary prudence of a man. That it might forget and desist, and would not drive on a design to an issue. Or that (contrary to what God tells Eli by Samuel, 1. Sam. 3. 12.) when he began, he would divert and alter his course, before he made an end. Or it implies, we place our felicity in somewhat without us, more than in a good habit and temper of spirit within. Whereas, surely things are much amiss with us, if we do not account that a mortified heart, towards whatsoever is temporary and terrene, is a thousand-fold more desirable than the best external state of things that is ever to be enjoyed under the sun. As calamitous as the condition of Job was, it had been a worse evil than any he suffered ; if that censure of him were true, that he chose iniquity rather than affliction. Job. 36. 21. Or if that were not true, which he seems to intimate concerning himself, that he was less intent

upon a present release from the furnace, than, at length to come out like gold. Job. 23. 10.

5. If the other parts of Scripture be less savoury to us than the prophetic. And especially when these are of more grateful savour than the preceptive part. This is of great affinity with the foregoing character. For the precepts in God's word, describe to us that excellent frame of spirit, which afflictions are designed (as one sort of means) more deeply to impress. And what there is of ill character, here, lies in this, when anything is of greater value than that comely, amiable, well complexioned temper of spirit. And surely it less concerns us, what God will do without us, than, what he will have us do, and be, ourselves. It is an ill circumstance with a diseased person, when he hath less inclination to such things as tend to bring him to a confirmed habit of health, than such as more serve to nourish his disease. And whereas *Quicquid recipitur—ad modum recipientis, whatever is received, is received according to the measure of the recipient*, there is little doubt, but where this distemper we are speaking of, prevails; men may be much inclined to make that use, even of Scripture prophecies as to feed their distemper. When they can relish and allow themselves to mind no other parts of the Bible: when they take more pleasure to be conversant in these obscurer things, than those that are plain, and concern us more, (as God hath mercifully provided that such things in his word, should be plainest, that are of greatest concernment to us,) and they perhaps, neither have the requisite helps, nor the ability, with them to master the obscurity: when our prepossessed fancy must be the interpreter: and we will make the prophecy speak what it never meant; draw it down to the little particularities of the time and place wherein we live: and are peremptory in our applications, and so confident, till we find ourselves mistaken, that when we do, we begin to suspect the Bible. As if divine truths, and our attachments to them, must stand and fall together.

6. (And lastly) when we have an undue regard to unscriptural prophecies. Which we may be supposed to have, if we either much search after them, or give hasty credit to them without search.

(1.) If we much search after them. As, weak and sickly appetites are wont to do for rarities and novelties, we are not content with what occurs, nor with our own allotment, and God's ordinary dispensation, if things of that kind occur not, but purvey and listen out after them; as if we had not considerable things enough, both for our employment, and our entertainment and gratification besides.

(2.) If we believe them without search; only because they seem

to speak according to our mind ; imbibe all things, of that import, promiscuously and on the sudden, without examining the matter. The simple believeth every word; Prov. 14. 15. It is the business of judgment, to distinguish and discern. We therefore call it discretion. It totally fails, when we can find no medium, between believing every thing and nothing. Some things indeed of this pretence, are so apparently idle and ridiculous, that it will become a prudent man to reject them at the first sight. Some may perhaps, partly from the matter, or partly from the person, and other concurring circumstances, have such an appearance, as ought to stay our minds upon them, detain us awhile, and hold us in some suspense, while we consider and examine whether any further regard is to be given them or no. It is a very distempered, ravenous appetite that swallows all it can catch without choice : that allows no leisure to distinguish between what is suitable, or fit for nourishment, and what is either noxious, or vain.

II. And now for the cure of this distemper. We are to consider the nature of the things the fore-knowledge whereof we so earnestly affect. And we find they are not such futurities as have their certain causes in nature. As when the sun will rise and set ; or be nearer us or remoter ; when there will be an eclipse, &c. These are not the things which will satisfy this appetite. But mere contingencies that depend upon free and arbitrary causes, that is especially, upon the mind and will of man ; as it is under the direction of the supreme, and all-governing mind. And again, we are to consider the nature of the knowledge we covet, of these things, namely, that it is not conjectural (which indeed were not knowledge) but we would be at a certainty about them. Now hereupon we are further to consider, that there is no reasonable appetite which we may not seek to have gratified in some apt and proper way, that is, by means that are both lawful, and likely to attain our end.

In the present case, we can think of no course to be taken for the obtaining of this knowledge (even giving the greatest scope and latitude to our thoughts) but it must suppose one of these two things ;—either that we look upon it as an ordinary gift to be acquired by our own endeavours that is, by art and industry, and the use of natural means and helps, whereby we imagine our natures may be heightened, and improved to this pitch—or else that we reckon it an extraordinary immediate gift of God ; so that if we affect it, we have no course to take but to seek it at his hands by prayer ; either that God would confer it upon ourselves, or upon some others, by whom we may be informed. And we are now to bethink ourselves, what

encouragement or allowance we can suppose is given us to seek it either of these ways. For, if we can seek it in neither of these, we must be obliged either to assign a third (as we never can) or abandon it as an unreasonable; and vicious appetite; the satisfaction whereof is no way to be so much as attempted, or sought after. And now

First. As to the former of these ways. There is nothing more to be despaired of, the very attempt being both foolish, and impious; both most impossible, and unlawful.

1. It is plainly an *impossible* attempt. For what natural means, what rules of art, can give us the knowledge of such futurities as we are speaking of? or improve our natural faculties to it? It is a knowledge quite of another kind, and alien to our natures. For besides the notices we have of things by sense, which is limited wholly to things present, as its object, and our knowledge of first, and self-evident principles (from which how remote are the future contingencies we now speak of?) We have no imaginable way of coming by the knowledge of any thing, otherwise than by reasoning and discourse, which supposes a natural connexion of things. Whereupon, when we have sure hold of one end of the thread, we can proceed by it, and lead ourselves on, by such things as we know to other things we know not. But what such natural connexion is there, between any present thing, known to us, and this sort of future things? Which, for the most part, are such as must be brought about, by the concurrence of great multitudes of free agents, who may be opposed by as great, and prevented of accomplishing what they designed, though their minds were never so constantly intent upon the design. But we have no way to know with certainty the present minds of so many men, nor of any man at all, by immediate inspection; or otherwise, than as we may collect, by the former series of his actions or professions. Wherein men may deceive the most quick-sighted, and really intend otherwise, than they seem. Much less do we know that so mutable a thing as the mind of man is, will not alter, and especially, of so many men. And their condition and outward circumstances may alter, if not their minds. What can be certain in such a region of changes, where the effecting of purposes depends upon the body, as well as the mind, and many external aids and helps besides? And where all are subject to so many accidents, to maims, sicknesses, and deaths? Nay who can tell what his own mind shall be hereafter, supposing any such futurity to be within his own power, or that his power shall be the same, if his mind should not change. And add, what is more than all the rest, who know-

eth the mind of God, or being his counsellor hath taught him? Isa. 40. 13. Rom. 11. 34. Who can tell what he will do? or enable, or permit men to do? What event could ever have been thought more certain, before-hand, than the destruction of the Jews by Haman's means? And who could ever have foreseen a few days, or hours before, that he should be hanged on the gallows he prepared for Mordecai. Who can ever think or hope, to measure that boundless range, and latitude, wherein infinite wisdom and power may work this way or that? Or, within that vast and immense scope? who can be able to predict what way God will take? Or what he will do, or not do? When all human contrivance and forecast is at an end, still more ways lie open to him. Or his power can make more, and break its way through whatsoever obstructions. We know not what to do (says Jehoshaphat in his distress) but our eyes are upon thee. 2. Chron. 20. 12. A dutiful confession of the limitedness of human wit, and power, and of the unlimitedness of the divine, both at once! To offer at comprehending his profound designs, and abstruse methods only shews how little we understand ourselves, or him. Our own scant measure, or his immensity. We might better attempt to sound the ocean with our finger, or gather it into the hollow of our hand. It were happy for us, if our confessed ignorance might end in adoration; and that the sense of our hearts were such as the apostle's words would aptly express. (Rom. 11. 33.) O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. Such as affect to be wiser, but not so pious, and go about to form models, and ideas for the future, apart from him; how often doth their great wit only serve to expose their folly! And make them the sport of fortune (as some would call it) we may say rather, of that wise and righteous providence, that delights to triumph over baffled insolence! for *ludit in humanis*, &c.) and deride a confidence that is founded only in proud impotency! He that sits in the heavens laughs, the most high hath them in derision. How often are the wisest politicians disappointed and despised! all their measures broken! their models shattered and discomposed! and all their fabrics overturned in a moment! So remote is human wit, at the utmost stretch, from any certainty, about the futurities we speak of. And if any imagine it may be helped to foresee, by some art or other; or by rules framed and collected upon former experience; according whereto judgments are said heretofore to have been happily made, of what would come to pass.

It is not here intended to examine the several ways that have

been taken, and trusted in, for this purpose. That they are all such as have been, and are, much disputed, if they were not with manifest evidence disproved, would argue that, that foreknowledge of things is not likely to be very certain, which must be obtained by arts and rules that are themselves uncertain. How much hath been said (anciently, and of late) to discover the vanity of that sort of astrology that relates to the futurities we have under consideration ! Such as have a mind may view what is written to that purpose, and may save themselves much vain labour by perusing the learned Dr. More's late tetractys, and what it refers to in his mystery of godliness. Have we heard of none of our later pretenders this way, that have incurred the like fate with that wise man of Greece, that was laughed at by a silly girl (as Laertius tells us) for so long gazing upon the stars (though perhaps upon a better account) till at length, in his walk, he fell into a ditch ; that he minded so much what was over his head, that he took no notice what was at his feet ! And for the ancient augury of the pagans, in the several sorts of it, how much was it had in contempt by the wiser among themselves. Insomuch that one of them says, he wondered how they could look upon one another, and not laugh. As who would not, that such strange things should be foreshewn by the flying or the singing, or the feeding of birds ! Their usual haruspicy was as wise, and as much regarded by some greater minds among them, As Alexander that reproved and jeered the impertinency of his sooth-sayer that would have withheld him from action, upon the pretence of some ill omen he had observed in the entrails : telling him that he would surely think he were impertinent, and troublesome if he should go about to interrupt him in his employment, when he was busy viewing his sacrifice, and asked him, when he pressed further, what greater impediment a man could have, that had great things before his eyes, than a doting superstitious fortune-teller ? And where there was not so much wisdom and fortitude, as to despise such fooleries, how ludicrous was it that great and momentous affairs were to be governed by them ! That a general was not to march an army or fight a battle, but first such observation must be had of the flight of birds, and the entrails of beasts ! or other things, as idle as they, as the whirlings, rollings and noise of rivers, the change of the moon, &c. Upon which in Germany (as is observed) when Cæsar had invaded it, their presaging women were to be consulted before it was thought fit to give him battle. Clem. Alexand. Strom. L. 1. Besides, what was not less vain, but more horrid, presaging upon the convulsed members, and the flowing blood, of a man slain for the purpose.

Diod. Sic. Bibl. Hist. l. 5. Nay and the excess of this desire hath tempted some, to try the blacker practices of necromancy or what might be gained to satisfy and please it, by converse with departed souls; or what if it be other familiar spirits? We here consider the folly of such courses, apart from the impiety. As what reason have we upon which to apprehend, that they can ascertain us, or be, ordinarily, certain themselves of such futurities as we speak of? But also the thought of any such course we are to presume is horrid to the minds of serious christians. Unto whom, what we find in the holy Scriptures, concerning any such ways of presaging, as have been mentioned, should, methinks, be enough to form their spirits both to the hatred, and the contempt of them, and, by consequence, of the principle itself (this vain appetite) that leads unto them, and hath captivated whole nations into so miserable delusion by them. Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, that frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad, that turneth the wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish. (Isai. 44. 25.) Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels: let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold they shall be as stubble, the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the flame, &c. (Isa: 47. 13, 14. Isa. 8, 19, 20. Dan. 2, 27.)

And though it be true that God hath often given premonitions of future things, by dreams (which is a matter that belongs not to this head) yet the rules that are given, by some learned men, for the interpreting of such dreams as contain not the things expressly, pretended to be signified are generally, so very ridiculous, that it is hard to say, whether they were learnedly busy or idle, that thought fit to trouble themselves or the world with them. Oneirocrit. Artem. Archmi. &c. And surely, though some dreams have been divine; such rules of interpreting any, are so meanly human, as to be fit enough to be thrown in hither and thrown away with the rest of the trash noted before. And may help to let us see, that the foreknowledge of the future things we are considering, is so impossible to human nature, improved by whatsoever rules and precepts of our devising, that while men seek to become wise in this kind, by such means, they do but befool themselves, and are not a whit the more knowing, but shew themselves the less prudent and sober. And if such knowledge be a thing whereof human nature, by itself, is not capable; to be impatient of ignorance in these things, is to be offended that God hath made such creatures as we find we are. That is, if this had been the natural endowment of some other

order of creatures, how unreasonable were it that a man should quarrel with his own nature, and with the inseparable circumstances of his own state? All creatures are of limited natures to one or other particular kind. This or that creature admits of all the perfections of its own kind. It admits not those of another kind. How foolish were it if a man should vex himself that he cannot fly like a bird, or run like a stag, or smell like a hound, or cannot as an angel fly, at pleasure, between heaven and earth, or visit the several orbs, and exactly measure their magnitudes and distances from one another!

2. We are therefore to consider that the affectation of such foreknowledge (that is, to have it in and of ourselves, or by any means of our devising) is *unlawful* as well as *impossible*. Indeed this might be collected from the former; for the capacity of our natures ought to limit our desires. And it hence also, further appears unlawful upon the highest account, in that it were to aspire to what is most peculiar, and appropriate to the Deity. For hereby the great God demonstrates his Godhead, and expostulating with idolaters, insults over the unactive ignorance of their impotent and inanimate deities upon this account. Produce your cause (saith he) bring forth your strong reasons. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen. Shew the things that are to come hereafter that we may know that ye are gods, Isa. 41, 21, 22, 23. As if he had said, If they be gods why do they not, as gods predict things to come, that if they be gods we may know it? So in the 42 ch. of the same prophecy, v. 8, 9. I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. Behold the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. This is a thing (saith he) that doth peculiarly belong to me. It is a glory of mine that shall never be imparted. And to the same sense is that in the 46 ch. of that prophecy, v. 9, 10. Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is none else, I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying; my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. So also did our blessed Saviour, when he had a mind to convince that he was, as he gave out the Son of God, design the same medium for that purpose. Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he. And again, I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe. John 13, 19. ch. 14. 29. It was indeed the great temptation used to our unhappy first parents; you shall be as gods, knowing good and

evil. Undoubtedly that knowledge wherewith they were tempted, must include at least, foreknowledge in it. You shall be as gods knowing &c. They were tempted by an expectation of being, in this respect, made like God, and we are become by it in this respect, like beasts that perish, and in other respects, like the devils themselves, who joy in our deception and perdition : too like beasts in ignorance, and devils in malignity!

What can be a more presumptuous arrogance, than to aim at the royalties of the Godhead! If to affect what belongs to the nature and capacity of another creature were foolish : to aspire to any prerogative, and peculiarity of God himself, cannot but be extremely impious and wicked! Are we to be offended that we are creatures? that our natures and the capacity of our understandings are not unlimited, and all-comprehending, when we owe it to the mere benignity and good pleasure of our Maker that we are anything? and much more that we have any such thing as an understanding at all. Yea, and if this knowledge were not peculiar to God, yet inasmuch as he hath not given it us, nor appointed us any means of attaining it, is an uncreaturely disposition, not to be satisfied without it. The rebuke our Saviour gave his disciples in one particular case of this nature, ought also to be monitory to us, in all such cases, that is, when they inquire wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? Acts 1. 6. His answer is reprehensive. It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. The expression is remarkable, which the Father hath put in his own power, (*εθετο*) it implies, as if, by a positive act, God had reserved, and locked up from us, the things which he hath not vouchsafed to reveal. And we may see how he hath, as it were industriously, drawn a curtain between the present and future time, that we cannot see so far as one moment before us. Shall we with rude and irreverent hands, as it were attempt to rend, or draw aside the curtain?

Secondly. And from hence we may also see, in the next place how little encouragement we have in the other way to expect this knowledge, namely, by supplicating God for it, as an extraordinary gift to be obtained immediately from him. If we have not wisdom enough, to present unto him reasonable desires, we may expect his wisdom will deny us such as are unreasonable. He is never so apt to dislike our requests for their being too great, as too little. Or for their having nothing valuable, or important in them, nothing suitable to him, or to us, fit for him to give, or for us to seek or receive. In the present case, it is true, he hath sometimes favoured men with this kind of knowledge, ordained and inspired prophets,

who were to signify his purposes and pleasure to others. But it was rather modestly declined, than sought; and was, mostly, upon great and important occasions for high and very considerable ends, and to be effected, at seasons, and by persons of his own choosing. Nor doth it seem a thing fit for men to make the matter of petition. For if they should, either it must be for some reason peculiar to themselves, and which others cannot generally allege, as well as they; which it is not supposable any can be able to assign. Or for some common reason that concerns the generality of men as much. And then, we are sure, it can be of no weight; for, upon the same reason, all should, as much, be prophets. Which it is plain he doth not judge fit (who can best judge) in that he hath not made them so, which is concluding, as to things he hath not made it our duty to seek. And that this is a communication not fit to be constant and general at all times, and to all persons, is evident in itself. And may appear by divers considerations that partly respect God and his government, partly ourselves and our own interest, and concernment.

1. On God's part. It would greatly detract from the majesty of his government that it should have no arcana, and that all things should lie open to every eye. We may easily apprehend that the dignity of the divine government was, in this respect, designed to be kept up to an awful height, when we find there is somewhat mentioned to us (and how many things more may there be that are not mentioned?) which the angels in heaven know not, nor the human soul of our Lord himself, but the Father only. Nor again, was it suitable (particularly) to the government of God over man, in this present state, which we find designed for a state of probation; to be concluded, and shut up at last by a solemn judgment. For unto this state, the final judgment hath its peculiar, only reference. Therein we are to receive the things done in the body, that is, (as it is explained 2 Cor. 5. 10,) according to what we have done whether good or evil. How unfit were it that probationers for eternity, should, generally foreknow events that shall fall out in the state of their trial? Wherein they are to be strictly tied up to rules without regard to events. And are to approve themselves in that sincerity, constancy, fortitude, dependance upon God, resignation of themselves, and their concerns to him, that could have little place or opportunity to shew themselves, in a state wherein all things were at a certainty to them.

2. On our own part. It is to be considered that the foreknowledge of temporary events, is not a thing of that value to us, which we may, perhaps, imagine it is. It would serve us

more for curiosity than use. An unfit thing for us to petition in, or expect to be gratified. The wiser heathens have thought meanly of it. They have believed, indeed, that *God did sometimes enable men to prophesy* but have reckoned it, as one of them speaks, *a gift indulged unto human imprudence*.* That author accounts weaker minds, the usual subjects of it. That *no man in his right mind*, attained it, but either being alienated from himself, by sleep or a disease. And that they were not wont to understand, themselves, the meaning of their own visions, but must have them interpreted by others. The result of a larger discourse, he hath about it, than is fit here to be inserted comes to this, that fools divine, and wise must judge. Whereupon another (Cicero) thinks such prophecies little to be regarded, counting it strange that what a wise man could not see a mad-man should. And that when one hath lost human sense he should obtain divine !

They were not acquainted indeed with those ways wherein God revealed his mind to holy men whom he used as his own amanuenses or penmen, or who were otherwise to serve him for sacred purposes. But when we consider Balaam's being a prophet, methinks we should not be over fond of the thing itself, abstractly considered. How unspeakably is the Spirit of holiness as such, to be preferred ! To have a heart subject to God, willing to be governed by him, to commit to him, even in the dark, our less considerable, temporal concernments ; and confidently to rely for our eternal concernments, upon his plain word in the gospel, wherein life and immortality are brought to light, would make us little feel the need of prophecy. The radical principle of holiness is love (for it is the fulfilling of the law) in the absence whereof, the apostle esteems the gift of prophecy (with the addition of understanding all mysteries, and all knowledge) to go for nothing. 1 Cor.13.2. And if we strictly consider ; wherein can we pretend it needful to us to foreknow the events that are before us ? they are either bad and ungrateful or good and grateful. For the former sort, what would it avail us to foreknow them ? That we may avoid them ? That is a contradiction. How are they avoidable, when we know they will befall us ? Is it that we be not surprized by them ? We have other means to prevent it. To bear an equal temper of mind towards all conditions ; to live always, in this region of changes, expecting the worst. At least not to expect rest on earth, to familiarize to ourselves the thoughts of troubles, apprehending, as to those that are private, we are always liable.

* ἡ δὲ μαντικὴ ἀφροσύνη Θεὸς ἀνθρώπινῃ δέδωκεν, ἔδειξεν ἔννεος

Plat. in Tim.

And for any greater, common calamities that we may share in with the generality usually, they come on more slowly. There, often, are premonitory tokens, such as were before-mentioned in this discourse, sufficient to keep us from being surprized. And with the rest this may concur (as was said) that perhaps some or other of that value, and consideration, as to deserve our regard may, in such a case, have great apprehensions of approaching trouble, which whether they proceed from their greater prudence and sagacity; or from any more divine impression upon their minds, we need not determine. If it should be the latter, the design may yet be, not to ascertain, but to awaken us. Upon which supposition, a serious consideration of the thing, may well consist with suspending our belief of it. And whether it prove true or false, if we are put thereby, upon the doing of nothing, but what a prudent man, and a good christian should do, however; and unto which we only needed excitation, a very valuable end is gained. Affairs are generally managed in human, yea and in the Christian life, upon no certainty of this or that particular event; it is enough that we are put upon seasonable consideration of what concerns us, in the one kind or the other, and do accordingly steer our course. When Jonah was sent to Nineveh upon that ungrateful errand; and came a stranger into that luxurious paganish city, though he brought them no credentials from heaven, nor (that we find) wrought any miracle to confirm his mission, yet the matter he published in their streets, being in itself most considerable, and they having (no doubt) sufficient light, to know their practices were such as deserved the doom they were threatened with, and needed redress, they hereupon consider what he said, reform, and are spared. And what harm was now done in all this? except that Jonah had too tender a concern for his own reputation, and lest he should be thought a false prophet. Whereas the event that happened did better prove the impression, upon his mind, divine; than the destruction of the city, after their repentance, had done. It being a thing more agreeable to the divine nature, and more worthy of God, to save, than destroy a penitent people. If we see no such disposition to repentance, we have the more reason to expect the overflowing calamity; and have enough to prevent our being surprized, without fore knowing the event. But for events that are pleasing and grateful, no matter how surprising they be. The more, the better, the sweeter, and the pleasanter. When God turned again the captivity of Zion we were as them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. (Psal. 126.) It enhanceth merey, when it is preventing, and unexpected.

And we may add, concerning ill events ; it is not only needless to foreknow them, but better to be ignorant. Think what a case we were in, had we the prospect, lying distinctly before us, of all the evils that shall befall us through our whole life. Such a day I shall have a terrible fit of the cholic, or the stone ; such a day, my house will be burnt or I shall be undone, and reduced to beggary. Such a day my husband, wife, or this or that pleasant child will die. At such a time, I shall break a bone, or be in prison, &c. Were this knowledge a felicity ? Some may think (says Cicero*) it were of great concernment to us to know what shall happen. But (he adds) Dicæarchus wrote a great book to shew it is better to be ignorant. He had indeed a copious argument, and the book, it is like, were a jewel. But enough is obvious to any man's reason that will soberly consider. Infinite knowledge is only agreeable to infinite wisdom and power. How unsuitable were the knowledge, we are apt to covet, to our impotency and imprudence ! As monstrous as the head of a giant, joined to the body of a child. The increase of such knowledge would certainly, but increase our sorrow ; and be to us but an engine of torture, a Medusa's head, always affrighting us with its own ideas, that would be worse to us, and more tormenting than snakes and serpents. Divine mercy, in these respects, keeps us ignorant. Thereto it is fit we should attribute it, not to ill will, as the devil at first suggested ; and as they seemed to apprehend, against whom Plutarch sagely reasons : † That it was very improbable, that God who hath given us birth, nourishment, being and understanding, should intend only to signify his displeasure towards us, by withholding from us the knowledge of things to come. Would we know what concerns our duty ? We have plain rules to direct us, it would but tempt, disturb, or divert us many times to know the event. "You need not consult a diviner, saith a heathen (Epicte.) whether you are with hazard, to help your friend, or defend your country. Nor any thing, by like reason, which we already know we ought to do. No more, saith one commenting upon him. (Simplic.) than whether a man should eat or sleep ? or whether a husbandman should plant or sow ? Or would we fill our minds with great thoughts, and employ them about matters more important than the affairs of the present time ? Besides all the great things that we know to be past, let us look forward to certain futurities, We may look even with a certain expectation for the day, when the heavens shall be rolled up as a scrole, and pass away with great noise, and the elements melt

* De divin †De fact. Oac. dcc.

with fervent heat, and the earth, and all things therein be consumed and burnt up. We have a certain foreknowledge of the final, glorious, appearing and coming of our Lord. We know he will come, and it will be gloriously, Behold the Son of man coming in the heavens with power and great glory!) Such things as these we look for according to his promise, he will come, and his reward with him. The trumpet will sound, and the dead arise. How great a thing is it to have graves opening all the world over! And men and women springing up, afresh, out of the dust! And all the chosen ones of our Lord caught up into the clouds, to meet their Redeemer in the air, and so to be for ever with the Lord! Let our thoughts fly over earth and time, they will be purer and less tainted. Let them center in God. They will be more steady, composed and calm. Fixedly apprehend him to be most wise, holy, good, powerful, and ours. Let our hearts quietly trust in him as such; and be subject to him; contented to follow. He will lead the blind in a way that they know not; (Isai. 42.) And, if we be-take ourselves wholly to him, will be our God for ever and ever: our God, and our guide even to the death.



MAN'S CREATION
IN
A HOLY,
BUT
MUTABLE STATE.

Eccles. 7. 29.

LO THIS ONLY HAVE I FOUND, THAT GOD HATH MADE MAN UPRIGHT ; BUT
THEY HAVE SOUGHT OUT MANY INVENTIONS.

MAN'S CREATION

IN

A HOLY

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Eccles. 7. 29.

*Lo this only have I found, that God hath made man upright;
but they have sought out many inventions.*

IN these words you have the result of a serious inquiry into the state of mankind. In the verse immediately foregoing, the preacher speaks his own experience, touching each sex distributively; how rare it was to meet with a wise and good man, how much rarer with a prudent and virtuous woman (so he must be understood, though these qualities are not expressed) then in the text gives this verdict touching both collectively, tending to acquit their Maker of their universal depravation, and convict them. "Lo this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

The words contain two propositions—The first touching man's perfection by his creation, "God made man upright"—The second touching his defection by sin, "But they have sought out many inventions"—Together with a solemn preface introducing both, and recommending them as well-weighed truths, "Lo this only have I found," &c. As though he had said, "I do not now speak at random, and by guess; no, but I solemnly pronounce it, as that which I have found out by serious study and diligent exploration, that God made man upright, &c." The terms are not obscure, and are fitly rendered. I find no considerable variety of readings, and cannot needlessly spend time

about words. Only in short,—By *man* you must understand man collectively, so as to comprehend the whole species.—*Making him upright*, you must understand so as to refer *making* not to the adjunct only, supposing the subject pre-existent, but to both subject and adjunct together; and so it is man's concrete and original righteousness that is here meant.—By *inventions* understand (as the antithesis doth direct) such as are alien from this rectitude. Nor is it altogether improbable that in this expression, some reference may be had to that curious desire of knowing much that tempted Adam and Eve into the first transgression.—*Many inventions*, seems to be spoken in opposition to that simplicity and singleness of heart which this original rectitude did include; truth is but one; falsehood, manifold. God made man upright, that is; simple, plain-hearted, free from all tortuous windings, and involutions (so the word rendered upright in the text doth signify; and Jeshurun derived therefrom, which God thought a fit name for his people Israel, the seed of plain-hearted Jacob to be known by; answerably whereto Nathanael is said to be a true Israelite in whom was no guile, John 1. 47.) Such, man was at first; now in the room of this simplicity, you find a multiplicity; he was of one constant, uniform frame and tenour of spirit, held one straight, direct and even course; now he is become full of inventions, grown vafrous, multiform as to the frame of his spirit, uncertain, intricate, perplexed in all his ways. *Sought out*, this notes the voluntariness, and perfect spontareity of his defection; it was his own doing. God made him upright; he hath sought out means to deform and undo himself.—The words thus opened afford us two great gospel truths.—That God endued the nature of man in his creation, with a perfect and universal rectitude.—That man's defection from his primitive state was purely voluntary, and from the unconstrained choice of his own mutable and self-determining will.

Though the latter part of the text, would afford a sufficient ground to treat of the state of man now fallen; yet that being by agreement left to another hand, I observe no more from it then what concerns the manner of his fall, and that only as it depended on a mutable will. In handling these truths, I shall—open them in certain explicatory theses, and—improve them in some few practical and applicatory inferences.

I. These two great gospel truths are to be opened in certain explicatory theses.

First. About the former,—That God endued the nature of man in his creation with a perfect and universal rectitude: take these propositions for explication.

1. All created rectitude consists in conformity to some rule or law. Rectitude is a mere relative thing, and its relation is to a rule. By a rule, I here mean a law strictly taken; and therefore I speak this only of created rectitude. A law, is a rule of duty given by a superior to an inferior; nothing can be in that sense a rule to God, or the measure of increased rectitude.

2. The highest rule of all created rectitude, is the will of God, considered as including most intrinsically, an eternal and immutable reason, justice, and goodness. It is certain, there can be no higher rule to creatures than the divine will; and as certain that the government of God over his creatures, is always reasonable and just and gracious; and that this reasonableness, justice and goodness by which it is so, should be subjected any where but in God himself, none that know what God is according to our more obvious notions of him can possibly think. Rom. 7. 12, 12, 1, 2, Ezek. 18, 25, ch. 33.

3. Any sufficient signification of this will, touching the reasonable creatures duty is a law, indispensibly obliging such a creature. A law is a constitution *de debito*, and it is the legislator's will (not concealed in his own breast, but) duly expressed that makes this constitution, and infers an obligation on the subject.

4. The law given to Adam at his creation was partly natural, given by way of internal impression upon his soul; partly positive given (as is probable) by some more external discovery or revelation. That the main body of laws whereby man was to be governed, should be at first given no other way than by stamping them upon his mind and heart, was a thing congruous enough to his innocent state (as it is to angels and saints in glory) it being then exactly contempered to his nature highly approvable to his reason, (as is evident in that being fallen, his reason ceases not to approve it, Rom. 2, 18.) fully suitable to the inclination and tendency of his will, and not at all regretted by any reluctant principle that might in the least oppose or render him doubtful about his duty.

Yet was it most reasonable also, that some positive commands should be superadded, that God's right of dominion and government over him as Creator, might be more expressly asserted, and he might more fully apprehend his own obligation as a creature to do some things, because it was his Maker's will, as well as others, because they appeared to him in their own nature reasonable and fit to be done; for so the whole of what God requires of man, is fitly distinguished into some things which he commands, because they are just; and some things that are just because he commands them.

5. Adam was endued in his creation, with a sufficient ability and habitude to conform to this whole law, both natural and positive; in which ability and habitude his original rectitude did consist. This proposition carries in it the main truth we have now in hand, therefore requires to be more distinctly insisted on. There are two things in it to be considered.—the thing itself he was endued with: and—the manner of the endowment.

(1.) The thing itself wherewith he was endued, that was uprightness, rectitude, (otherwise called the image of God, though that expression comprehends more than we now speak of, as his immortality, dominion over the inferior creatures, &c.) which uprightness or rectitude consisted in the habitual conformity, or conformability of all his natural powers to this whole law of God; and is therefore considerable two ways, namely, in relation to its subject, and its rule.

[1.] In relation to its subject; that was the whole soul (in some sense it may be said the whole man) even the several powers of it. And here we are led to consider the parts of this rectitude, for it is co-extended (if that phrase may be allowed) with its subject, and lies spread out into the several powers of the soul; for had any power been left destitute of it, such is the frame of man, and the dependance of his natural powers on each other, in order to action, that it had disabled him to obey, and had destroyed his rectitude; for* *bonum non oritur nisi ex causis integris, malum vero ex quovis defectu, good arises only from perfect causes but evil from some defect.* And hence (as Davenant well observes) according to the parts (if I may so speak) of the subject wherein it was, man's original rectitude must be understood to consist of,

First. A perfect illumination of mind to understand and know the will of God. Secondly. A compliance of heart and will therewith. Thirdly. An obedient subordination of the sensitive appetite, and other inferior powers, that in nothing they might resist the former. That it comprehends all these, appears by comparing Col. 3, 10, where the image of God, wherein man was created, is said to consist in knowledge, that hath its seat and subject in the mind, with Eph. 4, 24. where righteousness and holiness are also mentioned; the one whereof consists in equity towards men: the other in loyalty and devotedness to God; both which necessarily suppose the due framing of the other powers of the soul, to the ducture of an enlightened mind. And besides, that work of sanctification

* Davenant de justitia habituali, &c.

(which in these scriptures is expressly called a renovation of man according to the image of God wherein he was created) doth in other scriptures appear (as the forementioned author also observes) to consist of parts proportionable to these I mention, namely, illumination of mind, (Ephes. 1. 18.) conversion of heart (Ps. 51, 10.) victory over concupiscence. Rom. 6. 7. throughout.

[2.] Consider this rectitude in relation to its rule; that is the will of God revealed, (1. John 3. 4.) or the law of God. Sin is the transgression of the law; and accordingly righteousness must needs be conformity to the law; that is, actual righteousness consists in actual conformity to the law; that habitual rectitude which Adam was furnished with in his creation (of which we are speaking) in an habitual conformity, or an ability to conform to the same law. This habitual conformity, was, as of the whole soul, so to the whole law, that is, to both the parts or kinds of it, natural and positive. He was furnished with particular principles inclining him to comply with whatsoever the law of nature had laid before him, and with a general principle disposing him to yield to whatsoever any positive law should lay before him as the will of God. And if it be said (in reference to the former of these) that this law of nature impressed upon Adam's soul, was his very rectitude; therefore how can this rectitude be a conformity to this law? I answer, First—A law is twofold *regulans, regulating—regulata, regulated*. Secondly—The law of nature impressed upon the soul of Adam, must be considered;—as subjected in his mind; so it consisted of certain practical notions about good and evil, right and wrong, &c. and—as subjected in his heart, so it consisted in certain habitual inclinations to conform to those principles. Now these inclinations of the heart, though they are a rule to actions, they are yet something ruled in reference to those notions in the mind; and their conformity thereto makes one part of original rectitude. And those notions, though they are a rule to these inclinations, yet they are something ruled in reference to the will of God signified by them; and in the conformity thereto, consists another part of this original rectitude.

(2.) We have to consider the manner of this endowment. And as to this, it is much disputed among the schoolmen, whether it were natural or supernatural. I shall only lay down in few words, what I conceive to be clear and indisputable.

[1.] If by natural, you mean essential (whether constitutively, or consecutively) so original righteousness was not natural to man, for then he could never have lost it, without the loss of his being.

[2.] If by natural you mean connatural, that is, concreate

with the nature of man, and consonant thereto, so I doubt not but it was natural to him.

6. This rectitude of man's nature, could not but infer and include his actual blessedness, while he should act according to it. According to the tenour of the covenant, it could not but infer it. And consider this rectitude in itself, it must needs include it: the rectitude of his understanding including his knowledge of the highest good; and the rectitude of his will and affections, the acceptance and enjoyment thereof; as Augustine (*de civitate Dei*) in this case, *nullum bonum abesset homini quod recta voluntas optare posset, &c.* No good would be wanting to a man which a well regulated will could wish for. Thus far of the holiness and blessedness of man's first state. It follows to speak of the mutability of it, and of his fall as depending thereon.

Secondly. That man's defection from his primitive state, was merely voluntary, and from the unconstrained choice of his own mutable and self-determining will. For the asserting of this truth, take the following propositions.

1. That the nature of man is now become universally depraved and sinful. This, Scripture is full of,* and experience and common observation put it beyond dispute. It is left then that sin must have had some original among men.

2. The pure and holy nature of God could never be the original of man's sin. This is evident in itself. God disclaims it;† nor can any affirm it of him without denying his very Being. He could not be the cause of unholiness, but by ceasing to be holy, which would suppose him mutably holy; and if either God or man must be confessed mutable, it is no difficulty where to lay it; whatever he is, he is essentially; and necessity of existence, of being always what he is, remains everlastingly the fundamental attribute of his Being. James 1,¹⁷.

3. It is blasphemous and absurd to talk of two principles, (as the Manichees of old) the one good *per se, in itself*, and the cause of all good; the other evil *per se*, and the cause of all evil.

Bradwardine's two arguments: that this would suppose two gods, two independent beings; and that it would suppose an evil god; do sufficiently convince this to be full both of blasphemy and contradiction. Bradwardine *de causa Dei*.

4. It was not possible that either external objects, or the temptation of the devil should necessitate the will of man to sin. External objects could not; for that were to reject all

* 1 Kings 8. 46. Psal. 14, 1. Rom. 3, 12,—&c. cap. 5, 12, 13, &c. 1, John 5, 19, &c.

† Deut. 32, 4. Psal. 5, 4. 3. John 11.

upon God ; for if he create objects with such an allactive power in them, and create such an appetite in man as cannot but work inordinately and sinfully towards those objects, it must needs infer his efficacious necessitation of sin, being it would destroy the truth already established, that God created man with such a rectitude as that there was a sufficient ability in his superior powers for the cohibition and restraint of the inferior, that they should not work inordinately towards their objects. The devil could not do it for the same reason, having no way to move the will of man but by the proposal of objects ; yet that by this means (which he could in many respects manage most advantageously) he did much help forward the first sin, Scripture leaves us not to doubt.

5. The whole nature of sin consisting only in a defect, no other cause need be designed of it than a defective ; that is, an understanding, will and inferior powers however originally good yet mutably and defectively so. I shall not insist to prove that sin is no positive being ; but I take the argument to be irrefragable, (notwithstanding the cavils made against it) that is drawn from that common maxim, that *omne ens positivum est vel primum, vel a primo, all positive existence is either first or from the first*. And that of *Dionysius the Areopagite is an ingenious one ; he argues that no being can be evil *per se* : for then it must be immutably, to which no evil can be, for to be always the same, is a certain property of goodness ; it is so even of the highest goodness. And hence sin being supposed only a defect, a soul that is only defectibly holy, might well enough be the cause of it ; that is, the deficient cause. Nor is it in the least strange that man should be at first created with a defectible holiness ; for if he were immutably holy, either it must be *ex natura, of nature, or ex gratia ; of grace ; ex natura* it could not be, for that would suppose him God ; if it were *ex gratia*, then it must be free ; then it might be, or might not be ; therefore there was no incongruity in it that it should not be. And indeed it was most congruous that God having newly made such a creature, furnished with such powers, so capable of government by a law, of being moved by promises and threats he should for some time hold him as a *viator, traveller*, in a state of trial unconfirmed, (as he did also the innocent angels) that it might be seen how he would behave himself towards his Maker, and that he should be rewardable and punishable accordingly, in a state that should be everlasting and unchangeable : the liberty therefore of the viators and the comprehensors, Gibieuf well distinguishes into *inchoata or consummabilis*,

* τὸ γὰρ αἰ τὰυτον τῷ ἀγαθῷ ἴδιον. This is the peculiar nature of goodness. Dion. de Div. nom.

begun, and capable of being consummated; and perfecta or consummata, perfect or consummated; the former such as Adam's was at his creation; the latter such as is the state of angels and saints in glory; and as his would have been had he held out and persisted innocent through the intended time of trial.

It was therefore no strange thing that man should be created defectible; it was as little strange that a defectible creature should *deficere, revolt*. For the manner of that defection, (whether error of the understanding preceded, or inconsideration only, and a neglect of its office) with the great difficulties some imagine herein, I wave discourse about them; judging that advice good and sober, for to consider how sin may be gotten out of the world, than how it came in. Though it is most probable there was in the instant of temptation a mere suspension of the understanding's act, (not as previous to the sin, but as a part of it) and thereupon a sudden precipitation of will, as Estius doth well determine.

6. Man being created mutable as to his holiness, must needs be so as to his happiness too. And that both upon a legal account, (for the law had determined that if he did sin he must die) and also upon a natural; for it was not possible that his soul being once depraved by sin, the powers of it vitiated, their order each to other, and towards their objects broken and interrupted, there should remain a disposition and aptitude to converse with the highest good.

II. The use follows which shall be only in certain practical inferences that will issue from these truths, partly considered singly and severally; partly together and in conjunction.

First. Some inferences issue from these truths considered singly and severally. From the first we infer,

1. Did God create man upright as hath been shown, then how little reason had man to sin? how little reason had he to desert God? to be weary of his first estate? Could God's making him; his making him upright, be a reason why he should sin against him? was his directing his heart, and the natural course of his affections toward himself, a reason why he should forsake him? what was there in his state that should make it grievous to him? was his duty too much for him? God made him upright, so that every part of it was connatural to him; Was his privilege too little? He knew and loved, and enjoyed the highest and infinite good. O think then how unreasonable and disingenuous a thing sin was! that a creature that was nothing but a few hours ago, now a reasonable being, capable of God! yet sin! Urge your hearts with this, we are too apt to

think ourselves unconcerned in Adam's sin; we look upon ourselves too abstractly, we should remember we are members of a community, and it should be grievous to us to think that our species hath dealt so unkindly and unworthily with God: and besides, do not we sin daily after the similitude of Adam's transgression? and is not sin as unreasonable and unjust a thing as ever?

2. Was our primitive state so good and happy, how justly may we reflect and look back towards our first state? how fitly might we take up Job's words? (Job 29. 2, 4, 5,) O that I were as in months past;---As in the days of my youth;---When the Almighty was yet with me!---When I put on righteousness and it clothed me;---When my glory was fresh in me, &c. With what sadness may we call to mind the things that are past, and the beginnings of ancient time? when there was no stain upon our natures, no cloud upon our minds, no pollution upon our hearts; when with pure and undefiled souls we could embrace and rest, and rejoice in the eternal and incomprehensible good? when we remember these things, do not our bowels turn? are not our souls poured out within us? From the second we infer,

1. Did man so voluntarily ruin himself? how unlikely is he now to be his own saviour? he that was a self-destroyer from the beginning, that ruined himself as soon as God had made him, is he likely now to save himself? is it easier for him to recover his station than to have kept it? or hath he improved himself by sinning? and gained strength by his fall for a more difficult undertaking, is he grown better natured towards himself and his God, than he was at first?

2. How little reason hath he to blame God, though he finally perish? what would he have had God to have done more to prevent it; he gave his law to direct him, his threatening to warn him; his promise for his encouragement was evidently implied; his nature was sufficiently disposed to improve and comport with all these; yet he sins! is God to be charged with this? sins upon no necessity, with no pretence; but that he must be seeking out inventions, trying experiments, assaying to better his state, as plainly despising the law, suspecting the truth, envying the greatness, asserting and aspiring to the sovereignty and Godhead of his Maker. Had we (any of us) a mind to contend with God about this matter, how would we order our cause? how would we state our quarrel? if we complain that we should be condemned and ruined all in one man; that is to complain that we are Adam's children. A child might as well complain that he is the son of a beggar or a traitor, and charge it as injustice upon the prince or law of the land that he

is not born to a patrimony; this is a misery to him, but no man will say it is wrong. And can it be said we are wronged by the common Ruler of the world, that we do not inherit from our father, the righteousness and felicity we had wilfully lost long before we were his children? If we think it hard, we should be tied to terms we never consented to, might not an heir as well quarrel with the magistrate, that he suffers him to become liable to his father's debts? and to lie in prison if he have not to pay?

But besides, who can imagine but we should have consented, had all mankind been at that time existent in innocency together? that is, let the case be stated thus; Suppose Adam our common parent, to have had all his children together with him before the Lord, while the covenant of works was not as yet made, and while as yet God was not under any engagement to the children of men: Let it be supposed, that he did propound it to the whole race of mankind together, that he would capitulate with their common parent on their behalf, according to the terms of that first covenant; if he stood they should stand, if he fall, they must all fall with him. Let it be considered, that if this had not been consented to, God might (without the least colour of exception, being as yet under no engagement to the contrary) have annihilated the whole species; for wherein can it seem hard, that what was nothing but the last moment, should the next moment be suffered to relapse into nothing, again? Let it also be considered, that Adam's own personal interest, and a mighty natural affection towards so vast a progeny, might well be thought certainly to engage him to the uttermost care and circumspection on his own and their behalf. It must also be remembered, that all being now in perfect innocency, no defect of reason, no frowardness or perverseness of will can be supposed in any, to hinder their right judgment, and choice of what might appear to be most for their own advantage, and the glory of their Maker.

Can it now possibly be thought (the case being thus stated) that any man should rather choose presently to lose his being, and the pleasures, and hopes of such a state, than to have consented to such terms? It cannot be thought.

For consider the utmost that might be objected; and suppose one thus to reason the matter with himself; "Why? it is a mighty hazard for me to suspend my everlasting happiness or misery upon the uncertain determinations of another man's mutable will; shall I trust my eternal concerns to such a per-adventure, and put my life and hopes into the hands of a fellow-creature?"

It were obvious to him to answer himself, "I, but he is my

father; he bears a natural affection to me, his own concernment is included, he hath power over his own will, his obedience for us all, will be no more difficult than each man's for himself; there is nothing required of him, but what his nature inclines him to, and what his reason (if he use it) will guide him to comply with; and though the hazard of an eternal misery be greatly tremendous; yet are not the hopes of an everlasting blessedness as greatly consolatory and encouraging? and besides, the hazard will be but for a time, which if we pass safely, we shall shortly receive a full and glorious confirmation and advancement." Certainly no reasonable man, all this considered (though there had been no mention made of a means of recovery in case of falling, the consideration whereof is yet also to be taken in by us) would have refused to consent; and then what reasonable man but will confess this to be mere cavil, that we did not personally consent; for if it be certain we should have consented and our own hearts tell us we should, doth the power of a Creator over his creatures, signify so little that he might not take this for an actual consent? for is it not all one, whether you did consent, or certainly would have done it, if you had been treated with? Covenants betwixt superiors and inferiors, differ much from those betwixt equals; for they are laws as well as covenants, and therefore do suppose consent (the terms being *in se* reasonable) as that which not only our interest, but duty would oblige us to. It is not the same thing to covenant with the great God, and with a fellow-creature. God's prescience of the event (besides that no man knows what it is, yet) whatever it is, it is wholly immanent in himself (as also his decrees) therefore could have no influence into the event, or be any cause of it; all depended, as hath been shewn, on man's own will; and therefore if God did foresee that man would fall, yet he knew also, that if he would he might stand.

Secondly. Some inferences arise, from both these doctrines jointly.

1. Were we once so happy; and have we now undone ourselves? how acceptable should this render the means of our recovery to us? That it is a recovery we are to endeavour (which implies the former truth) that supposes us once happy, who would not be taken with such an overture for the regaining of a happiness, which he hath lost and fallen from; it is a double misery to become from a happy estate miserable; it is yet as a double happiness to become happy from such misery; and proportionably valuable should all means appear to us that tend thereto. Yea, and it is a recovery after self-destruction (which asserts the former truth) such a destruction as might reduce us to an utter despair of remedies, as rendering us incapable to

help ourselves, or to expect help or pity from others. O how welcome should the tidings of deliverance now be to us! how joyful an entertainment should our hearts give them upon both these accounts? how greatly doth *Scripture command the love and grace of Christ under the notion of redeeming? a word that doth not signify deliverance from simple misery only, but also connote a precedent better state as they expound it, who take the phrase as Scripture uses it, to allude to the buying out of captives from their bondage. And how should it ravish the heart of any man to have mercy and help offered him by another hand, who hath perished by his own? how taking should gospel-grace be upon this account? how should this consideration engage souls to value and embrace it? it is urged (we see) to that purpose, Hosea 13. 9. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help; and verse 10. it follows, I will be thy King; where is any other that will save thee, &c. And ch. 14. 1. O Israel, return unto the Lord, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Now (friends) do but seriously consider this. If you believe the truths you have heard, how precious should Christ be to you! how precious should the gospel, the ordinances, and ministry of it be! Do you complain that formerly you were not treated with? by all these God now treats with you. Now your own personal consent is called for; not to any thing that hath the least of hazard in it, but what shall make you certainly happy, as miserable as you have made yourselves; and there is nothing but your consent wanting; the price of your redemption is already paid; it is but taking Christ for your Saviour and your Lord, and living a life of dependance and holiness for a few days, and you are as safe as if you were in glory; will you now stick at this? O do not destroy yourselves a second time, and make yourselves doubly guilty of your own ruin.

2. Was our state so good, but mutable? what cause have we to admire the grace of God through Christ, that whom it recovers, it confirms? It was a blessed state, that by our own free will we fell from; but how much better (even upon this account) is this, which by God's free grace, we are invited and recalled to?

• Rom. 3. 24. &c. 1 Cor. 1. 30. 31. Eph. 1. 6, 7.
Tit. 2. 11.—14.

A
**TWO-FOLD
DISCOURSE.**

FIRST.—OF MAN'S ENMITY AGAINST GOD

**SECONDLY.—OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN GOD
AND MAN.**

Colos. 1. 21.

**AND YOU, THAT WERE SOMETIME ALIENATED, AND ENEMIES IN YOUR
MIND BY WICKED WORKS, YET NOW BATH HE RECONCILED**

OF
M A N ' S
ENMITY AGAINST GOD.

Colos. 1. 21.

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

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

I. For the meaning of it, it is evident that it is the unconverted state of man that is here reflected upon and referred unto. You that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind, by wicked works. They were so, before they were turned to God, he writes to those Colossians as to converts, to them that were saints, and faithful brethren in Christ, (v. 2.) to them that were now believers in Christ, and lovers of the saints, (v. 4.)

telling them, they sometime had been enemies, by wicked works. Before conversion, they had (as is elsewhere said) their understandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God; walking as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, (Ephes. 4. 18.) compared with the preceding verse. This is the deplorable condition of the unconverted world, they are alienated from, and enemies to God by wicked works. We are to consider what this *alienation* from God doth import. It signifies estrangement, unacquaintance with God; and that without any inclination towards him, or disposition to seek his acquaintance. The word is emphatical, it signifies people of another country, you were like people of another country. Of such a different language, manners and behaviour they that are converted are to you, and you to them; you are estranged to their speech, customs, and ways. All that is of God was strange to you, men in their unconverted state are strangers to God. Wicked men do not understand the words of the gospel. (John 8. 43.) What relates to the kingdom of God, the unconverted man dislikes. (Job. 21. 14.) They say to God, depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Man, who was originally made for the service of God, and communion with him, is now so degenerated, that he is become a mere stranger to him. The next word to be taken notice of, is *enemies*, which may seem to add somewhat to the former word alienated; there is not only no inclination towards God but there is a disinclination; not only no affection, but a disaffection. The carnal mind is enmity to God, and the effects are obvious. This alienation from God is voluntary, affected, and chosen: men in their unconverted state, are not only strangers to God, but enemies against God, and that in their minds. A most fearful case, full of astonishment, that the very mind of man, the offspring of God, the paternal mind, as a heathen called him, that this most excellent part, or power belonging to the nature of man, should be poisoned with malignity, and envenomed with enmity against the glorious, ever-blessed God! that the mind of man, his thinking power, the fountain of thoughts should be set against God, who gave him this power to think! Yet into this reason must every man's unacquaintance with God be resolved, they know not God, and converse not with him, only because they have no mind to it. That noble faculty in man, that resembles the nature of God, is turned off from him, and set on vain things that cannot profit; as also upon wicked and impure things, that render them more unlike to God, and disaffected to him. *By wicked works* which must have a double reference: to former wicked works, as done by them; and to future wicked works, as resolved on by them.

The former wicked works, which they have done, have more and more habituated their souls unto a state of distance from God. The longer they live, the longer they sin; and the longer they sin, the more they are confirmed in their enmity against God. Future wicked works, as resolved on to be done are also referred to. They purpose to live as they have done, and give themselves the same liberty in sin as before, and will not know God, or be acquainted with him, lest they should be drawn off from their resolved sinful course. For the knowledge of God, and a course of sin are inconsistent things, 1. Cor. 15. 34. Awake to righteousness, and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God. This is the condemnation, (John 3, 19.) that light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. They hate the light, because they will not have their course altered, they resolve to do as they have done, and that light, which brings with it a tendency to the obeying of God, they cannot endure. But then, as this alienation of mind and enmity, are against the light that reveals God, they finally terminate on the blessed God himself: as God is the term of reconciliation, so he is the term of this enmity and alienation. Wicked men look on God with enmity of mind, under several notions.

First. As he claims to be their Owner, when he claims a principal propriety in them, when he insists on his right in them as their Creator, as having made them out of nothing. When God owns or claims them as their Lord, that first signifies he is their Proprietor, or one to whom they belong; but they say they are their own. If we have to do with God, we must quit claim to ourselves, and look on God as our Owner; but this is fixed in the hearts of men, we will be our own; we will not consent to the claim which God makes to us. Our tongues are our own, Ps. 12. 4. Wicked men might as well say the same thing of their whole selves, our bodies, strength, time, parts &c. are our own, and who is Lord over us?

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

1. The sovereignty of God's will. We must look on God's will as absolutely sovereign, man must look on God's will to be above his will; so as that man must cross his own will, to comport with a higher will than his. But this apostatized man

will not do, and therefore he is at enmity with God; he will not submit to the will of God, as superior to his will. And then

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

Thirdly. God is considered under the notion of our end, our last end, as he is to be glorified, and enjoyed by us. There is a disaffection to God, in the hearts of unregenerate men, in this regard also. The spirit of man is opposite to living to the glory of God, every one sets up for himself; I will be my own end, it shall be the business of my whole life to please myself. Therefore when God is represented as our end, as in the 1. Cor. 10. 31. whether ye eat, or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God; and as it is in the 2. Cor. 5, 15. No man is to live to himself, &c.—The great design of our being delivered from the law, namely, as a cursing, condemning law) is that we may live to God, (Gal. 2, 19,) I am dead to the law, that I might live to God; this the unrenewed heart cannot comport with. The last and great design of all our actions must terminate on God; now self is set up, as the great idol in opposition to God, all the world over; and the spirits of men grow, by custom, more and more disaffected to God, in this respect. Again, God would be owned by us for our best good. This should be the sense of our souls towards him, so it was with the Psalmist, (Ps. 73, 25.) whom have I in heaven but thee, &c. but says the unregenerate soul, the world is better to me than God. And it is upon this account that when overtures are made of changing this state, the unregenerate mind opposes it. Thus have you this doctrine explained and opened. I come now,

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

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

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

2. This appears, in that men are wilfully ignorant of God, and are destitute of the knowledge of him out of choice: ignorant, and are willing to be so. This speaks enmity and alienation of mind more expressly and fully. That they are capable of knowing God, and yet are ignorant of him, leaves no other cause assignable; but their desiring so to be, plainly assigns this cause, (Rom. 1. 28.) They liked not to retain God in their knowledge. It is not grateful to them, (Job 21. 14.) We desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Men are ignorant willingly of that God, who made the world, and all things therein, (2 Pet. 3. 5.) For this they are willingly ignorant of, &c. They will not know God, though his visible works shew his invisible power, and Godhead, (Rom. 1. 19. 20.) Now this can signify nothing but alienation, and enmity of mind. Men are willing and industrious to know other things, and labour after the knowledge of them; but they decline the knowledge of God, and his ways, being alienated from God, through the blindness of their hearts, (Ephes. 4. 18.) This heart-blindness is chosen, and voluntary blindness, signifies their having no mind or will to things of that nature. But now the voluntariness of this ignorance of God, and the enmity that this is consequently in it, appears evidently in two sorts of persons.

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

(2.) In the unthinking generality. Of whom, yet unconverted out of the state of apostacy, it is said they are fools, as is the usual language of Scripture, concerning wicked or unconverted men; and that such fools, though they never offer at saying in their minds, much less with their mouths, yet they say in their hearts, no God; that is, not there is none, for there is no *is* in the Hebrew text. The words may rather go in the optative form, than the indicative, O that there were none! The notion is let alone, while it reaches not their hearts; if it do, they

only wish it were otherwise. This speaks their enmity the more, for the notion lays a continual testimony against the bent of their hearts, and constant practice, that while they own a God, they never fear, nor love him accordingly. And they grossly misrepresent him, sometimes as all made up of mercy without justice or holiness; and so think they need no reconciliation to him, he and they are well agreed already. Sometimes think of him as merciless, and irreconcilable; and therefore, never look after being reconciled to him.

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

4. It further appears hence, that men are so little concerned about the favour of God. Whomsoever we love, we naturally value their love; but whether God be a friend, or an enemy, it is all one to the unrenewed soul, if there be no sensible effects of his displeasure. The men of this world only value its favours, the favour of God they value not; whereas in his favour is life in the account of holy and good men, (Ps. 30. 5,) yea, they judge his loving-kindness is better than life without it, Ps. 63. 3. When men shall go from day to day, without considering, whether God hath a favour for them, or not; whether they are accepted, or not, whether they have found grace in his eyes, or not, &c. What doth this declare, but an enmity of mind, and alienation from God? If men had true love for God, it could not be, but they would greatly value his love.

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

6. That daily converse with God would cost us nothing. To have any man's thoughts full of heaven, and full of holy fear, and reverence of God &c. (which is included in walking with God) what inconvenience is in this, what business will this hinder? when a man goes about his ordinary affairs, will it do any hurt to take God with him, no business will go on the worse for it, it will not detract from the success of our affairs, 1. Cor. 7. 24. Let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God. Let your state be what it will, there can be no business in this world, but what you may do with God, as well as without God, and much better.

7. Which makes the matter much plainer, how uncomfortably do men live in this world, by reason of their distance from God, and unacquaintedness with him, Job. 35. 10. But no one saith where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night. They choose rather to groan under their burdens alone, than cry to God their Maker, as at the 9th verse of that chapter when men will endure the greatest extremity, rather than apply themselves to God, what doth this resolve into but enmity against God?

8. That men do so universally disobey God, bespeaks alienation and enmity of mind as obedience proceeds from love, so disobedience proceeds from enmity and for this I shall only instance two great precepts, wherein the mind and will of God is expressed which I mention, and insist upon (though briefly) as things that concern the constant, and daily practice of every

christian—a course of prayer to God, in secret, and—having our conversation in heaven. How express are both of these precepts, in the same chapter, the former Mat. 6. 6. the latter, ver. 19. 20. 21. Now consider, whether our disobedience to these two precepts do not discover great enmity in our hearts against God. What to refuse to pray and pour out our souls to him in secret so refuse placing our treasure and our hearts in heaven; what doth this signify, but aversion, and a disaffected heart? Let us consider each of them severally and a part by itself. We are a christian assembly, how should it startle us to be (any of us) convicted of enmity against God, under the Christian name, in two so plain cases?

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

I might also enlarge upon family prayer, but if closet prayer were seriously minded, you that have families would not dare to neglect prayer, with them too. But if either be performed with coldness and indifferency, it makes the matter worse, or more plainly bad; and shews it is not love, or any lively affection that puts you upon praying, but a frightened conscience only. And a miserably mistaken deluded one, that makes you think the God you pray to will be mocked or trifled with, or that he cannot perceive whether your heart be with him, or against him. And so instead of worshipping him, or giving him honour in that performance; you reproach and affront him; and all this while, how vastly doth the temper of your mind disagree with the mind of God. I would saith the blessed God, have a course of pray et

run through the whole course of your lives and all this that your hearts may be lifted up from earth to heaven, that your hearts may be in heaven every day, according to Matt. 6, 19. Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth; but treasures in heaven. Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also. And so we are led to the other precept mentioned before.

(2.) As to a heavenly conversation, God would not have reasonable creatures, who have intelligent spirits about them, to grovel and crawl like worms in the dust of this lower world, as if they had no nobler sort of objects to converse with, than the things of this earth; nothing fitter for the contemplation, exercise, and enjoyment of an immortal mind. The saints are finally designed for an inheritance in light, (Colos. 1, 12,) and their thoughts and affections ought to be there beforehand, that they may become meet for that inheritance. Will it do a man any harm to have frequent forethoughts of the everlasting joy, purity, and bliss of the heavenly state! How joyous and pleasant must it be! And why are we called christians, if he, who is our Lord, and Teacher, revealing his mind to us, and expressly charging us to seek first the kingdom of God, to set our affections on the things above, &c. shall not be regarded? Why is not heaven, every day in our thoughts why will we lose the pleasure of a heavenly life, and exchange it for earthly care and trouble, or vanity, at the best? Why is it? no other reason can be given, but only an alienation of our minds from God.

9. Another argument to prove this alienation, and enmity against God, is the unsuccessfulness of the gospel: which can be resolvable into nothing else, but such an enmity. The design of the gospel is to bring us into a union with the Son of God, and to believe on him whom the Father hath sent. Christ seeks to gather in souls to God, but they will not be gathered. This is matter of fearful consideration, that when God is calling after men, by his own Son, that there be so few that will come to him. How few are there that say, give me Christ, or I am lost? None can reconcile me to God, but Christ? You are daily besought, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled, (2 Cor. 5.20.) but in vain! What doth this signify, but obstinate, invincible enmity?

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

1. That God is the God of all grace, the fountain of goodness, the element of love. Why are men at that distance from him, who is goodness, and grace, and love itself? The reason is not on God's part, 1 John iv. 16. God is love, and he that dwell-

leth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. What can our so great distance from this God signify, from the most perfect, the most excellent goodness, but the most horrid kind, and the highest pitch of enmity! Did men apprehend this, what frightful monsters would they appear to themselves! This is not only a plain, but a terrible declaration of a most unaccountable enmity, on our part.

2. God is still pleased to continue our race on earth, a succession of men in this world, from age to age, made after his own image, with minds and spirits that are intelligent, and immortal; which declares a strong propension in God, towards such a sort of creatures, the inhabitants of this lower world, though degenerated, and fallen from him. Notwithstanding all their neglect of him, in former ages, yet new generations of men still spring up, capable of knowing, and serving him, Prov. viii. 31. In the foreseen height of man's enmity, this was the steady bent of his mind towards them, to rejoice in the habitable parts of this earth, and to have his delights with the sons of men. Thus also in the 2 Chron. vi. 18, do we find Solomon in a rapture of admiration, on this account: But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth, &c. And the Psalmist, ps. lxxviii: 18. That gifts are given to the rebellious (the most insolent of enemies) that the Lord God might dwell among them. How admirable, and unconceivable a wonder is this! The heaven of heavens cannot contain him, and will he yet dwell with men on earth! And we yet find, notwithstanding God's great condescension, that there is still a distance; whence can this be, but from man's aversion, and enmity of mind against God? Thus are men still requiting God evil for his goodness; God will dwell with men on earth, but men will not dwell with him, nor admit of his dwelling with them; they say to him depart from us. Job. xxi. 14. It is thus, from age to age, and generation to generation, which shews God's goodness on his part, and the enmity on man's part. See to this purpose, Ps. xiv. and liii. the beginning of each.

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

4. Consider God's large and wonderful bounty towards the children of men in this world, and the design of it, Acts xvii.

25. 26. He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, that they might seek after him, Ps. lxxviii. 19. He daily loadeth us with his benefits. He gives us all things richly to enjoy, Acts xiv. 17. God leaves not himself without witness, that he doth men good. He gives men rain from heaven, when they want it; and, when unseasonable, he withholdeth it. It is a great thing to understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, (Ps. cvii. 42.) his wonderful works towards the children of men; to understand our mercies and comforts, and what their meaning, and design is. By mercies to our outward man, God designs to draw our hearts and minds to himself. Mercies are bestowed on them that have the power of thought, to consider the end of all God's mercies; it is bespeaking, and seeking to win our hearts to himself, Hos. xi. 4. It is drawing us with these cords of a man, with bands of love; which plainly shews what the case requires, that the minds and hearts of men are very averse, and alienated from him, and therefore need such drawing.

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

reconciling sacrifice, to reconcile God's justice to us; and thereupon also, as in this context: having made peace by the blood of his cross, (ver. 20.) to vanquish our enmity, to reconcile us who were enemies in our minds—ver. 21, 22.

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

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

7. And lastly, the strivings of the Spirit, in the hearts of ministers preaching the gospel, and with the souls of men, to whom it is preached, shew that there is a mighty enmity to be overcome.

(1.) God's giving forth his Spirit to his ministers, enabling them to strive with sinners, to bring them to Christ according to the working of that power, which works in them mightily. Colos. i. 29. What need of such striving, but that there is a great enmity in the minds of people to be conquered, and overcome? Sometimes we read of ministers of the gospel weeping over souls, who, for their too intent minding of earthly things, are called enemies to the cross of Christ, Phil. iii. 18. Sometimes they are ready to breathe out their own souls towards them, among whom they labour, 1. Thess. ii. 8. Sometimes represented as travelling in birth, with them that are committed

to their charge, Gal. iv. 19. There are ministers, whose hearts are in pangs and agonies for the souls of sinners, when the things of God are too apparently neglected, and not regarded by them; and when they see destruction from the Almighty is not a terror to them; and while they visibly take the way that takes hold of hell, and leads down to the chambers of death. They would, if possible, save them with fear, and pluck them as firebrands out of the fire; the fire of their own lusts, and fervent enmity against God, and godliness, and save them from his flaming wrath. Is all this unnecessary? and what makes it necessary, but that there is a counter-striving, an enmity working in the hearts of men, against the Spirit's striving in the ministry, to be overcome?

(2.) The spirit also strives immediately with the souls of sinners, and pleads with them, sometimes as a Spirit of conviction, illumination, fear and dread: sometimes as a Spirit of grace, wooing, and beseeching; and when his motions are not complied with, there are complaints of men's grieving, vexing, quenching, resisting the Spirit, Acts vii. 51. Which resistance implies continual striving. No striving but doth suppose an obstruction, and difficulty to be striven withal; there could be no resisting, if there were not counter-striving; and hereby despite is done to the Spirit of grace. O fearful aggravation! that such a Spirit is striven against! It is the Spirit of grace, love and goodness, the Spirit of all kindness, sweetness and benignity which a wicked man doth despite unto, Heb. x. 29. How vile and horrid a thing, to requite grace, love, and sweetness with spite! As if the sinner should say, thou wouldest turn me to God, but I will not be turned! The blessed God says: Turn at my reproof, I will pour out my spirit unto you, Prov. i. 23. There are preventive insinuations, upon which, if we essay to turn, plentiful effusions of the Spirit may be hoped to ensue: for he is the Spirit of grace. When we draw back, and resist, or slight those foregoing good motions of that holy Spirit: this is despiting him. And doth not this import enmity, in a high degree? That the spirit needs strive so much, that it may be overcome, as with some, at his own pleasure, he doth, with others, in just displeasure, he strives no more, and so it is never overcome.

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

First. That ever the spirit of man, a reasonable, intelligent being, God's own offspring, and whereto he is not only a Minister

but a parent, stiled the Father of spirits, should be degenerated into so horrid, so unnatural a monster! What! to be a hater of God! the most excellent and all-comprehending good! and thy own Father! hear O heavens—and earth, saith the Lord, I have nourished, and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me, Isa. i. 2. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this! and be horribly afraid! be ye very desolate! As if all the blessed inhabitants of that upper world should rather forsake their glorious mansions, leave heaven empty, and run back into their original nothing, than endure such a sight! An intelligent spirit, hating God, is the most frightful prodigy in universal nature! If all men's limbs were distorted, and their whole outer-man transformed into the most hideous shapes, it were a trifle, in comparison with this deformity of thy soul.

Secondly. That it should be thus, and they never regret, nor perceive it! What self-loathing creatures would men be, could they see themselves! so as never to endure themselves, while they find they do not love God! but men are generally well pleased with themselves for all this. Though the case is so plain they will not see it; when all the mentioned inclinations shew it, they never charge or suspect themselves of such a thing as this enmity against God! God charges them, and doth he not know them? The pagan world, they are God-haters, (Rom. i. 30,) even with a hellish hatred, as the word there signifies. They that profess his name, are apt to admit this true of the Gentiles: but do we think our Lord Jesus did injuriously accuse the Jews too, that they had both seen, and hated him, and his father? John xv. 24. How remote was it from a Jew, who boasted themselves God's peculiar people, to think himself a hater of God! and what were they, of whom he says by the prophet my soul loathed them, and their souls abhorred me (which is presupposed, Zech. 11. 8.) and most justly, for can there be a more loathsome thing, than to abhor goodness itself! What the most perfect benignity! And those Cretians had received the Christian faith, whom the apostle exhorts Titus to rebuke sharply, that they might be sound in it; and of whom he says, that professing to know God, in works they denied him, being abominable, Tit. 1. 16, Hence is our labour lost, in beseeching men to be reconciled to God, while they own no enmity. Since this matter is so evident, that this is the temper of the unconverted world Godward, that they are alienated from him, and enemies in their minds towards him, by wicked works; it is then beyond all expression strange, that they never observe it in themselves (as the toad is not offended, at its own poisonous nature) and are hereupon apt to think that God observes it not nor is displeased with them, for it. It is strange they should

not observe it in themselves, upon so manifold evidence. Do but recount with yourselves, and run over the several heads of evidence that have been given. Can you deny you have minds capable of knowing God? Cannot you conceive of wisdom, power, goodness, truth, justice, holiness, and that these may be, either more manifest, or in more excellent degrees, even among creatures, in some creatures more than in others; but that Being, in which they are in the highest, and most absolute perfection, must be of God? Can you deny that you have lived in great ignorance of God, much of your time; that your ignorance was voluntary, having such means of knowing him, as you have had? That you have usually been thoughtless and unmindful of him, in your ordinary course? That the thoughts of him have been ungrateful, and very little welcome, or pleasant to you? that you have had little converse with him, little trust, reverence, delight, or expectation placed on him, as the object? That you have not been wont to concern him in your affairs, to consult him, to desire his concurrence? That you have not thought of approving yourself to him, in your designs and actions, but lived as without him in the world? That you have not designed the pleasing, or obeying of him in the course of your conversation? That the gospel, under which you have lived, hath had little effect upon you, to alter the temper of your spirits towards him? That if his Spirit hath sometimes awakened you, raised some fear, or some desires now and then in your souls, you have suppress, and stifled, and striven against such motions? Do not these things, together, discover an enmity against God, and the ways of God? And is it not strange you cannot see this, and perceive a disaffection to God, by all this in yourselves? What is so near a man, as himself? Have you not in you a reflecting power? Know ye not your own selves, as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Yea, generally, men never find fault with themselves, upon any such account! and consequently, think themselves, in such respects, very innocent in the sight of God, and think he finds no fault with them. Now these two things being premised, will make way for the following uses. We infer therefore,

1. That whereas it so evidently appears, that men are at enmity with God, it cannot but be consequent, that God is not well pleased with them. No one is well pleased to have another hate him. God discerns that, in the inward temper of men's minds, wherewith he is not well pleased; namely this alienation of mind from him, this wicked enmity, that is so generally found in them. They are wont to make light of secret, internal sin; the ill posture of their minds they think an harmless innocent

thing. But this he remonstrates against, takes notice of with dislike, and displeasure ; and is counterworking this spirit of enmity, not only by his word, but by his spirit of love, and power. Though he doth not testify his displeasure by flames, and thunderbolts ; yet he observes, and approves not the course and current of their thoughts and affections : though he permit them, sometimes without sensible rebuke, to run on long in their contempt of him ; yet he declares it to be wickedness : the wicked have not God in all their thoughts, Ps. x. 4. He expostulates about it : wherefore do the wicked contemn God, v. 13. threatens them with hell, for their forgetting him, Ps. ix. 17. yet sinners are apt to conclude, that God doth not see, or disallow any thing of that kind, Ps. xciv. 7. How unapt are they to admit any conviction of heart-wickedness ! though it is more than intimated to be destructive, Jer. iv. 14. Wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved : as if he had said, thou art lost if thy heart be not purged. Yea, when it is so plain in itself, that enmity against God, which hath its seat in the heart, makes a man's soul a very hell, yet they seem to think themselves very innocent creatures, when they are as much devilized, as a mind, dwelling in flesh, can be ! This is the common practical error and mistake men lie under, that they think God takes notice of no evil in them, but what other men can observe, and reproach them for. But he knows the inward bent and inclination of their minds, and spirits ; why else is he called the heart-searching God ? And knows that this is the principal, and most horrid wickedness, that is to be found among the children of men, an alienated mind from God ; and the root of all the rest. The fountain of wickedness is within a man, Simon Magus's wickedness lay in his thought ; it is said to him: repent of this thy wickedness, and pray the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee, Acts viii. 22. And when the prophet exhorts (as before) Jer. iv. 14. to wash the heart from wickedness he adds : how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee ? And our Saviour tells us : out of the heart, first, proceed evil thoughts and then all the other wickednesses, after mentioned ; murders adulteries, &c. Mat. xv. 19. And that enmity and alienation of mind, that turns off the whole current of a man's thoughts from God, is the original evil ; and, by consequence, lets them loose to every thing else that offends him, and ruins themselves. Yet when their very hearts are such a hell of wickedness (as what is more hellish than enmity against God) they are notwithstanding wont to say, they have good hearts.

2. Hence see the absolute necessity of regeneration. A doctrine, at which most men do wonder, which our Saviour inti-

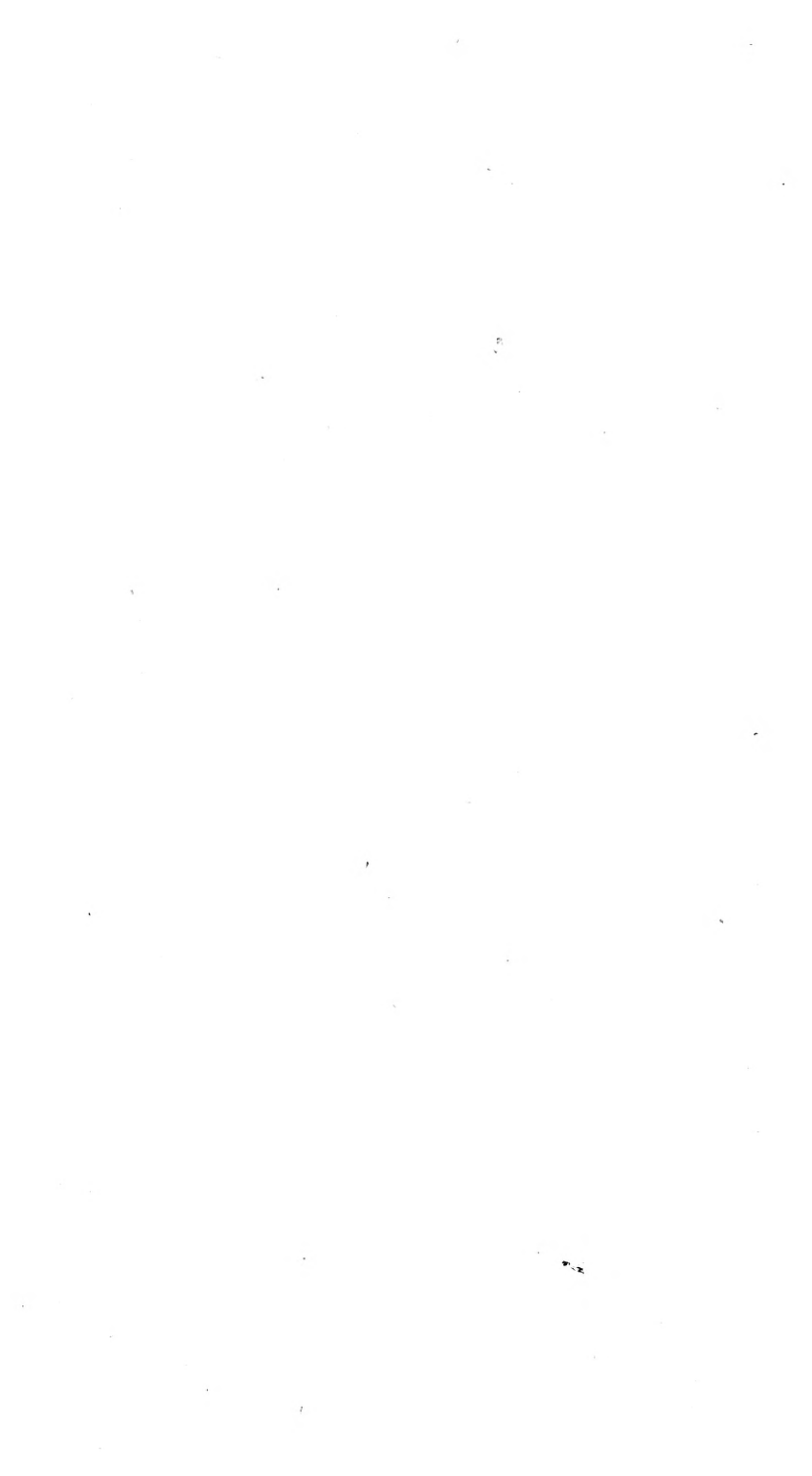
mates, when he says, John iii. 7. Marvel not at it, namely, that I said you must be born again. But who may not now apprehend a necessity of being regenerate? what will become of thee, if thou diest with such a disaffected mind Godward? Do but suppose your soul going out of the body, in this temper, full of disaffection towards the ever blessed God, before whose bright glory, and flaming majesty (to thee a consuming fire) thou must now appear; though most unwilling, and as full of horror and amazing dread! How will thine heart then meditate terror! and say within thee, "This is the God I could never love! whom I would never know! To whom I was always a willing stranger!" whose admirable grace never allured, or won my heart! who in a day of grace, that is now over with me, offered me free pardon, and reconciliation; but I was never at leisure to regard it. The love of this world, which I might have known to be enmity against God, had otherwise engaged me. It hath been the constant language of my heart to him: Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways; I must now hear from him that just, and terrible voice, even by the mouth of the only Redeemer and Saviour of sinners: depart from me, I know thee not. And into how horrid society must I now go! The things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; more glorious things than ever entered into the heart, are all prepared for lovers of God. And for whom can everlasting fire be prepared, but for the devil and his angels, and such other accursed God-haters, as I have been, Matt. xxv. 41? Recollect yourselves, consider the present posture, and temper of your souls, and what your way and course is. You care not to come nigh to God now, but love to live at a distance from him, through enmity against him from whence proceeds your departing from him and saying to him, depart from us. But another day, you will have enough of departing from God; a wicked man's life is nothing else but a continual forsaking of God, or departing from him. I appeal to your own hearts, concerning the justice of that mentioned repartee: they say now to God, depart from us, Job. xxi. 14. and God will then say to them, depart from me, Matt. xxv. 41. That man's soul must thus perish, that lives, and dies at enmity with God. Regeneration slays this enmity, and implants, in the soul, divine love. Therefore we must be regenerate, or we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, John iii. 3, 5. A man must have a new heart, and a new spirit created in him, in which heart and spirit the love of God is the reigning principle. And therefore I repeat to you: the things which eye hath not seen—and a crown of life are prepared, and promised to them that love him, 1 Cor. ii. 9. Jam. i. 12. You may yourselves collect the rest.

3. Hence take notice of the seat and subject of this regene-

ration and change. It is the mind of man, for you are enemies in your minds, by wicked works. We are to be renewed, in the spirit of our minds, (Ephes. iv. 23.) to be transformed, by the renewing of our minds, &c. Rom. xii. 2. You that have not considered what regeneration is, I tell you, it is to have your minds altered and changed; that whereas you did not mind God or Christ, your minds being changed, you savour, and delight in the things of God, Rom. viii. 5, 7. They that are after the flesh, savour the things of the flesh. The carnal mind is enmity against God. It is the mind, therefore, not as speculative merely, but as practical, and active, that must be renewed. Inquire, therefore, what change do you find in your minds? Are you in mind and spirit more holy, spiritual and serious? And are your minds more delightfully taken up with the things of God, than formerly? Till your minds are thus changed, they cannot be towards God; but will be perpetually full of enmity, against God. You will only mind earthly things, (Phil. iii. 19, 20.) with the neglect of God, and heaven and heavenly things. If ever the gospel doth us good, it must be by the change of our minds.

4. And in the last place, hence understand the absolute necessity of reconciliation with God; because you have been alienated and enemies against him, by wicked works. Regeneration cures in part your enmity, but makes no atonement for your guilt, in having been enemies; for this you need a reconciler, that could satisfy for you. What will become of the man that is not reconciled to God? If you be God's enemy, can he be your friend? And if God be your enemy, he is the most terrible enemy. How can we lie down in peace, in an unreconciled state? or without knowing whether we are reconciled, or not? Let not the sun go down this day, and leave you at enmity with God. If you have fallen out with a man, the sun is not to go down on your wrath; and is your enmity against God a juster, or more tolerable thing? O let not the sun go down before you have made your peace. And for your encouragement consider that it is the office of the Son of God to reconcile you to him. He is the reconciler, the peace-maker, the maker up of breaches between God and man. He is, if you resist not, ready, by his Spirit, to remove the enmity that lies in your minds against God; and by his blood, he causes divine justice to be at peace with you. If you find the former effect, that assures you of the latter. Bless God that he hath provided, and given you notice of such a reconciler, 2 Cor. v. 19. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Bless God that he hath sent and settled one among you, on this errand, to beseech you to be reconciled to God, v. 20. Blessed is the man, whose ini-

quities are forgiven ; and blessed is the man who can say, I was once an enemy, but now am I reconciled ; formerly I saw no need of Christ, but now I cannot live without him. How fearful a thing will it be to die unreconciled to God, under a gospel of reconciliation ! while the voice of the gospel of grace is calling upon you, return and live ; turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ? beware of dying unreconciled, under such a gospel. When you return hence, retire into a corner, and consider what a wicked enmity of mind you have had against God, and Christ ; and pray that you may be renewed, in the spirit of your mind, Eph. iv. 23. Let a holy resolution be taken up at last (after many neglects) as was by the poor distressed prodigal, after he had long lived a wandering life, (Luke xv. 18.) and onward ; I will arise, and go to my Father, &c. and you will find God a merciful Father, ready to receive you, and with joy ! Oh the joyful meeting between a returning soul, and a sin-pardoning God ! When once your strangeness, and your enmity are overcome, and you are come into a state of amity, and friendship with God ; then will the rest of your time be pleasantly spent, in a holy, humble walking with God, under the conduct of grace, till you come eternally to enjoy him in glory.



OF
RECONCILIATION
BETWEEN
GOD AND MAN.

Colos. 1. 21.

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

Verse 22.

In the body of his flesh, through death, &c.

WE have, from the former words of this text, shewn the fearful, horrid state of unconverted sinners; that as such they are alienated and enemies in their mind, by wicked works, and come now to shew, from the words that follow, the blessed state of the converted. You now, hath he reconciled, &c. Here is instance given of the happiest change that ever was made, in the case of sinful wretched creatures; and far above all our expectations, if we had not been told: that as far as the heavens are above the earth, so far, in acts of mercy, are God's ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts, Isa. 4. Otherwise, when we hear of a sort of creatures that were fallen from God, and gone into rebellion against him, that were alienated, and enemies to him in their minds, by wicked works; one would be in suspense, and say, well and what became of the business? how did it issue? what was the event? and would expect to hear, why fire came down from heaven upon them, and consumed them in a moment; or the earth opened, and swallowed them up quick. Yea and if the matter were so reported

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

I. Consider this reconciliation itself. Which that we may do with just advantage, both to the truth and ourselves, we must take heed of too much narrowing so important a subject; but take it in its due extent and compass, as comprehending all that truly belongs to it: and so it must be understood to be mutual between God and us; and to include both our reconciliation to him, and his reconciliation to us. Thus the proper import of the word, the scope of the apostle's present discourse, and the nature of the thing lead us to understand it. The word being used when two parties have been at variance, not only signifies the laying down of enmity on the one side, but to be received into grace and favour on the other; as might be shewn of the original words, that are wont to be thus rendered, if it were needful, or at this time fit. But it sufficiently appears, in the common use of this way of speaking among ourselves. And if we consider the scope of the apostle's discourse, nothing can be more agreeable to it; which is manifestly to exalt and magnify Christ, first, as Creator, affirming that all things visible, and invisible were made by him, and for him, as ver. 16. And then afterwards, there having been a rupture and breach in the creation, by the apostacy and revolt of some creatures; others also, being in an uncertain and mutable state, liable to a like failure and defection, he is further magnified, as the Reconciler of such as were thought fit to be restored, and the Establisher of such as stood, ver. 17. Now the representation of his performance, as a Reconciler, had been very imperfect, if he had designed therein only to signify a reconciliation, effected by him on one side, leaving the other unreconciled. And though it be true, that taking this reconciliation, in reference to the immediately foregoing words of this verse, you that were enemies, might seem to limit it to that one sense, as if it meant only reconciliation on our part, consisting in the laying down of our enmity; yet the following words, that shew how this reconciliation is brought about in the body of his flesh through death, signify as much for the extending of it to the other reconciliation also; namely on God's part towards us. For they plainly mean that this reconciliation is brought about by sacrifice, namely, by our Lord Jesus's offering himself upon the cross for us (as hereafter we shall have occasion more largely to shew) now a sacrifice is offered to God only, not to men, and being for reconciliation, must principally, and in the first place intend the reconciling of God to us; though it secondarily hath its great use, for the reconciling us to God, also; as hereafter we shall shew. And it is in the nature of the thing very evident: reconciliation supposing a difference and displeasure between two parties, as what hath been, it must include the agreement of both, as that which

now is. A willingness to be reconciled there may be on one side, when there is none on the other, as it is often and long between God and men; but if there be actual reconciliation, it is always mutual; unless the one party deceive, or impose upon the other, pretending to be reconciled when he is not: which, in the case between God and us, can never be; for neither can we deceive God, nor will he deceive us. Therefore we shall treat of both the parts of this reconciliation of men to God and of God to them.

First. Our reconciliation to God. And though that be proposed to be first insisted on, let none think it is therefore looked upon as deserving, or as being anyway a cause of his reconciliation to us. For as our enmity and rebellion, against him cannot do him real hurt, though it does him infinite wrong; so our love and obedience, though they are most due to him, can profit him nothing. Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself; is it a gain to him, if we be righteous? Job. xxii. 2, 3. What givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man, as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit a son of man, ch. 35, 7, 8. But by neither can we do the one or other to him. It should therefore be far from us to imagine we can procure his favour or reconciliation, by anything we can do. And know sinner, he is before-hand with thee, in the offer of reconciliation and in real willingness to be reconciled; for his offer is most sincere. When therefore out of a state of enmity, thou art brought to love him, it is because he loved thee first, 1 John iv. 19. But take this aright, that thou mayest not deceive thyself, nor wrong him. Before our reconciliation to him, his gospel truly speaks him reconcilable, and offering us reconciliation; when his offer is accepted and complied with, then his gospel speaks him actually reconciled. His offer of reconciliation shews his compassion, which is love to the miserable; herein he is before-hand with them whom he finally saves, he loves them with this love while they yet hate him and are full of enmity against him. From this love it is that he is reconcilable to them, willing to forgive all their former enmity and rebellions; if yet they will be reconciled, and turn to him with their whole souls. And this he testifies to them in his gospel; and hereby his spirit, working in and by this gospel of his grace, he overcomes, conquers their enmity, and causes them to love him, whom before they hated. But this actual reconciliation is always accompanied with delight, which is love to the amiable, such as he hath now made lovely, by transforming them into his own image, who is love, 1 John iv. 16. This is friendly complacential love, that freely converses, and holds communion

with the beloved, so that they dwell in him, and he in them, as in the same place.

It is profane therefore, and an insolent presumption for any to say, God is reconciled to me, he delights and takes pleasure in me, while they are unreconciled to him, and have hearts full of wicked enmity against him. They do even weary him with their words, when they say, every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them, Mal. ii. 17. It is an affront to his excellent majesty, a reproach to his glorious holiness and the purity of his nature, a defiance to the justice of his government, to think him well pleased, when they persist in their rebellions against him; or that he will be reconciled to them, when this is still the temper, and posture of their souls towards him. He is not a God that takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with him, he hates the workers of iniquity, Ps. v. 4, 5. Any such thought he will severely and terribly avenge, If any man bless himself in his heart, and say, I shall have peace when he walks in the imagination of his heart, Deut. 29, 19, 20. God will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man. And it is, on the other hand, a wicked, provoking unbelief, a high affront to him a giving him the lie, if one, really willing to be reconciled, do apprehend him irreconcilable, or say in his heart, God will never shew me mercy. It is as much as to say that the word of his grace is nothing but deceit, and his whole gospel is made up of falsehood. Therefore though our reconciliation to him is no cause of his reconciliation to us, yet (according to the method which he hath settled, as most agreeable to his glorious majesty, to his pure holiness, his hatred of sin, the justice of his government, and the truth of his word) we cannot say he is actually reconciled to us, till we are reconciled to him. It may be said he pities us before, and is upon gospel terms reconcilable to us, not that he delights in us, or is reconciled. And we may the better understand this, that our reconciliation is no cause of his reconciliation to us, though it go before it, inasmuch as he works both reconciliations, in and by his Christ; so the text speaks of both; you hath he reconciled—not we ourselves. And 2 Cor. v. 18. All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself, by Jesus Christ; but in this way, order, and method, that first he overcomes our enmity, changes our hearts, and turns them to him; then is reconciled to us, as believing in his Son, and accepts us in him, as the beloved one.

Hereupon therefore we are first to consider, and open to you our reconciliation to God; which we shall consider and speak of, not merely by shewing the very point, wherein it lies; but more largely, by letting you see what it comprehends in the compass

of it, or what belongs to it, and in what way it is brought about. We are indeed to consider that this, in the text "you hath he reconciled" is a historical passage, signifying somewhat past, a *res gesta*, a great thing effected and done. Whereas therefore some have taken much pains (and not to ill purpose) to write histories of nature, and give account of natural productions; we may call this a history of grace, giving some account how this gracious production is effected, and wrought on the souls of men. And for you that are reconciled, it is but to repeat to you your own story, and shew you what God hath done for your soul, in this blessed work. We might have carried the same notion backward, and in the former part have considered your case, as the history of a man's unregenerate state; but those days, I believe, you would rather should not be numbered amongst the months. We therefore go on, to consider what will be of a more grateful, as well as most useful remembrance to you; namely, how God hath dealt with you, in bringing about this happy change. And doing it, in some sort, in the way of a history, it will be the more suitable to put you in mind, in divers particulars, of the manner how it was wrought; it being usual, in historical relations, not only in short to say that such a thing was done, but more at large to relate how, and in what way it was done. Though yet we cannot certainly say, that the several things, we shall mention, were all done in that order wherein we shall set them down; for God's method may vary, or not in every respect be the same, with every one he savingly works upon. But because there are several things to be spoken which cannot all be mentioned at once, or in one breath, and some order or other must be used in reciting them; we shall repeat them, not merely as they occur to our thoughts, but also as they more aptly lie in order to one another; not doubting but if you have been reconciled to God, you will say, when you hear them, these things have been wrought in you. Or if you have not, I must say, these are things you are to look after; and must at one time find in yourselves, if ever you shall be reconciled. And so this reconciliation hath begun with you, or must begin in,

1. A thorough conviction with deep and inward sense, wrought into your hearts, of your former enmity. There must have been a charging one's self, particularly, with this matter of fact, I have been alienated from God, and an enemy to him in my mind; I see it, I confess it, thus it hath been with me, this hath been the temper of my soul, towards the blessed God! Here lies the great difficulty of reconciliation, on our part, that men are so hardly brought to see and own this; because they feel not an enmity boiling in their hearts against God, therefore

they will not yield there is any such thing. But they might take notice, they as little feel love burning in their breasts towards him. And they the less apprehend the truth of their case in this respect, because by the same external shew and appearance, by which they may deceive other men, they endeavour to cheat themselves too; that is because they sometimes bear a part in the solemnities of God's worship, and sit in an assembly as his people, hear his word, and with their mouth (*ore tenus*, or in *outward appearance*) shew much love, they therefore think all is well, though their heart run after their covetousness Ezek. 33, 31. But what can be said to that convictive query; How canst thou say thou lovest me, when thy heart is not with me? when in reference to creatures it is required that love be without dissimulation, and that we love not in word or tongue, but in deed and truth: Will an outward appearance, and shew of love, be sufficient towards the most amiable and most excellent One, the ever-blessed, heart-searching God! Let this be laid as a ground most firm and stable, that if the subject, thy soul, be capable, and the object, the ever-blessed God, be made known and set in view to the eye of the mind; if then there is not love towards him, there is hatred, What can a reasonable soul be indifferent towards God! the all-comprehending Being! and with whom all have to do! the first and the continual Author of our life and being, whose invisible and eternal power are manifest in the visible things which he hath made; so that heaven and earth are full of his glory. Towards some remote foreign prince, multitudes may be void of love and hatred alike, of whom they have no notice, with whom they have no business. Can it be so with us towards God, who is God alone, besides whom there is no other, in whom all live, and move, and have their being, who is, therefore, not far from any one of us; and whom all are obliged to take for their God, and must if they accept him not, be taken for refusers! A thing that carries with it most horrid guilt! and carries in it downright enmity; and the more heinous, when, with any, it is covered with lying lips, with the cloak of a profession, namely, that they have taken him for their God, when such as say that he is their God yet have not known him, as John. viii. 54, 55. For that ignorance must proceed from enmity, a not liking to retain God in their knowledge, as Rom. 1. 28. Of which ignorance from disaffection, if heathens might be guilty, as they were, the apostle there speaks of; much more deeply guilty are they, who being his professing people, yet know him not; as they were, whom our Lord so charges in the forecited John viii. 54, 55. For these hide their hatred with lying lips, which is much more an abomination to the Lord, Prov. x. 18. If you never so confidently pretend love to God, and he that knows all things, says I know

you that you have not the love of God in you, as our Saviour tells the Jews; Who is more likely to be mistaken? John v. 42. And can you be more confident, or more highly boast your relation to God, or your love to him, than they who were so peculiarly his people, chosen out from all nations? If you say you are lovers of God: and the Son of God, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and who searches hearts and reins, (Rev. ii. 18,) says, I know you that you have not the love God in you; how must it appal and dismay your hearts, to have his certain unerring judgment of you, thus to controul your partial, self-flattering judgment; and if this be indeed the state of the case, with any of us, and he know it to be so, it is enough for our condemnation; but for our saving conviction it is necessary that we know it too: therefore let us search our own hearts, and try them impartially, by all the several evidences, and aggravations of enmity against God, in the foregoing discourse, from p. 390. to p. 399. And to all these, I add here some enlargement, upon what was more lightly touched (as within the narrow limits of time, wherein that discourse was delivered, it could not be otherwise) p. 395. (2.) namely, disobedience to that plain, express command of our Lord: to lay up our treasure, not on earth, but in heaven, so as to have our hearts also there, Mat. vi. 19, 21. This I choose to insist upon, in reference to our present purpose, that where there is a remaining and a reigning enmity against God, there may be a thorough conviction of it, in order to reconciliation; both because as to this thing, the rule we are to judge by is so very plain in the word of God; and because the temper and bent of our own hearts, in this respect, is so easily discernible, to them that will diligently, and faithfully observe themselves.

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

cure for his redeemed, a blessed state in heaven, and to bring them thither, not to plant and settle them here on earth. They are enemies therefore, because his design, and theirs lie contrary, and oppose one another. He is all for having them to heaven, and was so intent upon that design, as not to shun dying upon a cross to effect it; they are all for an earthly felicity, and for a continual abode upon earth, to enjoy it. This is an opposition full of spite and enmity, to oppose him in a design of love and upon which his heart was set, with so much earnestness! Therefore is the carnal mind said to be enmity against God, Rom. viii, 7. even as it is death, v. 6. but to whom? not to the blessed God himself, which you know is impossible, but to us. It is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be; for that is spiritual, ch. vii. 14. and the best on earth find themselves, in too great degree, carnal; and here lies the contrariety, much more when this carnality is total. And this law is the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, which directly tends to make us free from the law of sin, and death; ch. viii. 2. which it doth when the Spirit of God prevails, and gets the victory over this carnality of mind, so that we come to walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. In the mean time, they that are after the flesh, do only savour the things of the flesh; as they that are after the Spirit, do the things of the Spirit, v. 5. And they that are after the flesh shall die, but they that by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh shall live, v. 13. Therefore we see the reason why it is above said, they that are in the flesh, or under a prevailing carnality, cannot please God; for he takes no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but that he should turn, and live, Ezek. 33. 11. You cannot please him, because the bent of your carnal mind lies cross to his saving design, you are enemies in your mind to him, for your mind is most opposite to his mind; he is for saving you, you are for self-destruction, you hate him, as you love death, Prov. viii. 36. Therefore also they that love this world, the love of the Father is not in them, 1 John ii. 15. He would have them do his will, and abide in a blessed state for ever; but while they love this world, their hearts are set upon a vanishing thing; for the world and the lust thereof must pass away and be gone, v. 17. They cannot love him, while in mind, and will, and design, they so little agree with him. And hereupon is the friendship of this world said to be enmity against God, and he that will be a friend of this world, makes himself an enemy to God, Jam. iv. 4. The design of his amity with you is disappointed and lost, therefore he can look upon you no otherwise than as enemies to him.

And now, if this be the temper of your mind and spirit, how easily, by looking into your own hearts, might you discern it?

Know you not your ownelves? 2 Cor. xiii. 5. As if it were said, it is a reproach to be ignorant or without this knowledge! What is so near you as yourselves? Do you not know your own minds? whether you had rather have your portion for ever on earth, or in heaven? whether you more value a heavenly treasure or the treasures of this earth? If you chiefly mind earthly things, how can you but know it? Do but take an account of yourselves, where are your hearts all the day from morning to night, from day to day, from week to week, from year to year? what thoughts, designs, cares, delights are they that usually fill your souls? are they not worldly, carnal, earthly? Trace your own hearts: how canst thou say, I am not polluted? see thy way, (Jer. ii. 23,) mark thy own footsteps, see what course thou hast held, years together, even under the gospel; and when thou hast been so often warned, even by him who bought thee by his blood, to seek first the kingdom of heaven—to strive to enter in at the strait gate—and told how precious a thing thy soul is, even more worth than all the world; and how fearful a bargain thou wouldst have of it, if thou shouldst gain the whole world, and lose thy soul! And if all the neglects of his warnings and counsels have proceeded from the worldliness, earthliness, and carnality of thy heart and mind, and all this is declared to be enmity against God; then cast thyself down at his foot, and say to him, now Lord, I yield to conviction; I now perceive I have been alienated, and an enemy in my mind by wicked works, though I never suspected any such thing by myself before. And know that till then the gospel of reconciliation will do thee no good, thou wilt never be the better for it, though thou livest under it all thy days: all exhortations to be reconciled to God, and to get this dreadful disease of enmity against God cured, will avail no more than physic, or a physician to one that counts he is well, and feels himself not at all sick. All thy Redeemer's calls will sound in thine ears, as if he called the righteous, and not a sinner to repentance. But that such calls might, or may yet signify the more, know that reconciliation not only comprehends a conviction of the fact, that thou hast been an enemy; but will also contain, in thy case, if ever thou be reconciled;

2. A clear and lively apprehension, with dread and horror, of the monstrous iniquity and wickedness thereof. This hath been, or must be wrought in thee. And when thou art convicted in thy conscience of thy being an enemy to the ever-blessed God, how canst thou but see thyself to be a vile and wicked creature, upon this account? This is thy ease, and thou must apprehend it accordingly, that thou art an enemy in thy mind, and by wicked works. For what can be more wicked, than to hate the God of thy life! even him who is love, and good-

ness itself in highest perfection ! What to hate the God of all grace, he that is the Lord, the Lord gracious and merciful, abounding in loving-kindness, goodness, and truth ! Bethink thyself, make thy reflections, view the face of thy soul, in the mirror of that most righteous law : thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and soul, and might and mind. And doth it not astonish thee to behold enmity filling up, in thy soul the room and place of love ! that thou findest thou hast, in thy soul, a power of thinking thoughts, but canst take no pleasure to think of God ! Thou hast in thy nature a principle of love, and thou canst love thy friend, thy child, yea thy money, and (what is worse) thy lust ; but canst not love thy God ! How fearful a case ! that when thou hast a mind and spirit in thee, made up of reason and love, it should against all reason love things less lovely, as earth and vanity ; yea even most hateful, as sin and iniquity ; but cannot love its own Father, even him whose offspring it is, and to whom alone the title belongs of Father of spirits.* How monstrous a deformity is this ! How fearful a transformation of a reasonable, immortal mind and spirit ! If thy body were wrested into never so horrid and hideous shapes, there were nothing in point of horror, comparable to this deformedness of thy soul. Nor canst thou ever be reconciled to God, till there be unreconcilableness to thyself, as thou art in this state ; and till thou be the most frightful, hateful spectacle to thyself, on this account. Thou wilt never look upon thy own carnal mind, or thy friendliness towards this world, which is declared to be enmity against God, (Rom. viii. 7. Jam. iv. 4.) with a kind, self-indulgent eye any more ; but as having in them the most amazing wickedness, such whereby a reasonable soul, an understanding mind and spirit is brought to love a clod of clay, a lump of earth, yea even sin itself, rather than the ever-blessed, and most holy God of heaven ! Let no man ever think himself in a way of reconciliation to God, till he find in his soul a very deep sense of so hateful an evil as this ; and have expressly charged himself with it, before the throne of the most high. If you find there is a difficulty in it, and that your hearts are hardly brought to it, that they fly back and recoil, and will not yield that anything so bad is to be charged upon them ; take

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

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

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

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

(1.) You have had, or must have a sight and sense of sin as sin. Many apprehend little of it besides the sound of the word, and make a light matter of it. I am a sinner, is soon said, when it is little understood what sin is, or what it is to be a sinner. But you have, or must conceive of sin, as a violation of the holy law of God; an affront to the authority of your Maker and sovereign Lord, a setting of your own will above, and against the supreme will of the most high. Hereupon you must consider, if yet you have not, what a fearful thing it is to be a sinner, and say with yourself, "O what a monstrous vile wretch am I! that was nothing but the other day, and now being raised up

into being a reasonable creature, capable of subjection to a law, to rise up in rebellion against him that gave me breath!" What to contend against him who is thy life, and the length of thy days; how horrid must this be in thy eyes!

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

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

(4.) But there must also be a deep sense too of sins against thy neighbour. For on the other hand, there are too many that are so taken up about the commands of the first table, as to overlook those of the second; that if they cannot be accused of gross idolatry, or of the neglect of God's external worship, think themselves very innocent, when in the mean time they live, as to their neighbours, in envy, hatred, malice, hateful, and hating one another; make no scruple of cozening, or defrauding a neighbour for their own advantage, or of bearing him a grudge, of harbouring thoughts of revenge against him. Whereas we are plainly told, that if we forgive not our offending brother, neither will God forgive us; and are taught to pray for forgiveness to ourselves; but as we forgive others. And that he that hates his brother, abides in death, 1 John iii. 14. Yea, and that when the law of God requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, we are obliged not only not to harm him, but to do him all the good we can, as we have opportunity, and as we are able, when we see him in distress, to relieve and help him. Especially if we see him go on in a sinful course, to admonish, and reprove him, with prudent friendliness, and not suffer sin upon him: otherwise thy righteous judge will reckon that thou hastest him in thy heart, Lev. xix. 17.

(5.) And thou oughtest to be sensible too of sins against thyself. For when God's law requires us to love our neighbour as

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

(6.) And you must labour to be sensible of all such sins against your neighbour, and yourselves, as sins, though not immediately or directly, yet principally against God himself; because he is the supreme Law-giver, and it is he, who by his law hath settled that order in the world, which by such sins you have violated and broken. Therefore doth that great penitent thus accuse himself, in his humble confession to the great God: against thee, thee only have I sinned (ps. li. 4.) reflecting upon the transgressions, by which he had highly wronged Uriah, Bathsheba, and his own soul; because there is but one sovereign Lawgiver, (Jam. iv. 19.) by whose authority only, either put forth immediately by himself, or derived to his vicegerents, all just laws are made, by which there comes to be any such thing as sin or duty in the world. Therefore you must charge yourself as having offended him, by all the sins that ever you were guilty of; though man was the object, God's law was the rule, sinned against.

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

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

(9.) Of sinful omissions, as well as commissions; you must be sensible, not only of the evil which you have done but the good that you might, and ought to have done, but which you have not done. The judgment of the great day, as it is represented, Mat. 25. from ver. 31, to the end of the chapter, runs, you see, chiefly upon the omissions of the condemned, in oppositions to the performances of them that are absolved, and adjudged to life everlasting. And before, in the same chapter, he that made no use of his one talent, is doomed unto utter darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth, under the name of an unprofitable

servant, ver. 30. that is, a wicked, and slothful servant, as he is called, ver. 26. For though, when we have done all we can, we are to count ourselves unprofitable servants, and to God we are so: yet we ought, and are capable to be profitable to ourselves, and to other men; and to God we ought to be faithful servants, though we cannot be profitable. But will you count him a faithful servant, who can only plead for himself to his master: "I have not embezzled your goods, destroyed your cattle, or burnt your house;" when yet he never did him real service? If ever therefore you be reconciled to God, you will be or have been in bitter agonies of spirit before him, in the review of your former fruitless life, and that you have lived so long in the world to so little purpose!

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

4. If Christ hath brought about, in you, a thorough reconciliation to God, this further belongs to the story of his dealings with you, as that which he hath given you to experience; or if he have not yet reconciled you, it is that which, if ever you be reconciled, you are yet to expect, namely—a deep inward apprehension and sense both of the dreadful, and due of divine displeasure towards you, for your former enmity against

him, and for all the other wickedness, that hath accompanied it.

(1.) Of the dreadfulness of his displeasure. You could no longer make light of it, or eat and drink, and sleep in quiet, and give yourself the liberty of mirth and jollity, while you still lay under it. God is said to be angry with the wicked every day, Ps. vii. 11. and to hate all the workers of iniquity. Ps. v. 5. You will count it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, when he saith, vengeance belongs to him, and he will repay it, Heb. x. 30, 31. And when you have reason to apprehend him, as lifting up his hand to heaven, and saying, I live for ever; as whetting the glittering sword, and his hand taking hold of vengeance, (Deut. 32. 40, 41.) you must have thought, or will yet think with yourself, who knows the power of his anger! Ps. xc. 11. And by how much the less you can know it, so much the more you must have dreaded it. For all the while you have been abusing his patience, long-suffering, and forbearance, not considering that the goodness of God did lead you to repentance; so long as you were despising the riches of his goodness, you were treasuring up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of his righteous judgment, Rom. 2. 4. 5. And to have treasures of unknown wrath, far beyond what you could conceive, laying up in store against you, how amazing must this be to you! Destruction from the Almighty! What a terror must that be to you, Job. 31. 23. To eat and drink under wrath! to buy and sell, to plough and sow, and all under wrath! and with a curse from God, covering you as a garment, cleaving to you as a girdle, flowing as oil into your bones, mingling with all your affairs, and all your comforts, with whatsoever you do, and whatsoever you enjoy! And to be, all the while, upon the brink of eternity, and not, for ought you know, to have a hand-breadth, not more than a breath between you and eternal woes and flames, and none to deliver you from the wrath to come! This cannot have been an easy condition, and the less when you considered,

(2.) The dueness of God's wrath and displeasure unto you, that how terrible soever it is, it is all most justly deserved. You must have been made to see and say, "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish did most righteously belong to me, as my most proper portion; to me, an enemy to the God of my life, who gave me breath and being, upon the treasures of whose bounty I have lived all my days; to whom, when he filled my house with good things, yet I often in my heart said, depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job xxi. 14. 15. And as the law of love to God, the great original law, had engaged me to keep all his other commandments

so my enmity against him, hath made me break them all, so that I have lived a life of disobedience and rebellion, all my time thus far. And though he hath offered me terms of peace, and I have been often and earnestly besought, by those that have spoken to me in Christ's stead (my bleeding, dying Redeemer and Lord) to be reconciled to God; yet I have hitherto borne toward him an impenitent, implacable heart. If there were ten thousand hells, they were all due to me, I have deserved them all.

5. Such as have been reconciled, have been brought, by believing, to apprehend God's reconcileableness to them, in and by his own Son. This also belongs to the history of God's dispensation towards them, and may instruct others, by letting them know what must be wrought in them, that they may be reconciled. It is their special advantage, that live under the gospel, that therein they behold God reconciling the world to himself, by Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. This is the sum of the gospel, that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believe in him should not perish but have life everlasting, John iii. 16. Hereby they may know and believe the love God hath to them, 1 John iv. 16. And that, though they have been alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works, yet he is not irreconcilable. This is the gospel of the grace of God, which he testifies and they are to believe, unless they will make him a liar, 1 John v. 10. And therefore notwithstanding the sense they ought to have of their having been enemies, and of the horrid wickedness hereof and of their sinful temper and course in all other respects, together with the terrors of God's wrath, and their desert of it to the uttermost; they are yet to conjoin therewith, the belief of his willingness to be reconciled. And hereby he melts and breaks their hearts, namely, by this discovery of his good will, believed; for disbelieved, it can signify nothing, nor have any effect upon them; the gospel is his power to salvation, to every one that believes, (Rom. i. 16.) and works effectually in them that believe, 1 Thes. ii. 13. So it is the immediate instrument of their regeneration, after that the love and kindness of God to men, appears, that is, so as that they believe it, he saves them by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, Tit. iii. 4, 5. And then he makes them know it is not by works of righteousness, which they have done, but by his mercy, as it is there expressed. They are not (as was formerly said) the objects of his delightful love, before their regeneration; but they may be of his pity, or mercy, his compassionate love; and this they are to believe, as the general proposal of his gospel declares it; and by the belief hereof, he conquers their

enmity, and subdues them into compliance with his good and acceptable will. These glad tidings, that he is truly willing to receive any returning soul, vanquishes their disaffection, and overcomes their hearts; makes them say with themselves, why should I still continue alienated from the God who is so gracious and merciful, abundant in loving-kindness, goodness and truth, as his name signifies (Exod. 34, 6, 7.) though he will by no means clear the guilty; that is, the obstinate, impenitent, and implacable. But if this discovery of the grace of God can find no entrance, sinner into thy soul, if it remain shut up in unbelief; or if, when he tells thee over and over, that he takes no pleasure in the death of sinners, but that they turn and live, thou wilt not believe him, but still think him implacable, and Cain-like, say thy sin is greater than can be forgiven: this hardens thy heart in enmity against him, and makes thee say, as (Jer. ii. 25.) There is no hope, I have loved strangers, and after them I will go. Therefore if ever thou hast been, or shalt be reconciled to God, as thou hast not been left in a stupid insensibleness of thy former wickedness, so thou hast been kept from sinking into an utter despair of God's mercy; thy reconciliation is brought about by thy believing his reconcileableness.

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

and that thou canst not approach him in, and by Christ, if thou be not in him :

7. Thou art hereupon led to Christ, and brought to receive him with all thy heart and soul, (John 1. 12. Rom. x, 10.) and to resign and give thyself up wholly to him, (2 Cor. viii. 5.) not knowing in thy distress, what to do with thyself, and he compassionately inviting thee, O thou weary, heavy laden soul, come unto me, and I will give thee rest, (Mat. xi. 28.) and assuring thee, that whosoever comes to him, he will in no wise cast out, John vi. 37. Thou thereupon with a humble, thankful, willing heart art brought to comply with his merciful offer, acceptest him and yieldest up thyself, no more to be thy own, but his ; and thus believing in his name, thou ownest him in his office, as the great Peace-maker, between God and thee.

8. Whereupon thou hast been brought to apply thyself, through Christ to the blessed God, and humbly to take hold of his covenant, Isa. lvi. 2. Thou hast come to God the judge of all, having come to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, Heb. xii. 23, 24. And been enabled to covenant with him, according to what he himself hath declared to be the purport and sum and substance of his covenant ; that is, if thou art reconciled, thou hast taken him to be thy only God, thy supreme and sovereign good, thy chief and only satisfying portion, (ps. xvi. 5.6.) whom thou art most pleasantly to enjoy, and in whom thou art to take highest delight, above all things in heaven or earth, (ps. lxxiii. 25) and whom thou art to believe willing, according to this covenant, to do for thee, in outward and temporal respects, what he judges fittest and best ; and for thy soul, in his own way and method, all that is requisite for thy present support, and future blessedness. And to be thy supreme and sovereign Ruler and Lord, whom thou art to thy uttermost to please, serve, fear, obey, and glorify above all other. And to whom thou must reckon it belongs, according to this covenant, to forgive thy iniquities ; and by it, as well as by natural right, to govern and dispose of thee in all thy thoughts, actions, inclinations and affairs, according to his own holy will. And thou givest up thyself absolutely, and entirely to him, to be of his people to be taught and ruled by him. This is the covenant which in thy baptism thy parents, who had nearest natural relation to thee, entered into for thee (as children do, in their parents, stand obliged to the government under which they live) but which, when thou art come to use an understanding of thy own, thou art to enter into with the great God, for thyself (as persons come to a certain age of maturity, are called to avow their allegiance to their secular rulers.) And because it is made with sinners, such as had been in rebellion against the majesty of

heaven, and therefore by a mediator, and by sacrifice; it is therefore a covenant of reconciliation, and the sacrifice by which it is made, is a propitiation or a reconciling sacrifice. If therefore Christ hath reconciled thee to God, or if ever thou shalt be reconciled, this covenant must pass between him and thee; this is to come into the history of his dealings with thy soul. And it ought to be with thee a great solemnity, and to fill thy soul with a wondering joy, that the great God, whom thou hadst so highly offended, should ever vouchsafe to covenant with thee a sinful worm! But because the manner of this covenanting is so fully set down, by Mr. Joseph Allen, and in a little treatise called self-dedication, and in another of yielding ourselves to God, I shall not further enlarge upon it here.

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

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

(1.) Where there is a thorough reconciliation, amity must be continued, care taken of giving any new offence, or the making any new breach, by not doing what will displease, and by a friendly intercourse continued and kept up. For there may be a new breach, or a new offence may be given again, either of these ways; either by breaking out into any fresh quarrel or contentions, or by breaking off friendly intercourse. As if there have been a war between two nations, when a firm peace is made, there ensues both a ceasing from hostilities, and free commerce; so if thou hast made peace with God, and hast entered into a league and covenant of reconciliation with him, thou must take great care, to thy uttermost, to sin no more; not deliberately to do any thing, that thou knowest will displease him. Thou must say, as is said in Job. 34. 32. If I have done iniquity, I will do no more. And again, thou must take great

heed of growing strange to him, of giving over, or of becoming slack or cold in thy converse with him; for when he inquires, "can two walk together if they be not agreed?" he thereby intimates, that if they be agreed, it is that they may walk together. And it is to be considered, that in the text the unreconciled state consists, not only in the enmity of the mind by wicked works, but also in being alienated from him, or strange to him; by either whereof thou givest him also cause of just offence, even after reconciliation.

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

Secondly. God's reconciliation to thee; and inquire what that includes and carries in it. But here now, because his part lies in himself, and may for some time have no discernible effects upon thy soul; therefore the account hereof is not to be

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

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

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

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

4. If any could be reconciled to God, and yet God not be reconciled to them, and they die in that state, it would be possible there might be lovers of God in hell. And what can be more absurd in itself? or more contrary to the plain word of God, that hath said; the things which eye hath not seen are prepared for them that love God, (1 Cor. ii. 9.) and that he hath promised the crown of life to them that love him, Jam. i. 12. All which you cannot but apprehend to be intolerable absurdities, and they would all follow, if upon such grounds as have been mentioned you should apprehend yourself to be reconciled to him, and yet disbelieve his being reconciled to you. Therefore having so sure a ground, upon which to apprehend he is reconciled to you, when you find you are reconciled to him; let it now be considered what his reconciliation to you imports. Wherein, as in all that follows, I shall be very brief; that this part be not too unproportionable in bulk to the former gone out before it. And here two things in the general, must be understood to be included in God's being reconciled to us.—His forgiving to us all the sins of our former state of enmity against him: and—His receiving us into a state of amity and friendship with him. How great things are both these! And if you cannot as yet with certainty conclude that you are reconciled to God, as thereupon to have a present assurance of his having thus forgiven, and accepted you; yet you are however to apprehend both these as most certainly be-

longing to their state, who are reconciled to him, so as to make you most earnestly to covet, and endeavour to get into that state; as perceiving how desirable a thing it is to have the eternal God no longer an enemy to you, but your friend.

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

And here you must understand aright what sort of pardon and forgiveness that is, when God is said to forgive; which you must conceive of, by considering what sort of enmity yours was against him. The case is not as between equals, falling out and forgiving one another; but your enmity was that of an offending inferior and subject, rebelling against your sovereign, rightful Lord, who hath both right and power to punish you. And then think how terrible punishment you deserved, and were liable to: even an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, 2Thes. i. 9. Whereupon consider what it signifies for him to forgive you: and see now whether you do not savour those words: blessed is the man, or whether the sense of your ease do not make you cry out, as those words may be read: O the blessednesses of him, whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered: O the blessednesses of him, to whom the Lord doth not impute iniquity! Of how mighty a load must it ease and disburden thy soul, to have thy offended Lord say to thee, Thou hast been sinning against me hitherto all thy days, when I have been all thy days doing thee good; thou hast done evilly against me as thou couldst, slighted my authority and despised my mercy; I could plead my rebukes against thee, with flames of fire; if I should whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold of vengeance, how soon could I ease myself of so feeble an adversary, and avenge myself of so contemptible an enemy?

But I forgive thee : Now upon thy repenting and turning to me with thy whole soul, I forgive thy ungodly prayerless life, thy having been alienated, and an enemy in thy mind by wicked works. I forgive it to thee all ! Thy iniquity is all pardoned, thy sin covered, I no more impute any thing of it to thee. What rock would not this melt ? what stony heart would it not dissolve, and break in pieces ? And what ! Canst thou now be any longer an unreconciled enemy, to such a sin-pardoning God ? Consider here more particularly,—the properties and consequences of this forgiveness.

[1.] The properties of it, as that,

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

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

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

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

[2.] The consequences of this forgiveness.

First. Cessation of all acts, that have either destruction for their end, or enmity for their principal. In the very covenant of reconciliation, God reserves to himself a liberty of chastening his reconciled ones ; yea the case requiring it, he not only reserves the liberty, but takes upon him an obligation hereunto. For he expressly declares : that if his children forsake his law,

and walk not in his judgments; then he will visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes; but that, nevertheless, he will not utterly take away his loving-kindness, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail, nor break his covenant, (Ps. lxxxix. 31,—34.) implying that otherwise his faithfulness would fail, and his covenant were broken on his part. And therefore when he deals not with a people upon covenant terms, but as cast-aways, and as people given up, he declares: I will not punish your daughters, Hos. iv. 14. And why should they be smitten any more? Isa. i. 5. And they themselves own; it was good for them to have been afflicted, (Ps. cxix. 71.) and that he had done it in very faithfulness, v. 75. And his correcting them is signified not only to consist with love, but to proceed from it; for it is said; whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, Heb. xii. 6. And those afflictions are properly punitive, as they import warning to others; but not vindictive, as tending to the destruction of themselves; but corrective, as intending their own amendment, besides warning to others, which also those that are destructive might do. But these afflictive strokes upon his own, as they intend warning to others, have the general nature of punishment in them. But they differ in their special kind, as being to themselves corrective only, not destructive, or vindictive. But upon the whole, when once he is reconciled to you, he no longer treats you as enemies; if sometimes he see cause to afflict his own, he smites them not as he smites those that smote them, Isa. xxvii. 7. Your carriage doth not always please him, therefore it is not strange, if his dealings do not always please you; but after forgiveness he intends your real, and final hurt no more.

Second. Another consequent of God's forgiving you all your sins, is his seasonable manifestation hereof to you. He may have forgiven you, and not judge it seasonable suddenly to make it known to you: he may judge it fit to hold you, some time, in suspense. And when by his grace he hath enabled you to exercise repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, whereupon you are in a pardoned state; you may yet sometime remain in doubt, whether you were sincere herein or no. And may not on a sudden, put you out of doubt, but keep you a while in a waiting posture; as that which is more suitable to his own majesty and greatness, and to your own infirm and less established condition. He waits to be gracious, and is exalted even in shewing mercy, for he is a God of judgment, and doth shew mercy judiciously, when he judges it the fittest season; therefore are they blessed that wait for him, Isa. xxx. 18. Assurance is the privilege not of all his children, but

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

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

Abraham was called the friend of God, (Isa. xli. 8.) that is, not only in the active sense, as now bearing a friendly mind towards God; but in the passive sense also, as now God hath a friendly mind towards him. And upon what account? some may think Abraham being a person of eminent sanctity, this may be said of him only upon that peculiar account. But see how the matter must be understood, from what we find, Jam. ii. 23. Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness and he was called the friend of God; this is spoken of him, not as an eminent saint only, but under the common notion of a believer; so that the same thing is truly to be said of every one that believes, with a justifying faith. So saith our Saviour to his disciples in common: ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you, John xv. 14. And—I have called you friends for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you, (v. 15.) which signifies his own friendly mind to them. And now consider what this friendliness towards them includes. It must include,

[1.] Love, which is the very soul of friendship. So our Saviour expresses his own friendliness, towards them that are his: As my Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love, v. 9. And the height of that love, v. 13. Greater love than that hath no man, that a man should lay down his life for his friends; though it is elsewhere further heightened, from

our having been sinners and enemies, (Rom. v. 8, 10,) though it was then in view to him what he designed to make of them, namely, friends to him too. And so his friendship must signify further, not love merely, but also after reconciliation, there mentioned, v. 10.

[2.] A delightful, complacential love. For such is the love of friends, a love of delight, which they take in one another; as if he had said, "Now I have overcome you, and won your hearts, I love you with that pleasantness, that delightful love which is proper to the state of friendship." So such friends are spoken to, (Cant. ii. 11.) O my dove, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance comely; and that book abounds with expressions of that import, thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse. How fair is my love! (ch. iv. 7, 9, 10, &c.) But besides what this friendship, as such, or as it hath in it the general notion of friendship, includes; consider further some particularities belonging to this friendship, as,

[3.] How infinitely condescending it is on God's part. That the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, who hath infinite fulness in himself, and could with delight live alone to all eternity, as he did from all eternity, that he should vouchsafe to take from among his own creatures, such as he would make friends of; how admirable! much more of such creatures, apostate revolted creatures, impure and vile creatures! such as he hath so much to do upon, to make them kind and holy, that they might be capable of his friendship!

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

[4.] How beneficial this his friendship to us is! many friends can only wish well to one another, have neither wisdom, nor

power really to befriend them; his friendship is most beneficial to them on whom it is placed, having all-sufficient fulness in himself to counsel, to support, to relieve, to supply them as the matter shall require.

[5.] How conversable he is with these his friends, being

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

Second. Being intimately present, with our minds and spirits. The Lord Jesus be with thy spirit, 2 Tim. iv. 22. He can be always so. The most inward friends, among men, can have no immediate access to one another's spirits; but this is the peculiar advantage of this friend, that he can enter into our very souls; nothing is shut up from him.

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

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

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

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

2. You can easily apprehend that the sins of men deserved eternal death, and that God threatened them with eternal death accordingly; for what death, but eternal death can that be, which is opposed to eternal or everlasting life? (Rom. v. 21. Rom. vi. 23.) and which is executed upon all that are not reconciled, according to the sentence of the last judgment, Mat. xxv. 46.

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

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

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

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

7. So it came to pass that our Lord Jesus suffered once, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, (1. Pet. iii. 18.) And he was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in him.

8. And hereupon when God is reconciled to sinners, he doth not only forgive them, but he justifies them, there being an equal recompence made to him; but of his own providing, and therefore to us it is most free, though it was very costly to Christ. So both these expressions, of the same thing, are put together: We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins that God might be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus, Rom. iii. 25. 26.

9. Thus God becomes reconciled to sinful men (not to every one, but to them that sincerely repent, and believe) in a just, regular, and orderly way, most becoming his excellent Majesty. For though he forgive sinners, that had affronted him, and rebelled against him; yet it is not without a sacrifice, and that of his own Son, a sacrifice of infinite value; most becoming his grace and mercy, for that sacrifice was of his own providing. Most becoming his justice, for though sin be forgiven, it is punished too; forgiven to us but punished on his own Son, who consented to bear our sins, in his own body on the tree, (1 Pet. ii. 24.) Most becoming the truth of his word, for as that said, without shedding of blood there could be no remission; the most precious blood was shed, that ever was, in order to our remission. Most becoming his infinite wisdom, that found out this way of answering all purposes; that both he might be glorified in the highest degree, and yet sinners be saved. Grace hath herein abounded in all wisdom and prudence, Eph. i. 6, 7, 8.

Secondly. We come now (having thus far seen, how Christ's dying on the cross works God's reconciliation to us) to shew also how it brings about our reconciliation to God. And here you may observe, we changed the method of speaking to this two-fold reconciliation, considered in itself, and as the effect of Christ's death. For though God is not actually reconciled to us before he hath disposed our hearts to a reconciliation unto him; yet the foundation of his being reconciled to us, is first laid in the death of his Son, or in the prospect and foresight of it; before there can be any disposition, on our parts, to such a reconciliation. And that being done, and it being thereby seen what this great sacrifice signifies to his being reconciled, whensoever that shall be; it comes, in the proper order, next to be considered which way it works, to bring about our reconciliation also. And it works, in order hereto, these two ways.

1. By preparing the ground of preaching the gospel of reconciliation, or of Christ crucified; which must first be, or have been resolved on before there could be any gospel to reveal it. In this gospel, Christ is set forth as a propitiation, through faith in his blood, (Rom. iii. 25.) And this is the proper and most apt means to work upon thy heart sinner, to persuade thee to be reconciled to God. Looking upon him whom thou hast pierced, is that thou mayst mourn over him, Zech. xii. 10. What should so melt and overcome thy heart, and make thee yield to the terms of reconciliation? But he must be represented, that he may be looked upon; and therefore is the preaching of Christ crucified, unto them that are called, the power of

God, and the wisdom of God, (1 Cor. 1. 23, 24.) the most powerful, and the wisest method; and which God, hath thought fittest to win souls, and reconcile them to himself. Therefore it is reckoned no less than a witchery, if they obey not the gospel, who have Christ set forth before their eyes, as crucified among them, (Gal. iii. 1.) which setting forth could not be otherwise, than in the gospel representation. For you know Christ was not actually crucified in Galatia, but at Jerusalem; therefore, saith our Lord himself: But I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me, (Joh. xii. 32.) This was said (as it follows) signifying what death he should die, that is, by being crucified. And this, supposing a due representation of him in the gospel, was in point of means to draw all men. But it could only be sufficient, as a means; when yet it could not be a means sufficient, if there were not an Agent, able to use it to that purpose. Therefore,

2. Our Redeemer's dying upon the cross did work towards our reconciliation, by procuring the Spirit to be given, in order to the making this most apt means effectual to this end. And if this sacrifice of Christ, on the cross, was necessary to the obtaining forgiveness of sins; it was, at least, equally necessary to obtain the giving of the Spirit, without which all the rest were in vain. When Christ had died to reconcile both, (that is, Jew and Gentile) in one body, by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and thereupon preached peace to them that were afar off, and to them that were nigh; yet it was still necessary that by one Spirit, both should have access to the Father; otherwise they would never come at him, they would still, with implacable hearts, have kept at a distance. Therefore looking upon a crucified Christ would never have had this effect, to make them mourn over him, whom they had pierced; if the Spirit of grace and supplication were not poured forth, Zech. xii. 10. They would with hard hearts have gazed long enough, on this doleful spectacle, far enough from mourning; if the Spirit of Christ were not poured forth, as well as his blood.

And do we think that holy and pure Spirit would ever have been poured forth, on so impure and unholy souls; if the precious blood of that invaluable sacrifice had not been poured forth to procure it? Those words of the apostle make this plain, (Gal. iii. 13, 14.) Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (for cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree) that the blessing of Abraham might reach further, come upon the Gentiles; that they might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Or in their being made to

believe, the ever-blessed One was so far made a curse, that you might be capable of this blessing; and by it have your own enmity overcome, and your reconciliation brought about. Therefore doth our Lord direct us to pray for the Spirit, assuring us our heavenly Father will give that Holy Spirit to them that ask him, (Luke xi. 13.) as well knowing, his pouring forth his blood had deserved it should not any longer be an enclosed blessing; but which might be communicated to Jew and Gentile, and in his way and season be poured out on all flesh. Thus doth our Lord, in the body of his flesh through death work out this twofold reconciliation both of God to you, and of you to God.

III. And now the use follows, which must have reference both,—To the mutual reconciliation itself. You hath he now reconciled, and—To the way wherein our Lord Jesus brings it about (in the body of his flesh through death) The use we shall make of the former, will be twofold (according as this reconciliation itself is twofold, namely, God's reconciliation to us, and our reconciliation to God) namely, to persuade us, from sundry considerations,—

To believe God's reconcileableness to us, and—to be willing, hereupon, to be actually, and speedily reconciled to him. And the use which is only now intended to be made of the latter, is to draw from it divers additional considerations, by which to enforce, and give further strength to both those mentioned exhortations.

First. For the use of the former, the doctrine of the reconciliation itself. In as much as we have shewn that it contains reconciliation, on God's part towards us, and on our part, towards God, we must understand,

1. That God's reconciliation is asserted here, to the persons whom the apostle now mentions; and whom he had before described as converts, saints, faithful in Christ, (ch. i. 1.) that Christ had reconciled them, that is, restored them into a state of grace, favour and acceptance, though they had been alienated, and enemies in their minds. Therefore, if when they become saints, faithful, &c. God was reconciled to them; while they were yet in their state of enmity, he was reconcileable. The plain use to be made of this, is—that we be persuaded to *believe* God's reconcileableness to sinners, offending creatures, such as had been strangers to him, and enemies; whatsoever bar was in the way, is so far removed (as we shall shew from the second head) that he can be reconciled to such enemies, and will actually be so, whensoever they turn to him. This, sinner, is the sum of the gospel, which thou art to believe

upon sundry considerations, which have their ground here ; as,

(1.) This gospel could never be intended for these only, to whom the apostle now writes. Can we think there was one gospel meant for Colossians, and another, or none at all for Englishmen? Yea when the apostle himself was converted and obtained mercy, it was for a pattern to them that should hereafter believe, (1 Tim. i. 16.) You have the same warrant to believe, that turning to God and believing on his Son, God will be reconciled to you as he was to them.

(2.) This is the gospel which God hath ever declared to the world, without excepting any person, wheresoever his written word hath come, (Isa. lv.) Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, even he that hath no money, come without money, and without price, ver. 1. Incline your ear, and come to me, hear, and your souls shall live ; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, ver. 3. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy ; to our God, and he will abundantly pardon. For my ways are not as your ways, ver. 7, 8. So the tenour of his word hath always run "turn to me, and I will turn to you" 2 Chron. xxx. 6. Jer. iii. 12. Zech. i. 3. Mal. iii. 7. And is it not to be believed ?

(3.) It is the gospel which he hath confirmed, by his own solemn oath (as I live, saith the Lord) having plainly pronounced it, (Ezek. xviii. 21, 22, 23, 31, 32.) He swears to it, ch. xxxiii. 11. and wilt thou not yet believe him ?

(4.) When, after the fulness of time, it was more expressly revealed, that there could be no turning to God, but through Christ; this was the Gospel which he himself preached, (Mark. 14. 15.) and which, when he was leaving the world, he required should be preached to all the world, (Mark xvi. 15, 16.)

(5.) It is given as the sum of all the counsel of God, (Acts xx. 21.)

(6.) It is the everlasting gospel, which is to continue through all ages, as the stated means of regenerating and renewing souls, (1. Pet. i. 23, 24, 25.)

(7.) It is this gospel which God blesses, and makes effectual to this purpose. When, herein, the love and kindness of God to men appear, then (not by works of righteousness which they have done) but of his mercy he saves them, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, (Tit. iii. 4, 5.) His mercy revealed, softens and changes their hearts; so that by the exceeding great, and precious promises, contained in this gospel, they are made partakers of a divine nature, (2 Pet. i. 4.)

(8.) But it is by believing it becomes effectual to any blessed purpose. It is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believes, (Rom. i. 16.) but to them that believe it not, it is without power, and effects nothing. It works effectually, on every one that believes, (1. Thes. ii. 13.) but hath no efficacy, when it is not believed. Much people, believing, were turned to the Lord, (Acts xi. 24.) but where there is no believing, there is no turning.

(9.) Where it is not believed, it hardens. We are therefore warned to take heed of the evil heart of unbelief, lest we be hardened, (Heb. iii. 12. 13.) and are told those hardened ones that fell in the wilderness, were such as believed not, and that could not enter into Canaan (the type of heaven) because of unbelief, (ver. 18, 19.) and that the gospel could not profit them because it was not mixed with faith, ch. iv. 2.

(10.) It is in the same context mentioned, as a most provoking wickedness, to disbelieve this gospel of his. That sin was therefore said to be the provocation, (Heb. iii. 15.) and referring to the same time, the great God says; How long will this people provoke? How long ere they believe me? (Numb. xiv. 11.) when their not believing his willingness to do better for them, than only to bestow upon them an earthly Canaan, was their most provoking wickedness.

(11.) The not believing of this gospel of his, is understood to be giving God the lie. (1 Joh. v. 10.) as believing it, is setting to our seal that he is true, (Joh. iii. 33.) But what inducement is it possible he can have to lie to his own creatures, who is himself all-sufficient; and who hath them absolutely in his power? Or what man would lie for lying sake, having no inducement? It is therefore impossible for God to lie, as being inconsistent with the universal perfections of his nature; and therefore to impute falsehood to him, is highest blasphemy. And after all this, sinner, darest thou disbelieve God's reconcileableness to thee, upon his own declared terms; when here the whole business stieks, of reconciliation between him, and thee? But there are yet other considerations to this purpose, to persuade thy *lief* of God's reconcileableness to thee, from the

Second, Head of discourse, the way of our Lord's bringing about this reconciliation, namely, in the body of his flesh through death. And here his reconcileableness must be understood to signify two things:—he possibility of God's being reconciled to sinners, and—his willingness to be reconciled. And the death of his Son upon the cross in order hereto, affords considerations to evince both.

1. The possibility of the thing, which this sacrifice proves to be possible, because it makes it so. When the apostle asserts, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, (Heb. ix. 22.) and that it was impossible the blood of bulls and of goats should take it away, (ch. x. 4.) and that therefore our Lord came to take it away, in that body prepared for him, (v. 5, 6.) he therein implies it to be impossible to be otherwise taken away, than by this blood shed upon the cross; nothing indeed being possible to God, which becomes him not. And it became him not otherwise to effect this design, and bring many sons to glory, but by the sufferings of this his Son. It was therefore not possible upon other terms, (Heb. ii. 10.) but in this way it was possible, upon the account of these several things concurring;

(1.) The rich and infinite value, and fulness of this sacrifice. The blood that was herein shed, and the life that was laid down, though of a man, yet were the blood and life of such a man as was also God, (Acts xx. 28. 1 Joh. iii. 16.) a man that was God's own fellow, Zech. xiii. 7. As it was God that was offended, so it was God that did satisfy for the offence.

(2.) He was nearly allied to us, as a Redeemer ought to be. Because we were partakers of flesh and blood, he took part with us of the same, (Heb. ii. 14. 15.) therefore as man did offend, man suffered for it.

(3.) He freely consented hereto, both to become man, and to suffer for man, Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8. Joh. x. 18.

(4.) He had no sin of his own to suffer for, as 2 Cor. v. 21. and many other scriptures speak.

(5.) He was, by a special, divine law, commissioned hereunto. Therefore his laying down his life, was in itself no illegal act. He had power to lay down his life, having received a commandment for it from the Father, Joh. x. 18. He came, having God's law, to this purpose, in his heart, Psal. xl. 6, 7, 8.

(6.) He was fully accepted herein above, his sacrifice having a sweet smelling odour with it, unto God; because satisfying his justice, it made way for the free exercise of his grace and love. Eph. v. 2. Therefore, sinner, canst thou disbelieve, or doubt the very possibility of God's being reconciled to thee, upon his own declared terms; when so extraordinary a course was taken that he might be reconciled?

2. And thou hast as great reason to believe his willingness to be reconciled, considering that this was consented to on purpose. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, (Joh. iii. 16.) Now consider, was his own Son given for what he was

not willing of? His only begotten Son! His very Image! (Heb. i. 2.) The Son of his delights, always dear to him! (Prov. viii. 30.) and who was specially dear to him, for this very reason! Joh. x. 17. Yea, and that it was the very cry of his blood from the cross: O forgive, forgive this repenting, believing sinner, be reconciled to him, O Father, for the sake of thy dying Son! and yet was he unwilling? What could induce him who is love itself, to give up such a Son, to so bitter, bloody, and ignominious sufferings, but his willingness to be reconciled to sinners? It were a blasphemy, against the ever-blessed nature and being of God, to imagine he would have his most beloved Son suffer for suffering's sake! And for what other end could it be? And there is as little reason to doubt the issue, but that, being an enemy thou wast reconciled by the death of his Son; being reconciled, thou shalt be saved by his life, Rom. v. 10. It therefore remains to press the

2. Exhortation, which you may take in the apostle's words, (2 Cor. v. 20.) We, the ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, do pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. Now that is put out of doubt, that God justly and honourably can be reconciled to you (without which it had been impossible) and that he is most unquestionably willing; are you yet unwilling to be reconciled to him? Consider both this reconciliation itself, brought about with some, You hath he reconciled. And the way of it, in the body of his flesh, through death.

(1.) Some have been reconciled, that have been alienated and enemies in their minds, by wicked works, Whereupon bethink yourselves.

[1.] Have you any greater reason to be implacable towards the blessed God, than those Colossians? why should you be more wicked enemies?

[2.] Can you better maintain your cause against God? are you more able to stand against all the power of his wrath, which you so little know? Ps. xc. 11.

[3.] Can you better bear the loss and want of the comforts of his love, while you live? To have the great God for your friend? To whom you have free recourse, and may pour out your souls daily? Upon whom you may cast all your cares? With whom you may walk in friendly love, and may converse with him every day?

[4.] Can you less need his supports in a dying hour? Will it be easy to you to die unreconciled? And afterwards to appear convicted, unreconcilable enemies before the tribunal of your Judge? And then to have no advocate, no intercessor to plead for you? When he himself must be your condemning Judge,

and shall only say, O that thou hadst known, in the day of thy visitation, the things that did belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thy eyes, Luke xix. 42, 44.

(2.) But we are further to persuade to this reconciliation to God, from the way wherein our Lord effects it: in the body of his flesh, through death, or by dying a sacrifice upon the cross. And now you know this, will ye not yet be reconciled to him? Consider,

[1.] You will herein frustrate and make insignificant to yourself, the highest demonstration that could be given of God's good-will towards you. God so loved the world, &c. (John. iii. 16.) and what could our Lord himself have done more to testify his own love? For greater love hath no man, than to lay down his life for his friends, (Joh. xv, 13.) Yea, for those that were not so before, but wicked enemies; only that thereby they might be made friends, Rom. v. 8. And what could it signify to you, to represent the divine love to you by so costly a demonstration, if it do not gain your love?

[2.] And what could be so apt a means, sinner, to break thy heart, and conquer all thy former enmity, as to behold thy Redeemer dying upon the cross for thee? They shall look upon me, whom they have pierced, and mourn, Zech. xii. 10. And I, if I be lift up, will draw all men to me; which our Lord said, signifying what death he should die, by being lift on the cross, Jon. xii. 32, 33. Now what dost thou think of thyself, if such a sight will not move thee! An earthly, carnal, worldly mind, is declared over and over to be enmity against God, Rom. viii. 7. Jam. iv. 4. But how remarkable is it, that such a temper of mind should be so peculiarly signified to import enmity to the cross of Christ? Phil. iii. 18, 19. I tell you of such, weeping, saith the apostle, that do even continue their enmity even in the face of the cross! And who even by that itself are not overcome!

[3.] If thou wilt not be reconciled, Christ did, as to thee, die in vain, thou canst be nothing the better. Think what it must come to, that so precious blood, (infinitely exceeding the value of all corruptible things; silver and gold, &c. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.) should be shed, to redeem and save such as thou, and yet do thee no good?

[4.] If thou continue to the last, unreconciled, it not only doth thee no good, but it must cry, and plead most terribly against thee. Blood guiltiness is a fearful thing! What must it be, to be guilty of such blood! if thou wert guilty of the blood of thy father, thy child, or of the wife of thy bosom, how would it astonish thee! But to be guilty of the blood of the Son of God! How canst thou live under it? If thou wert guilty of all the inno-

cent blood that ever was shed, since the creation of the world, it were not comparable to the guilt of this blood!

5. But if thou come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than the blood of Abel, as a reconciled believing penitent; thou wilt also come and be adjoined to the general assembly, to the church of the first born written in heaven, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24. O the joy in heaven that will be concerning thee! And O the fulness of thy own joy, into which thou shalt enter at last: for consider,

[6.] And in the last place, what follows in the latter part of this verse, that is, that thou wilt be presented, by thy Redeemer, holy and unblameable, and unproveable in the sight of God, as if thou hadst never offended, and never been an enemy. All thy former transgressions, that have overwhelmed thee with just sorrow, shall all be overwhelmed in that kind, paternal joy, as for the returning prodigal; This my Son was lost, and is found. And thy having been so long alienated, and an enemy in thy mind by wicked works, will all be forgotten and swallowed up in the embraces of infinite, everlasting love!

THE
RIGHT USE
OF THAT
ARGUMENT IN PRAYER,
FROM THE
NAME OF GOD;
ON BEHALF OF A PEOPLE THAT PROFESS IT.

Jer. 14. 21.

DO NOT ABHOR US FOR THY NAME'S SAKE.



PREFACE.

NO sort of men have ever pretended to religion, who have not allowed unto prayer a very eminent place in it. And so much a deeper and more potent principle is religion in the nature of man than reason, (though both are miserably perverted and enfeebled) that the former doth secretly prompt men (especially in great distresses) to pray, and expect relief by prayer, when the way wherein it is efficacious cannot so well be explicated or apprehended by the other.

And as prayer hath ever been reckoned a very principal part of religion; so hath intercession for others been wont to be accounted a very fit and profitable part of prayer.

In the general, prayer is most evidently a duty of natural religion, a dictate of nature, which every man's own mind suggests to him, or may be appealed to about it (should not a people seek unto their God? Whence that personated, eloquent patron of the Christian cause, urging for the conviction of his heathen adversaries, the common practice of people in their extremities, to lift up (even untaught) their hands and eyes to heaven fitly says of it * *Vulgi iste naturalis est sermo, that they do herein, as it were, but speak the language of nature.*

Now hereupon, the impression of that primitive law of nature, (not quite worn out from the mind of man, even in this his very degenerate state) to love our neighbours as ourselves, doth as a natural instinct, secretly prompt us to pray for others, whom we cannot otherwise help, (especially such to whom we have more peculiar obligations, who are in a more especial sense our neighbours) as (at least in our last necessities) we do for ourselves.

In which recourse to God, whether for ourselves or others, we are led by a sense of our own impotency and dependent state from a deeply inward apprehension of a Deity, that is (as Epicurus himself seems constrained to acknowledge concerning the idea of God) even

* Octav. apud Min. F.

PREFACE.

proleptical, or such as prevents reason. So that we do not, being urged by the pinching necessity of the case, stay to deliberate and debate the matter with ourselves how this course should bring relief, do but even take it for granted, that it may; by an apprehension that is earlier in us, than any former reasoning about it, and being prior to it, is also not suppressed by it, but prevails against it, if there be any thing in reason objected, which we cannot so clearly answer.

Yet, when we do bring the matter to a rational discussion, we find that in our conception of God we have the apprehension of so perfect and excellent a nature, that we cannot suppose we should be moved by any thing foreign to himself, or that we can inform him of any thing he knew not before, or incline him to any thing to which his own nature inclines him not. And therefore that though the wise and apt course of his government over intelligent creatures requires that they should be apprehensive of their own concernments, (whether personal or that belong to them, as they are in communities) and pay a solemn homage to his sovereign power and goodness, by supplicating him about them, yet that if he hear their prayers, it must not be for their sakes, but his own. Therefore also, it cannot upon strictest reasoning, but seem most dutiful to him and hopeful for ourselves, that our prayers should be conceived after such a tenor, as may be most agreeable unto that apprehension.

The Holy Scriptures, and the Divine Spirit do both aim at the recovery of apostate man, and the repairing the decays of his degenerate nature, and do therefore (besides what was necessary to be added) renew the dictates of the law of nature, the one more expressly representing them, the other impressing them afresh, and re-implanting them in the hearts of all that are born of God. Therefore, that external revelation of the mind and will of God doth direct, and his blessed Spirit, (which is pleased to be in all his children the Spirit of grace and supplication) doth inwardly prompt them, not only to pray (in reference to their single and common concernments) but to form their prayers after this tenor; which is to be seen in their so frequent use of this argument in prayer, from the name of God.

Whereupon, in a time when we are so much concerned to be very instant in prayer, not only each of us for himself, but for the body of a people, upon whom that holy name is called; I reckoned it reasonable to shew briefly the import and right use of this argument; and to that purpose have taken for the ground, the following text of Scripture.

PRAYER
FROM THE
NAME OF GOD.

Jer. 14. 21.

Do not abhor us for thy name's sake.

WHERE we have a petition and, the argument enforcing it.

I. A very serious petition, or a deprecation of the most fearful evil imaginable. Do not abhor us. The word * doth not merely signify abhorrence but {disdain : a displeasure prevailing to that degree, and so fixed, as to infer rejection, even from a just sense of honour. So some of the †versions read, reject us not, or cast us not forth, as we would do what (or whom) we despise and scorn to own; as if it were feared the holy God might count it ignominious, and a reproach to him, to be further related to such a people, and might even be ashamed to be called their God. And consequently that the following argument is used not without some suspence of mind and doubt lest it should be turned against them, whereof more hereafter. Here it is implied,

First. To be no impossible thing that God should reject with abhorrence a people once his own, or that have been in peculiar, visible relation to him. Prayer is conversant about matters of divine liberty, that is, that are not known to us to be already determined this way or that; but that may be, or may not be, as he pleases and sees fit; consistently with the settled course and order of things, not about things that he had before made ordinarily necessary, nor about things that are simply or in or-

* Naaiz Sprevit contempsit.

† Vulg. Lat. and Chald. Par.

dinary course impossible. In the former case prayer would be needless, in the latter to no purpose. We do not pray that the sun may rise to-morrow at the usual hour, or that the sea may ebb and flow, nor that they may be prevented doing so. But we must distinguish such necessity and impossibility from a mere certainty that things shall either be, or not be. We are to pray in the present case, with a deep apprehension that this is perfectly a matter of liberty with the great God, and that as he took such a people to be his, of mere good pleasure, (Deut. 7. 7. ch. 10, 15.) so it depends wholly upon his mere pleasure, that he continues the relation, when he might abandon and cast them off. It is further implied,

Secondly. That the more serious and apprehensive among such a people, do understand it (at sometimes more especially) a thing very highly deserved, that God should abhor and reject them. The deprecation is a tacit acknowledgment, that the deprecated severity was reasonably to be feared, not only from sovereign power, but offended justice. This is indeed expressed in the next foregoing words. We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee, do not abhor us, &c. So that this ought to be the sense of the supplicants in the present case, that they are herein perfectly at mercy, that if they be heard it is undeserved compassion, if they be rejected, it is from most deserved displeasure. And if it were not expressed yet the supplication must be understood to imply it. For when the great God hath vouchsafed to limit his sovereign power, and antecedent liberty by his promise and covenant, such a prayer were itself reflecting, and an affront, if it should proceed upon a supposition, or but intimate, that he should ever be inclined to do such a thing, without an excepted cause. Such as that his rejecting them upon it, might consist with his being faithful to his word: when he values himself so much upon his faithfulness, and seems even to lay his very Godhead upon it: as those strangely emphatical words import. (Deut. 7. 9.) Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them, that love him, and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations; implying that he would even yield himself not to be God, if he did not in all points vindicate and demonstrate his faithfulness. Nor indeed do we properly crave for any thing, but we therein disclaim a legal right to it, and acknowledge it to be rightfully in his power, to whom we apply ourselves, to grant or deny; we make demands from justice, and are supplicants for mercy. And with this sense the spirits of holy men have abounded, when they have taken upon them to intercede in the like case, as we see Dan. 9. 7. O Lord

righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day, &c. And to the same purpose, Ezra 9. Nehem. 9. at large, and in many other places: as though he had said: "Our only resort, O Lord, is to thy mercy: thou mightest most justly abhor and abandon us, and say to us, Loammi, ye are none of my people;" but in the multitude of thy tender compassions and mercies, do it not. It is again further to be collected,

Thirdly. That this is a thing which holy and good men do most vehemently dread and deprecate, namely, that God should thus abhor and reject a people so related to him. It is that which the very genius and spirit of holiness in the sincere, regret beyond all things for themselves. They have taken the Lord to be their God, for ever and ever; their hearts have been attempered to the tenour and constitution of an everlasting covenant, which they entered with no design, or thought of ever parting; but that it should be the ground of an eternal relation. And the law of love written in their hearts, prompts them to desire the same thing for others too; especially such to whom they have more especial, endearing obligations; and (if it were possible) that the whole body of a people to whom they are themselves united, might all be united to God upon the same terms, even by the same vital and everlasting union; and therefore also, that same divine, and soul-enlarging love; being a living principle in them, makes them have a most afflicting sense of any discerned tendencies to a rupture and separation that might prevent, and cut off the hope of his drawing still more and more of them into that inward living union, and intercourse with himself. These things it may suffice briefly to have noted from *the petition* in the text. That which I principally designed, is what we have next coming under our view, namely,

II. The argument brought to enforce it; "for thy name's sake." About which, what I shall observe, shall be with special reference to the case which the prophet refers unto, in his present use of it. Namely, that in praying for a people professing the name of God, that he would not reject and cast them off, the fit and proper argument to be insisted on is that from his own name. (see ver. 1, 9.) And here it will be requisite,—to have some very brief consideration of this argument in the general: though—we principally intend to treat of it, as it respects this present case.

First. In the general, we are to consider both what the name of God in itself imports, and what is signified by using it as an argument in prayer. And,

1. As to what is imported by the name of God, in itself

considered. We shall not trouble this discourse with the fancies of the rabbins; of whom yet one* very noted, soberly and plainly tells us the name of God is wont to signify his essence and truth, though the instance he gives, shews he means it of the Nomen Tetragrammaton (the name Jehovah) which indeed more eminently doth so. To our purpose it is obvious, and sufficient to note, that by his name, more generally, is signified both the peculiar excellencies of his nature and being, which are himself, as the use of a man's name is to notify the man. So when he is pleased himself to proclaim his own name, thus it runs; the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin. &c: Exod. 34. 6, 7. And again, that by his name is meant his glory, and most especially the honour, and reputation of his government. For so too, a man's name signifies his fame and repute in the world (as they whom our translation calls men of renown, Gen. 6. 4. the Hebrew text says only, (but plainly, meaning the same thing,) they were men of name. And if he be a public person, a prince, and ruler over others, it must more peculiarly signify his reputation and fame as such. Thus Moses designing to celebrate the unexceptionable equity, and awful majesty of the divine government begins thus: Because I will publish the name of the Lord; ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment, Deut. 32. 3, 4.

2. As an argument used in prayer, it may accordingly either signify the principle from which it is hoped and requested he should do what we desire, or the end for which. For as his name signifies his nature, which himself hath taught us primarily to conceive under the notion of goodness, mercy, love, in that forementioned Exod. 34. 7. and 1 John 4. 16. so when we pray he would do this or that for his name's sake, the meaning may be, that we request he would do it for his mercy's sake, even in compliance with himself, and as it were to gratify his own nature, which, as nothing is more Godlike, is wont to be delighted in acts of goodness towards all, of compassion and mercy to the miserable, and of special favour to them that more peculiarly belong to him. And again, as his name signifies his glory, and principally the honour and reputation of his government; so when we pray he would do this for his name's sake, we further must be understood to mean, we desire he would do it to prevent his own dishonour, to augment his glory and further to recommend himself to the world. And I conceive it must be meant in both these senses taken together, namely, that we pray he would do this, or that, both from himself, and for him-

* Maimon. Mo. Nevoch.

self, from his goodness, or indeed the general perfection of his nature, and for his glory, and that he may represent himself such, as he truly is. But some circumstances in the coherent verses, afterwards to be particularly noted, seem to intimate that the honour and dignity of his government are here more directly meant. His glory is indeed the end which he cannot but design in all that he does. For inasmuch as he is said to do all things according to the counsel of his will; Eph. 1. his will must be principally of the end, which is ever the highest and most excellent good, and that can be no other than himself, and that only as he is capable of greatening himself by his own action; which cannot be in respect of intrinsic excellency, that being already perfect and capable of no addition, therefore it must be in point of glory and reputation only. And so, as it is said, having no greater to swear by, he swears by himself. Heb. 6. 13. So having no greater to act for, it is most just, and most worthy of him, and but a Godlike owning of himself, to act only to and for himself. And then whereas, having this constant, just and holy will, he doth all things according to counsel in pursuance of it, it must signify that he ever takes the aptest, and most proper methods for the advancing of his own glory; the choosing the fittest and most suitable means to a fore-resolved end, being the proper business and design of consultation. Though that be spoken of God but allusively, and after the manner of men, who by slow degrees, and by much deliberation arrive to the very imperfect knowledge of things, which at one view he perfectly beholds from all eternity.

But also how the great God designs his own glory in all that he doth, we must take great care, be duly and decently understood. It were low and mean to think that the design of his mighty works, and accurate dispensations is only that he may fill men's minds with wonder, be highly thought of, admired, and celebrated in the world, which even a wise and virtuous man would think an end much beneath him. But the glory of his name must be understood to be primarily an objective glory, that shines with a constant, and equal lustre in all his dispensations, whether men observe, or observe it not. And shines primarily to himself, so as that he hath the perpetual self-satisfaction of doing as truly becomes him, and what is in itself reputable, worthy of him, and apt to approve itself to a right mind, as his own ever is, let men think of his ways as they please. Thus it was in his creating the world, when he had not yet made man, nor had him to look on, as a witness and admirer of his other glorious works, it was enough to him to be self-pleased that he saw them to be good, and that they had his own most just and complacential approbation. Nor is he less

pleased with himself, in his governing the world, than he was in the making of it. As also good men, by how much the more they excel in goodness, have herein the greatest resemblance and imitation of God, doing good for goodness sake, and pleasing themselves with the lustre and beauty of their own actions, shining to their own mind and conscience, and their discerned conformity to the steady rules of righteousness; without being concerned, whether perverse and incompetent judges approve, or disapprove, them. Though also, because the blessed God delights in propagating blessedness, and imparting it to his intelligent creatures, he is pleased in recommending himself, so far, to their estimation and love, as is necessary to their own felicity, wherein also he doth as it were but enjoy his own goodness, as his own felicity can only be in himself, and is pleased with the self-satisfying beauty, pleasantness and glory of it.

Yet further also we are to consider that though it be most suitable to the majesty, and the independent, self-sufficient fulness of God, to take pleasure only in the real goodness, excellency, decency, and glory of whatever he is, and doth: yet it belongs to, and becomes the dutiful affection of his people towards him, to be deeply concerned, how he is thought and spoken of in the world. Dishonourable reflections upon him are therefore as a sword in their bones. What cannot hurt him ought to wound them. Which dutiful love also cannot but make them highly covet that his name might be known, and renowned all the world over, knowing that the reproach that is no real damage, is a wrong to him; and that universal praise is his right, though it cannot be an advantage. And this love to his name they cannot more fitly express, than in praying to him. And here we are further to note that this argument, thus generally considered hath, when we use it in prayer, a twofold aspect, that is we are to consider it as an argument both to God, and to ourselves. To God, as whereby we expect to prevail with him to hear our prayers. To ourselves, as whereby we are to be urged, and excited to pray with the more importunity and confidence, so as not to faint in prayer. Thus much as to what is more general. We are now

Secondly. To consider it in reference to this present case. Where we are to shew,—how the name of God may be understood to be concerned, in his abhorring, so as to forsake a people more peculiarly related to him, and—the fit and right use of this argument in deprecating his doing so.

1. How the name of God may be understood concerned in this matter. Taking his name to signify not only his nature, and the attributes of his being themselves, but also the glory and lustre of those his attributes, especially, which are to have a more principal exercise and demonstration in the course of his

government over mankind, and more particularly, over such a select, peculiar people. It may seem greatly to reflect upon, his governing attributes, and detract from the glory of them, and consequently to lessen the honour and dignity of his government, if having taken such a people into near, and peculiar relation to him, he should grow into that dislike of them, as at length, quite to reject and cast off them, as if he now disdained the relation. That such a contemptuous rejection of this people is the thing here deprecated by the prophet, is evident (besides what hath been noted of the true import of the word rendered abhor) from other expressions in the context, that plainly speak this very sense, and shew this to be the matter about which he was so deeply concerned. Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? ver. 19. And then presently is added, to the same sense, do not abhor us, &c. As when a man's heart is full of a thing, and the sense of it abounds, he varies expressions and from the abundance of the heart, as from a fountain, the matter streams from him several ways. His iterations, and varied forms of speech to the same purpose, shew what urged him, and about what his mind was engaged and taken up. It is plain that, at this time, that which this holy man was in this agony for, was not a lighter, temporary anger, but so settled a displeasure, as upon which a final rejection was likely to ensue.

And he apprehends the name of God to be concerned in it. Which it appears also lies with great weight upon his spirit, our iniquities testify against us, but do thou it, that is, save us, as afterwards, for thy name's sake, ver. 7. And again, ver. 9. Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not. Which also shews how he understood it to be concerned, namely, as the great God was not only the common Ruler of the world, but a Governor over them, in a way, and upon terms that were very peculiar, namely, by covenant and compact. Such whereof the nuptial contract, is the usual resemblance; by which the related persons mutually pass into each others right, and whereupon, the inferior person in the relation takes the name of the superior, as Isa. 4. 1. We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel, only let us be called by thy name. So the great God entering that covenant with a people; "I will be your God, and you shall be my people," speaks of himself as conjugally related to them. Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord; and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed, forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed, desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzi-

bah; and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. Isa. 62. 4. Thy Maker is thine husband. Isa. 54. 5. Who being the governing relative, the phrase of being called by his name imports the agreed, voluntary subjection of such a people to his government, and his vouchsafing to be their Governor, upon the special terms of his own covenant, whereupon another prophet, pleading for his special favour, and protection unto this people, against their heathen adversaries, uses this phrase. We are thine, thou never barest rule over them, they were not called by thy *name*. Isa. 63. 19. Therefore this prophet understood his *name* to be concerned, if he should reject them, as it signified his honour and reputation as their Governor by covenant, which further appears by the immediate connection of these words "Do not abhor us for thy name's sake," with those that next follow, Do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us; as if he had said, "Thou hast covenanted to be our Governor, and hast erected, accordingly, thy glorious throne among us. How canst thou sustain, or endure to break thy covenant, and dishonour thy own throne! to draw a disreputation upon thy government; or cast a dark shadow upon those famed excellencies, which were wont to recommend thee in the sight of all nations as the best Ruler that ever people had; and might make the sons of men apprehend it the most desirable thing in all the world to be, on the same terms, under thy government!" Particularly of his attributes that have more special relation to his government, such as these may seem (and have been apprehended) liable to be reflected on in this case.

(1.) His power, as if he had designed to do some great thing for them, which he could not bring about, and therefore he casts them off, and will seem no further concerned for them. Or as if his power were confined within such limits, that it would suffice him to destroy them once for all, but not constantly to preserve and prosper them. So when God threatened to smite his people Israel with the pestilence, and disinherit them, (Num. 14, 12.) Moses urges on their behalf, then the Egyptians shall hear it, for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou, Lord, art among this people, that thou Lord art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day-time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people, as one man; then the nations which heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilder-

ness: ver. 13, 14, 15, 16, or rather he had said, "That thou hast peculiarly owned them, and concerned thyself for them cannot be hid. It hath made a great noise in the world, and been the common talk of all nations, and made a more special impression of awe and terror upon the Egyptians (against whom thou first tookest part with them) that thou wast usually seen face to face among them; that most extraordinary tokens of a divine presence, the miraculous pillar of a cloud by day, and of fire by night, were constantly afforded them. There is no coming off (so far and so openly hast thou been concerned for them) but this construction will be made of it, that though very great difficulties have been overcome for them, there was a prospect of yet greater, that could not be overcome, and therefore, that whereas less power was required to make a present end of them, thou didst rather choose to do that. And this consideration seems sometimes to have weighed much with God himself, as we find he is brought in speaking (Deut. 32. 26. 27) I said I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men; were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say our hand is high, &c. Whence also

(2.) His wisdom must, by consequence, be exposed too: that this was not foreseen, and considered, when he first undertook their conduct, and espoused their interest.

(3.) His goodness and benignity, his propensity to do good, and bestow favours, that it was not so unexhausted a fountain as might seem suitable to a God; and to him, whom his wonderful noted acts of favour towards that people, had made to be vogue among the nations as the only one.

(4.) His clemency and unaptness to be provoked; the great commendation of rulers: who ought to be *legum similes, likenesses of the laws*, as little moved with passions, as the laws they govern by. A thing especially to be expected in a divine Ruler, and most agreeable to the serenity of the nature of God. According not only to what men are commonly wont to apprehend of his nature, but what he had been pleased to declare of himself, as is alleged Num. 14. 17, 18. Let the power of my Lord be great intimating that to appear hurried with passions would seem an un-Godlike impotency, and it is added, according as thou hast spoken, saying the Lord is long-suffering and of great mercy, &c. Whereupon therefore

(5.) His sincerity, another great excellency in a governor, seems liable to be suspected too. That he should not be what he seemed, had given out of himself, or was taken, at least to be the import and signification of his former dispensations.

Which is the scope of Moses's reasoning, Ex. 32. 12. Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, for mischief did he bring them out to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? As if he had said, why shall the Egyptian enemy have occasion to apprehend, that God did only hide mischievous intentions towards this people, under an appearance and shew of kindness to them; that he only drew them hereby to trust in him, and commit themselves to his care and protection, that he might, when he saw his time, the more please and as it were sport himself in having deceived them, and in disappointing and destroying them. That therefore the God of Israel was not such a one as he seemed willing to be thought, nor a relation to him so covetable a thing. Or else,

(6.) His constancy, and faithfulness to himself. He may be thought, in this case more mutable, and unsteady in his own designs than is worthy of a God. Even Balaam's notion of the Deity could not allow him to think either, first, that as a man he could lie, or next, that as the son of man he could repent. Num. 23. The former he thought not agreeable to the sincerity, nor the latter to the constancy which he reckoned must belong to the nature of God. That he should appropriate a people to himself, remarkably own them by a long-continued series of eminent favours; and at length seem to grow weary of them, and his own design, and throw them off! How un-God-like a levity doth this seem to import? and how contrary to the encouragement which we sometimes find given to such a people, even from the regard he would have to his own name in this respect, The Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people. 1. Sam. 12. 22.

(7.) His righteousness in reference to his promise and covenant with such a people, or his faithfulness unto them. For, as considering only his purpose, and his having begun a design his pursuing of it is but faithfulness (or a being true) to himself and his own design; so when his purpose hath expressed itself in a promise to a people; to make it good is to be faithful and true to them. And is therefore a part of righteousness, his promise having created a right in them to whom he made it. By his purpose he is only a debtor to himself, by his promise he is a debtor to them too. Upon this account his name seems liable to be reflected on, if he should reject such a people. As the words following the text intimate. Do not abhor us for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory, break not thy covenant with us. And such is the import of Moses's plea, Num. 14. 16. Because the Lord was not able to bring

this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. Which pleading of his he himself also recites, (Deut. 9. 28.) with little variation; and implies in it, that if God should reject this people, it would turn greatly to the prejudice of his name and repute in the world, in respect of his truth and fidelity which made so great a part of his name and glory. That in his anger he neither regarded his word, nor his oath. No bond was sacred with him. Than which, what could make a prince more inglorious, and infamous? And how gladly would those more implacable enemies out of whose hands he had rescued his people, catch at such an occasion of traducing and defaming him! We see then how the name of God may appear concerned in this matter. It seems indeed in all these respects very deeply concerned, and much exposed to obloquy, if he reject such a people. Though if he should, it can never be, but upon such terms, as that all that can be objected, will appear to be but groundless cavil and calumny, and admit of easy answer as we shall see anon. In the mean time, while the matter admits of any hope, we are

2. To shew the fitness and right use of this argument for the preventing of it. We are indeed manifestly to distinguish these two things.—The general fitness of this argument to be used, and—wherein stands the fit and due use of it. As any thing else, though in itself very fit to be used for such and such purposes (as meat and drink for instance, or learning, or speech) may yet notwithstanding be used very unfitly. Therefore we shall speak to both these severally, and shew—how fit an argument this is to be insisted on in prayer, even to the purpose we are now speaking of; and what is requisite to the due and right use of it to this purpose.

(1.) That it is in itself an argument very fit to be insisted on in prayer, to this purpose, or to any other in reference whereto it is fit for us to pray, is most evident; for it is most likely to prevail with God, being an argument taken from himself, and most fit to move and affect us; for it hath most weight in it. And we ought in prayer as much as is possible, to conform our minds to God's; so as not only to pray for the things which we apprehend him most likely to grant, but upon the same grounds, and with the same design, which he must be supposed to have in granting them, and that there be but one end and aim common to him and us. We are told that if we ask any thing according to his will he heareth us. 1 John 5. 14. This is to ask according to his will, in the highest and most certain sense. For the first and most fixed object of any will whatsoever is the end: of any right will, the best and most excellent end, which can be but one. The divine will we are

sure, is ever right, and must so far as it is known be directive, and a rule to ours. Concerning the end it is most certainly known, he doth all things (as he made all things) for himself. Concerning the means and way to his end, we are often ignorant, and in doubt; and when we are, we then are to will nothing but upon condition, that it will conduce to the great and common end of all things, and do interpretatively, retract and unpray every petition in the very making it, which shall be really repugnant thereto. Nothing can move God besides. He is eternally self-moved. Our attempt will be both undutiful and vain, if we suffer our spirits to be engaged, and moved by any thing which will not be a motive unto him. Therefore no argument can be fit besides this, for his own name, or that cannot be reduced to it. But the fitness of this argument may be more distinctly shewn and discerned from the following considerations, namely, that is most suitable

[1.] To the object of prayer; the glorious ever-blessed God. To whom it belongs as the appropriate, most incommunicable prerogative of the Godhead to be the last, as well as the first, the Alpha, and the Omega; the end, as he is the Author of all things. Of whom, and through whom, and to whom all things are; and unto whom must be all glory for ever. Rom. 11. 36. So that to pray to him that he would do this or that, finally and ultimately for any thing else than his own name; is humbly to supplicate him that he would resign the Godhead; and quit his throne to this, or that creature.

[2.] To the right subject of prayer, considered whether according to its original or renewed state. According to primitive nature, or renewing grace. To primitive nature, which was no doubt pointed upon God as the last end. Otherwise a creature had been made with aversion to him, and in the highest pitch of enmity and rebellion. Since there can be no higher controversy than about the last end. And to renewing grace, the design whereof, as it is such, can be no other than to restore us to our original state; to bring us back, and state us where, and as we were, in that absolute subordination to God that was original and natural to us. Which therefore stands in repentance towards God as our end, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as our way, wherein alone we can acceptably return and render ourselves back unto him. We through the law are dead to the law, being humbled, broken, macerated, mortified by it, we are become dead to it, exempt from its execrating condemning power and dominion, that we might live to God, (Gal. 2. 19.) that a new divine life and nature might spring up in us, aiming at God, tending and working entirely, and only towards him. We have been reduced to a chaos, to utter confusion,

or even brought to nothing, that we might be created anew, with a re-implanted disposition to serve the ends and purposes for which we were first made. And therefore are to yield ourselves to God as those that are alive from the dead, Rom. 6. 13. that is, (as ver. 11.) alive to God through Jesus Christ. In him we are created to good works (that are principally to be estimated from the end) which God had before ordained that we should walk in them. Eph. 2. 10. Thus we are reconciled to God. The controversy is taken up, which was about no lower thing than the Deity; who should be God, he or we: whether we should live and be for ourselves, or him. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are past away, behold, all things are become new; and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. 2 Cor. 5. 17, 18. Hereupon this is, in prayer, the only proper genuine con-natural breath of the new creature, the most inward habitual sense of a devoted soul "To thee, O Lord, be all things, mayst thou ever be the all in all. Let the creation and all things be nothing, otherwise than in thee and for thee!"

[3.] To the Mediator in whose name we pray. Who never undertook that part of mediating between God and us, with a design to alienate, and give away from God the natural rights of the Godhead; but to assert them to the highest, to repair unto God and expiate by his blood the encroachments we had made upon them, and provide we might do so no more: that we might be forgiven what was past, and be dutiful and subject for the future. His principal design was to salve the injured honour and dignity of the divine government, and to reconcile therewith our impunity, and felicity, to make them consist. He was therefore to redeem us to God by his blood, Rev. 5. 9. How immodest, and absurd a confidence were it, for any to make use of the Mediator's name in prayer against his principal and most important design?

[4.] To the Spirit of prayer who, we are told (Rom. 8. 27.) makes intercession for the saints *κατὰ Θεου*. We read *according to the will of God*, but no more is in the text than *according to God*, that is, in subserviency to him, and his interest, so as that in prayer, by the dictate of that Spirit, they supremely mind the things of God, and are most intent upon his concerns, and upon their own only in subordination to his. As it may well be supposed his own Spirit will be true to him, and not act the hearts which it governs, otherwise; and that the prayers that are from himself, and of his own inspiring, will be most entirely loyal, and import nothing but duty and devotedness to him.

[5.] To the most perfect model and platform of prayer given

us by our Lord himself. In which the first place is given to the petition, Hallowed be thy name, and the two next are about God's concernments, before any are mentioned of our own. So that the things we are to desire, are digested into two tables, as the decalogue is containing the things we are to do. And those that respect God (as was fit) set first.

[6.] To the constant tenour of the prayers of holy men in Scripture. We have seen how earnestly Moses presses this argument in the mentioned places, Exod. 32. and Num. 14. And so doth Samuel express his confidence in it, when he promises, upon their desire, to pray for the trembling people of Israel. 1. Sam. 12.22, 23. The Lord will not forsake his people *for his great name's sake*, because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people. Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for you. And this was a pair whom God hath himself dignified as persons of great excellency in prayer, and whose prayers he would have a value for, if for any man's. Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, &c. Jer. 15. 1. Thus also doth Joshua insist, upon occasion of that rebuke Israel met with before Ai. Josh. 7. 8. 9. O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies? For the Canaanites, and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name? And so doth Daniel plead (one of a famous triad too, of potent wrestlers in prayer. Ezek. 14. 14.) O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do: defer not for thine own sake, O my God; for thy city and thy people *are called by thy name*. Dan. 9. 19.

[7.] To the highest example and pattern of prayer (fit to be mentioned apart) our Lord himself; who, in some of his last agonies, praying, Father save me from this hour, represses that innocent voice. But therefore came I to this hour, and adds Father glorify thy name, (Joh. 12. 27. 28.) intimating that the sum of his desires did resolve into that one thing, and contented to suffer what was most grievous to himself that so, that might be done which should be finally most honourable to that great name.

[8.] To the design and end of prayer, which is partly and principally to be considered as an act of worship, a homage to the great God, and so the design of it is to honour him. And partly as a means, or way of obtaining for ourselves the good things we pray for, which therefore is another, but an inferior end of prayer. Whether we consider it under the one notion, or the other, or propound to ourselves the one or the other end in praying; it is most agreeable to pray after this tenour, and to insist most upon this argument in prayer.

First, Do we intend prayer as a homage to the great God, and to give him his due glory in praying to him? How fitly doth it fall in with our design, when not only our praying itself but the matter we chiefly pray for have the same scope and end. We pray that we may glorify God. And the thing we more principally desire of him in prayer, is that he would glorify himself, or that his name be glorified. And square all other desires by this measure, desiring nothing else but what may be, or as it is subservient hereto. And

Secondly, If we intend and design any thing of advantage to ourselves; we can only expect to be heard, and to obtain it upon this ground. The great God deals plainly with us in this, and hath expressly declared that if he hear, and graciously answer us, it will only be upon this consideration, as is often inculcated, Ezekiel 36. 22. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy *name's* sake, And I will sanctify my great *name*, which was profaned among the heathen, and again, Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. ver. 32. This every way then appears a most fit argument to be insisted on in prayer; and to this purpose as well as to any other; many of the instances mentioned from Scripture, having an express and particular reference to this very case, of praying for a people related to God, and upon whom his name was called. It remains then to shew

(2.) What is requisite to the right and due use of this argument unto this purpose. Where we may sum up all in two words, sincerity and submission. The former whereof belongs to this case in common with all others, wherein we can use this argument, or, which is all one, wherein we can pray at all. The other hath somewhat a more peculiar reference to this case considered apart by itself. And indeed that the one and the other of these are requisite in the use of this argument, are both of them corollaries from the truth itself we have been hitherto insisting on, and that have the very substance and spirit of it in them. For if this be an argument fit to be used in prayer at all, it is obvious to collect, that it ought to be used with great sincerity in any case, and with much submission, especially, in such a case as this.

[1.] It is requisite we use this argument with sincerity, that is, that we have a sense in our hearts correspondent to the use of it, or that the impression be deeply inwrought into our spirits of the glorious excellency of the name of God. So as it be

really the most desirable thing in our eyes, that it be magnified and rendered most glorious whatsoever becomes of us, or of any people or nation under heaven. Many have learned to use the words "for thy name's sake," as a *formula, a plausible phrase*, a customary, fashionable form of speech, when first, there is no inward sense in their hearts that doth *subesse, lies under* the expression, so as that with them it can be said to signify any thing, or have any meaning at all. Or, secondly, they may have much another meaning from what these words do import, a very low, self-regarding one. As when in praying for a people that bear this name, of whom themselves are a part, these words are in their mouths, but their hearts are really solicitous for nothing but their own little concerns, their wealth, and peace, and ease, and fleshy accommodations. Apprehending a change of religion cannot fall out among such a people, but in conjunction with what may be dangerous to themselves in these respects: Whereupon it may fall out that they will pray earnestly, cry aloud, be full of concern, vehemently importunate, and all the noise and cry, mean nothing but their own corn, wine, and oil. They mention the name of the Lord, but not in truth. It appears the servants of God in the use of this argument have been touched in their very souls with so deep and quick a sense of the dignity and honour of the divine name, that nothing else hath seemed considerable with them, or worth the regarding besides: As in those pathetic expostulations, "What wilt thou do to thy great name? What will the Egyptians say, &c.?" This alone, apart from their own concerns, was the weighty argument with them. For it weighed nothing with Moses on the contrary, to be told, "I will make of thee a great nation." To have himself never so glorious a name, to be spread in the world and transmitted to all after-ages as the root and father of a mighty people, was a light thing in comparison of the injury and dis-reputation that would be done to God's own name, if he should desert or destroy this people. Or, thirdly, they may have a very wicked meaning. The name of God may be invoked, religious solemnities used as a pretence and colour to flagitious actions. *In nomine Domini* —&c. *in the name of the Lord*. Most execrable villainies have been prefaced with that sacred, adorable name. As when a fast was proclaimed, but a rapine upon Naboth's vineyard was the thing designed. And the awful name of God was indifferently used in prayer and in perjury to serve the same vile purpose. In which soever of those degrees this venerable name is *insincerely* mentioned, we ought to account a great requisite is wanting to a right use of it as an argument in prayer. And

should consider both the absurdity and the iniquity of our so misusing it.

First. The absurdity, for who can reasonably think him capable of hearing our prayers, whom at the same time he thinks incapable of knowing our hearts? Am I consistent with myself when I invoke, worship, trust in him as a God, whom I think I can impose upon by a false shew? Is it likely, if I can deceive him, that he can help and succour me?

Secondly. The iniquity. For this can be no low (though it be not the peculiar) sense of taking the name of the Lord our God in vain. And we know with what awful words that great precept is enforced. The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Nor can any man devise to put a greater affront upon him than to approach him with insincerity. For it is to use him as a senseless idol, and signifies as if I counted him as the vanities of the Gentiles, one of their inanimate or brutal gods; denies his omniscience to discern, and his justice and power to revenge the indignity, all at once. And what now is to be expected from such a prayer wherein I both fight with myself and him at the same time. With myself, for the same object that I worship, I affront in the same act, and with him; for my worship is but seeming, and the affront real.

Such a disagreement with myself were enough to blast my prayer. The ἀνὴρ διψυχος, the man with two souls, Jam. 1. the double-minded man is said to be ἀκάλυκτος, *unstable (inconsistent with himself* the word signifies) and let not such a man think saith the apostle, that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. Much more when his prayer is not only not acceptable to God, but offensive. And by which he is so far from pleasing that he provokes.

It is then of unspeakable concernment to us in the use of this argument, that we well understand ourselves. Let us search our hearts. And see that we mean as we speak, that we do not pretend a concernedness, and zeal for the name of God, when he that knows all things, knows that we lie; and that we do but flatter him with our mouth, and lie unto him with our tongues when our heart is not right with him. Ps. 78. 36, 37. That we do not seem to be in great perplexity about the name and glory of God, when we are quite unconcerned what becomes of his name, are only solicitous lest we should suffer ourselves, afraid of being undone, of losing our estates, or of being driven from our dwellings, or perhaps but of being abridged somewhat of our conveniencies, and more delectable enjoyments. As if (not the fortunes of Cesar, and the empire but) the mighty and all comprehensive name of the great Lord of heaven and

earth did depend upon our being rich or quiet, and at our ease, and having our sense and fancy gratified. As if the heavens rested upon our shoulders, and the frame of the universe were sustained by us, who ourselves need such pitiful supports, lean upon shadows, and if they fail us are ready to sink and drop into nothing!

[2.] Submission is highly requisite especially in a case of this nature, that is, we are to submit to his judgment the disposal both of his concernments, which this argument directly intends, and our own which we are too apt, indirectly to connect with his, so as to be more principally solicitous about them.

First. His concernment in this case must (as is fit) be submitted with all humble deference to his own judgment, it being really a doubtful case, not whether it be a desirable thing, that the name and honour of God should be preserved and advanced, or whether we should desire it? But whether his continuing such a people in visible relation to himself, or rejecting and casting them off, will be more honourable and glorious to him? Where the doubt lies, there must be the submission, that is, this matter must be referred to himself, it being such as whereof he only is the competent judge and not we. The thing to be judged of, is not whether occasion may not be taken by men of short discourse, and of profane minds, to think and speak reflectingly of such a piece of providence, that is, if a people whom God had long visibly owned and favoured should be, at length, rejected with detestation, and exposed to ruin. It is like, the heathen nations were very apt so to insult, when God did finally abandon and give up that people of the Jews, and make them cease at once to be his people, and any people at all. As we know they did before, when they gained any temporary advantage upon them, upon their being able to spoil their country, to reduce them to some distress; and straiten their chief city with a siege, as if they had them totally in their power, they presently draw the God of Israel into an ignominious comparison with the fictitious deities of other vanquished countries: the gods of Hamath, Arphad, Sepharvaim, Isa. 36. 19. (who are also stiled their kings as is thought, 2 King. 19. 13. * though the destruction of their kings may also admit to be meant as an argument of the impotency of their gods. And they are mentioned distinctly, as perhaps was not observed, in both those cited books of Scripture where that history is more largely recorded; 2 Kings 18. 34. ch. 19. 13. and Isa. 36. 19. ch. 37. 12, 13.) as if he were able to do no more for the protection of his people, than they for their worshippers. And so, for a few moments, he remains

* Selden. de Diis Syris. 2. Cap 16.

under the censure of being an impotent God. But that momentary cloud he knew how soon to dispel, and make his glory shine out so much the more brightly unto, not only a convincing, but an amazing confutation of so prophane folly; yielded the short sighted adversary a temporary victory, which he could presently redeem out of their hands, that he might the more gloriously triumph in their surprising, unfear'd ruin; and so let them and all the world see that those advantages were not extorted, but permitted upon considerations that lay out of their reach to comprehend; and that they proceeded not from want of power, but the excellency of other perfections, which would in due time be understood by such as were capable of making a right judgment. His wisdom, holiness and justice which appeared in putting a people so related to him, under seasonable rebukes and discountenanc'e, when the state of the case, and the methods of his government required it. And so much the rather because they were so related. According to that you only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. Amos. 3. 2. The matter here to be disputed, was not whether it did not occasion a present dishonour to the God of Israel, to let the enemy have such a seeming ground of spiteful suggestions concerning him, as if he were impotent, or variable, or false to them that had intrusted themselves to his protection and care; but whether that dishonour were not recompens'd with advantage, by the greater glory that accrued to him afterwards. And this also is the matter that must come under judgment, if at length he should finally cast off such a people; whether upon the whole, all things being considered and taken together, it be not more for the honour of his name, and the reputation of his rectoral attributes, to break off such a relation to them, than continue it. Wherein he is not concern'd to approve himself to the opinion of fools, or half-witted persons: and whose shallow judgment too, is governed by their disaffection; but to such as can consider. Perhaps, to such as shall hereafter rise up in succeeding ages. For he is not in haste. His steady duration, commensurate with all the successions of time, and which runs into eternity, can well admit of his staying till this or that frame and contexture of providence be completed, and capable of being more entirely view'd at once, and till calmer minds, and men of less interested passions shall come to have the considering of it. And in the mean time he hath those numberless myriads of wise and holy sages in the other world, the continual observers of all his dispensations, that behold them with equal, unbiass'd minds, and from the evidence of the matter, give their concurrent approbation and applause, with all the true members of the

church on earth, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints. Rev. 15. 3. But it is enough and much more considerable to approve himself to himself; and that all his dispensations are guided according to the steady, eternal reason of things, which is an inviolable law to him, from which he never departs, and from the perpetual uniform agreement of all his providences whereto, an indubious glory will result unto him, that will never admit the least eclipse, or ever be capable of being drawn into dispute. And according whereto it will appear, if ever he forsake such a people, the concernment of his name and glory in the matter, was the great inducement to it, that he did even owe it to himself, and had not, otherwise, done right to his own name. And whatsoever might be argued from it to the contrary will be found capable of a clear and easy answer, so as that the weight of the argument will entirely lie on this side. For

As to his power, he hath reason to be ever secure concerning the reputation of that, having given, and knowing how further to give, when he pleases, sufficient demonstrations of it otherways. Nor was it ever his design to represent himself as a Being of mere power, which of itself, hath nothing of moral excellency in it, nor do the appearances of it tend to beget that true notion of God in the minds of men which he designed to propagate; otherwise than as the glory of it should shine in conjunction with that of his other attributes that are more peculiarly worthy of God, more appropriate to him, and more apt to represent him to the world as the most suitable object of a religious veneration. Whereas mere power is capable of having place in an unintelligent nature, and in an intelligent, tainted with the most odious impurities. He never desired to be known among men by such a name, as should signify power only unaccompanied with wisdom, holiness, &c. And

For his wisdom; it is seen in pursuing valuable ends, by methods suitable to them, and becoming himself. It became the absolute sovereignty of a God, to select a nation, that he would favour more than other nations, but would ill have agreed with his wisdom to have bound himself absolutely to them, to favour them, howsoever they should demean themselves.

His bounty and goodness, though it found them no better than other people, was to have made them better. Nor was it any disreputation to his goodness to divert its current, when they after long trial, do finally resist its design.

His clemency must not be made liable to be mistaken for inadvertency, or neglect: and to give the world cause to say,

tush, God seeth not, neither is there knowledge in the most high. Nor for indifferency, and unconcernedness what men do, as if good and bad were alike to him. And that such as do evil were good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighted in them; words wherewith he sometime complained that men wearied him Mal. 2. 17. He is not to redeem the reputation of one attribute by the real prejudice of another; that is, the offence and grievance to it, which acting directly against it (if that were possible) would occasion.

His sincerity will be highly vindicated and glorified, when it shall be seen that there is nothing more of severity in such a dispensation, whenever it takes place, than was plainly expressed in his often repeated fore-warnings and threatnings, even long before. And therefore

He is herein but *constant to himself*, and should be more liable to the charge of mutability, and inconstancy, if finally, when the case should so require, he should not take this course. And

As to his *righteousness and fidelity* towards such a people, even those to whom he more strictly obliged himself than ever he did to any particular nation besides. Let but the tenour of his covenant with them be consulted, and see whether he did not reserve to himself a liberty of casting them off, if they revolted from him. And whether these were not his express terms that he would be with them while they were with him, but that if they forsook him, he would forsake them also.

Therefore much more is he at liberty, as to any other people, to whom he never made so peculiar promises of external favours as he did to this people. Nor hereupon can any thing be pleaded from his name, or that is within the compass of its signification, with any certainty, that it shall conclude, and be determining on the behalf of such a people. There is a real, great doubt in the case, whether the argument may not weigh more the other way. And whether the wickedness of such a people may not be grown to such a prodigious excess, that whereas none of these his mentioned attributes do make it necessary, he should continue his relation, some other, that could not be alleged for it, may not be alleged against it, and do not make it necessary he should break it off. The glory of his holiness (which if we consider it in itself, and consider the value, and stress he is wont to put upon it, we might even reckon the prime glory of the Deity) is not, perhaps, to be sufficiently salved and vindicated without, at length, quite abandoning and casting them off. There seems to be somewhat very awful and monitory in those most pleasant, gracious words, and that breathe so sweet a savour. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: where-

fore God is not ashamed to be called their God, Heb. 11. 16. that is, that if a people that have long enjoyed brighter discoveries of heaven, and the way to it, do yet generally bear a disaffected heart to the design of that revelation, remain habitually terrene like the rest of the world, governed by the spirit of it, ingulfed in the common pollutions, sensualities, impieties of the wicked atheistical inhabitants of this earth. God will be even ashamed to be called their God. He will reckon it ignominious, and a reproach to him (though he will save such as are sincere among them) to stand visibly related to such a people as their God. What to have them for a peculiar people, that are not peculiar? to distinguish them that will not be distinguished? To make a visible difference by external favours and privileges, where there is no visible difference in practice and conversation, that might signify a more excellent spirit. This is not only to lose the intended design, but to have it turn to a disadvantage. And whom he expected to be for a name and a praise to him, a crown and a royal diadem, to become to him a dishonour and a blot. And we do find that such severities as have been used towards such a people, are declared to have been so, even for the sake of his name, Jer. 34. 16, 17. But ye turned and polluted my name,—Therefore I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. And when therefore a remnant of this people, rebelliously, against God's express word, went down into Egypt, preferring a precarious subsistence, under tyranny and idolatry, at the cruel mercy of a long since baffled enemy before the true religion, and liberty, under the divine protection, see how God expresses his resentment of this dishonour done to his name, and the affront offered to his government. Jer. 44. 26. Therefore hear ye the word of the Lord, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt, Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the Lord, that my name, shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah, in all the land of Egypt, saying; the Lord God liveth.

And when the time drew nearer of God's total rejection of that people, as in the time of Malachi's prophecies; they are charged with despising and profaning his name, (chap. 1. 5, 6, 12.) and are told God had now no pleasure in them, nor would accept an offering at their hands, but that his name should be great among the Gentiles, (ver. 10, 11.) even from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, intimating that (excepting those few that thought on his name. (chap. 3. 16.) and that feared his name, (ch. 4. 2,) who he says should be his, when he made up his jewels and the Sun of righteousness should rise upon them) he would have no more to do with them, but in the

day that should burn as an oven, (when the whole hemisphere should be as one fiery vault) they should be burnt up as stubble and neither root nor branch be left of them, and all this upon the concern he had for his name, which was reproached by such a people's pretending to it. Whereupon, they had been threatened (ch. 2. v. 2.) that except they did give glory to his name he would curse them, and their blessings, corrupt their seed, spread dung upon their faces, even that of their solemn feasts, and they should be taken away therewith.

It is therefore possible the whole force of this argument may lie against us, in praying for such a people, I say, it is possible it may, whether actually it do or no, we can never be competent judges. Our knowledge is not large enough, nor our minds enough comprehensive. Our wisdom is folly itself to the estimating such a case. We are capable of pronouncing hastily, it would in this, or that particular respect, be dishonourable, and an obscurement of God's name, if he should cast off England. But he that pronounces hastily, considers but a few things and looks but a little way.

The question is whether all things compared and considered together, that belong to such a case, it will be more honourable to God or dishonourable, and more or less recommend him to intelligent minds, get him a greater and more excellent name and renown in the world, when it shall be enlightened to consider the case, to break off his relation or continue it? We know his own judgment is according to truth, and hope he will judge the way, that will be more favourable to us. But we cannot be certain of it. It is a case that requires the judgment of his all comprehending mind, whose prospect is large every way; and takes in all the decencies and indecencies that escape our notice. As we know in viewing things with the eye, a quick and clear sight. (Especially helped with a fit instrument) will discern many things, so fine and minute, as to be, to a duller eye, altogether invisible. It is the work of wisdom, and judgment, to discern exactly the critical seasons, and junctures of time, when to do this or that. And the wise God in his dispensations, especially towards a great community, or the collective body of a people, takes usually a vast compass of time, within which to select the apt and fit season, for this or that act, whether of severity, or mercy towards them. And it is more fit, as by the coincidence of things, it contributes more to the greater glory of his name. We cannot discern the things, the concurrence whereof, makes this a fitter season than another, that such an event should be placed just there, within so large a tract of time. What mortal man, or indeed what finite mind, was capable of judging some hundreds of years before, what was just

wanting to the fulness of the Amorites sin, so as that it should be more honourable, and glorious to the divine justice, not to animadvert thereon, till that very time when he did it. Or why he chose that time which he pitched upon, wherein to come down, and deliver his Israel from their Egyptian oppressors. Or when (without inspiration) to be able to say the time to favour Zion, even the set time is come. Nor are we to resolve the matter only into the absoluteness of his sovereignty, upon the account whereof he may take what time he pleases, but the depth of his hidden wisdom, for he doth all things according to the counsel of his will, having reasons to himself, which our shallow, dim, sight perceives not, and whereof we are infinitely less able to make a sure judgment, than a country idiot of reasons of state. He may (as to the present case) think it most fit, most honourable, and glorious, so often to forgive, or so long to forbear such a delinquent people; and may, at length, judge it most becoming him, and most worthy of him, as he is the common Ruler of the world, and their injured despised Ruler, to strike the fatal stroke, and quite cut them off from him.

Now here, it is therefore necessarily our duty, to use this argument with him of his name, so, as wholly to submit the matter to his judgment, and but conditionally, if it will indeed make most for the glory of his name, that then he will not abhor and reject such a people even for his name's sake. Nor can we herein be too importunate, if we be not peremptory, not too intent upon the end, the glory of his name; for about the goodness, excellency and desirableness of that we are certain; if we be not too determinate about the means, or what will be most honourable to his name, concerning which we are uncertain. Neither is it disallowed us to use the best judgment we can, about the means, and the interest of God's name in this case. It is not our fault to be mistaken, he expects us not to use the judgment of gods. But it will be our fault to be peremptory and confident in a matter, wherein we may be mistaken; and must signify too much officiousness, as if we understood his affairs better than himself, and a bold insolence to take upon us to be the absolute judges of what we understand not; and to cover our presumption with a pretence of duty. Therefore though such a people be dear to us, yet because his name ought to be infinitely more dear, that in the settled bent of our hearts we ought to prefer; and be patient of his sentence, whatever it prove to be, with deep resentment of our own desert but with high complacency that his name is vindicated and glorified, and with a sincere, undissembled applause of the justice of his proceedings; how severe soever they may be towards us: especially if we have reason to hope, that severity

will terminate, but in a temporary discountenance and frown; not in a final rejection.

Secondly. Much more are we to submit our own secular concerns, which may be involved. That is, we ought only to pray, we may have the continued, free, profession and exercise of our religion, in conjunction with the comfortable enjoyment of the good things of this life, if that may consist with, and best serve the honour of his great name. But if he do really make this judgment in our case, that we have so misdemeaned ourselves, and been so little really better to common observation, in our practice and conversation, than men of a worse religion, that he cannot without injury to his name, and the reputation of his government, countenance us against them, by the visible favours of his providence: that it will not be honourable for him to protect us in our religion, to so little purpose; and while we so little answer the true design of it; that if we will retain our religion (which we know we are upon no terms to quit) we must suffer for it, and sanctify that name before men by our suffering, which we dishonoured by our sinning. We have nothing left us to do but to submit to God, to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, to accept the punishment of our sin, to put off our ornaments, expecting what he will do with us. And be content that our dwellings, our substance, our ease and rest, our liberties and lives, if he will have it so, be all sacrifices to the honour of that excellent name. Nor can our use of this argument want such submission without much insincerity. Concerning this therefore look back to what was said on the former head.

Nor is there any hardship in the matter, that we are thus limited in our praying, for what even nature itself teacheth us to desire; our safety, peace and outward comforts; unless we count it a hardship that we are creatures, and that God is God, and that ours is not the supreme interest. The desires of the sensitive nature are not otherwise to be formed into petitions than by the direction of the rational, that also, being governed by a superadded holy, divine nature; unto which it is a supreme and a vital law, that God is to be the first-eyed in every thing. Reason teaches that so it should be, and grace makes it be so. And it ought to be far from us to think this a hardship; when in reference to our greater, and more considerable concerns, those of our souls, and our eternal states, we are put upon no such (dubious suspenceful) submission. He hath not, in these, left the matter at all doubtful, or at any uncertainty, whether he will reckon it more honourable to his name to save, or destroy eternally, a sincerely penitent, believing, obedient soul. He hath settled a firm connection between the felicity of such

and his own glory. And never put it upon us, as any part of our duty, to be contented to perish for ever, that he may be glorified; or ever to ask ourselves whether we are so content or no. For he hath made such things our present, immediate, indispensable duty, as with which our perishing is not consistent and upon supposition whereof, it is impossible we should not be happy. If we believe in his Son, and submit to his government, his name pleads irresistibly for our being saved by him. He can have no higher glory from us, than that we be to the praise of the glory of his grace, being once accepted in the beloved. Neither is it disallowed us to do the part of concives, fellow-members of a community, civil, or spiritual, to pray very earnestly for our people, city, country that are so justly dear to us. Only since prayer itself is an acknowledgment of his superiority to whom we pray: and we have no argument, that we ought to hope should prevail, but that of his own name; we can but pray and plead as the nature of prayer, and the import of that argument will admit, that is, with entire subjection to his holy and sovereign will, and subordination to his supreme interest, to whom we address ourselves in prayer.

III. And now the use this will be of to us, is partly to correct and reprehend our prayers, wherein they shall be found disagreeable to the true import of this argument, and partly to persuade unto, and encourage such praying, as shall be agreeable to it,

First. It justly and aptly serves to reprehend and correct, such praying as disagrees with it: especially the carnality and the selfishness of our prayers. The use of this argument implies that the glory of God, and the exultation of his name, should be the principal design of our prayers. Is it not in these respects much otherwise? We keep fast after fast, and make many prayers. And what is the chief design of them? or the thing we are most intent, and which our hearts are principally set upon? We see how God expostulates this matter, Zech. 7. 5. When ye fasted and mourned, in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did you at all fast unto me, even unto me? Why to whom can it be thought this people did keep fasts but unto God? Yes no doubt they did eye him, as the object, but not as the end. They were kept to him, but not for him, so as that his interest and glory was the thing principally designed in them, nor can it be, if the things we chiefly insist upon, be such as have no connection with his true interest, or subserviency to it. And let us inquire upon these two heads; whether our prayers, in these respects, do not run in such a strain, as that they cannot possibly be understood to mean him, or have a true reference to him.

1. In respect of the carnality of them. When we pray for the people of our own land, or for the Christian church more generally, what sort of evils is it that we find our hearts most feelingly to deprecate, and pray against? what are the good things we chiefly desire for them? We find ourselves, it is likely, to have somewhat a quick sense, and dread of the calamities of war, depredation, oppression, persecution, and we feel, probably, somewhat of sympathy within ourselves, when we hear of any abroad, professing true, reformed Christianity, that suffer the spoiling of their goods, are banished from their pleasant homes, dragged to prisons, pressed with pinching necessities, for the sake of their religion; and it were well if our compassions were more enlarged in such cases. And if we should hear of nations depopulated, cities sacked, towns and countries deluged with blood and slaughter, these things would certainly have an astonishing sound in our ears. But have we any proportionable sense of the spiritual evils that waste and deform the Christian church, exhaust its strength and vigour, and blemish its beauty and glory? Ignorance, terrene inclination, glorying in the external forms of religion, while the life and power of it are unknown and denied, estrangement from God, real infidelity towards the Redeemer, veiled over by pretended, nominal christianity, uncharitableness, pride, wrath, strife, envy, hatred, hypocrisy, deceitfulness towards God and man? We ought to lament and deprecate the former evils without over-looking these, or counting them less, or being less affected with them. We are apt to pray for peace unto the Christian community, for haleyon days, prosperity, the abundance of all outward blessings, in conjunction with the universal reception of such forms of religion, as are most agreeable to our minds and inclinations. But do we as earnestly pray for the reviving of primitive Christianity, and that the Christian church may shine in the beauties of holiness, in heavenliness, faith, love to God, and one another, in simplicity, meekness, patience, humility, contempt of this present world, and purity from all the corruptions of it. This we chiefly, ought to have done, without leaving the other undone. Which while it is left out of our prayers, or not more principally insisted on in them, how ill do they admit of enforcement by this argument from the name of God? For do we think it is so very honourable to his name, to be the God of an opulent, luxurious, voluptuous, proud, wrathful, contentious people, under what religious form or denomination soever?

2. But also do not our prayers chiefly centre in ourselves? while we make a customary (not understood) use in them of the name of God? And when we principally design ourselves

in our prayers, what is it we covet most for ourselves? it is not agreeable to the holy, new divine nature, to desire to engross spiritual good things to ourselves; when for others, we desire only the good things of this earth. But if our prayers do only design the averting from ourselves outward calamities, or inconveniencies, and the obtaining only of ease, indulgence, and all grateful accommodations to our flesh, how absurd an hypocrisy is it to fashion up such a petition, by adding to it for thy name's sake? As if the name of God did oblige him to consult the ease and repose of our flesh! when our souls, thereby, are made, and continued the nurseries of all the evil, vicious inclinations, which shew themselves in our practice, most of all to the dishonour of that name! what subordination is there here? Manifest is the opposition of our carnal interest, to the interest and honour of the blessed name of God. If a malefactor, convicted of the highest crimes against the government, should petition for himself to this purpose, that it will bring a great disreputation upon authority, and detract from the famed clemency and goodness of the prince, if any punishment should be inflicted on him for his offences, or if he be not indulged and suffered to persist in them. How would this petition sound with sober, intelligent men? It is no wonder our flesh regrets suffering, but it is strange our reason should be so lost, as to think, at random, that right or wrong the name of God is not otherwise to be indemnified than by its being saved from suffering. As if the gratification of our flesh, and the glory of God's name were so very nearly related, and so much akin to one another! And now this carnal self-interest, insinuating itself, and thus distorting our prayers, is the radical evil in them, and the first and original part of their faultiness. For it is not likely we should love others, better than ourselves; therefore we cannot go higher in supplicating for others. But yet we inconsiderately mention the name of God for fashion's sake, though it be no way concerned in the matter, unless to vindicate and greaten itself, in rejecting us and our prayers together.

Secondly. The further use of what hath been said upon this subject, will be to persuade and engage us to have more regard to the name of God in our prayers, especially in praying about national and public concernments; or such external concernments, of our own as are involved with them. That, in the habitual temper of our spirits, we be so entirely and absolutely devoted to God, and the interest of his great name, that our prayers may savour of it, and be of an agreeable strain; that the inward sense of our souls, may fully correspond to the true import of this argument, and our hearts may not reproach us, when we use it, is

only pretending God, but meaning ourselves, and that only our carnal self, the interest thereof alone, can be in competition with that of God's name; and which, while it prevails in us, will be the measure of our prayers for others also; that the meaning of our words may not be one, and the meaning of our hearts, another, that we may truly mean as we speak, when we use the words for thy name's sake. And that our hearts may bear us this true testimony, that we desire nothing but in due subordination to the glory of his name; external favours, with limitation; only so far as they may; and spiritual blessings, absolutely, because they certainly will, admit of this subordination. And to this purpose let it be considered,

1. How unsuitable it is to the condition of a creature, that it should be otherwise. That were certainly, a most uncreaturely prayer, that should be of a contrary tenour. Let us but digest and state the case aright in our own thoughts. Admit we are praying with great ardency, on the behalf of a people to which we are related, and who are also related to God. It can scarce be thought we are more concerned for them, than for ourselves; or that we love them more than we do ourselves. Our love to ourselves is the usual measure of our love to others. And that is higher in the same kind, which is the measure of all besides, that belongs to that kind. When therefore we are much concerned for the external felicity of such a people, it is very natural to be more deeply concerned for our own. Now if the sense of our hearts, in such a prayer, will not agree with the true import of these words, "for thy name's sake;" because indeed, we are more concerned for our own carnal peace, ease, and accommodation than we are for the name of God; let us, that we may have the matter more clearly in view, put our request into such words, as wherewith the sense of our hearts will truly agree, and will it not be thus "Lord, whatever becomes of thy name," let nothing be done that shall be grievous, and disquieting to my flesh which is as much as to say, Quit thy throne to it, resign thy government, abandon all thy great interest for the service, and gratification of this animated clod of clay; and do we not now begin to blush at our own prayer? We easily slide over such a matter, as this, while our sense is more latent, and not distinctly reflected on, but let us have it before us *conceptis verbis*; let it appear with its own natural *face* and *look*; and now see what horror and detestableness it carries with it! And dare we now put up so treasonable a prayer? It would puzzle all our arithmetic, to assign the *quota pars*, or the *proportional part* any of us is, of the universe of the whole creation of God! And do I then think it fit that the heavens should roll for me? or all the mighty wheels of providence move only with regard to my

convenience? If a worm in your garden were capable of thoughts and because it is permitted to crawl there, should think, this garden was made for me, and every thing in it ought to be ordered for my accommodation and pleasure, would you not wonder that such insolence, and a disposition to think so extravagantly, should be in conjunction with the thinking power or an ability to think at all. If we allow ourselves in that far greater (infinitely more unbecoming, and disproportionable) petulance do we think when the roller comes it will scruple to crush us, or have regard to our immodest, pretenceless claim? Let us consider what little minute things, how next to nothing we are, even compared with all the rest of the world: what are we then compared with the Maker and Lord of it, in comparison of whom the whole, is but as the drop of a bucket, or the small dust of the ballance, lighter than nothing and vanity! We should more contemplate ourselves in such a comparison; many comparing themselves with themselves are not wise. While we confine and limit our eye only to ourselves, we seem great things, fancy ourselves very considerable. But what am I? What is my single personality? ipseity, selfhood (call it what you will) to him who is the all in all; whose being (actually, or radically) comprehends all being, all that I can conceive, and the infinitely greater all, that I cannot. If therefore I take in, with myself, the whole body of a people besides, that I am concerned for, and admit that a generous love to my country, should make me prefer their concerns to my own; or that upon a higher account, as they are a people related to God, I could even lay down my life for them. What are we all, and all our interests to that of his name? And if we should all agree in a desire, that our interest should be served upon the dishonour of that name, it were but a treasonable conspiracy against our common, rightful Lord. And a foolish one, being expressed in a prayer; as if we thought to engage him, by our faint breath, against himself. We are to desire no more for them, than they may for themselves. And if we have joined in open sinning against him, to that height that he shall judge he is obliged for the vindication, and honour of his name, (by which we have been called) of his wisdom, holiness, and punitive justice, as openly to animadvert upon us, can we gainsay? If we knew of such a judgment nothing could remain for us but shame and silence, conviction of ill desert, and patient bearing the punishment of our sin. And while we know it not, yet because it is possible; we ought no otherwise to deprecate such a procedure against us, than as will consist with that possibility. To pray otherwise, if we make no mention of his name, is absurd presumption, that we should wish, or imagine, he will prefer any concerns

of ours, to the steady order and decorum of his own government. But if we do make mention of it, it is a more absurd hypocrisy, to seem concerned for his name when we intend only our own external advantages! as if we thought he that could answer our prayers, could not understand them. It is surely very unbecoming creatures, to bear themselves so, towards the God that made them.

2. Consider, that to have a sense in our hearts truly agreeable to the proper meaning of this argument for thy name's sake, is very suitable to the state of returning creatures, who are gathering themselves back to God, out of the common apostacy, wherein all were engaged, and combined against that great Lord and Ruler of the world. In that defection every one did principally mind and set up for himself. Each one would be a God to himself, but all were, by consequence against God. Whom to be for, they were divided, and of as many minds as there were men. Whom to be against, they were agreed, as if their common Lord, was the common enemy. For his interest, and theirs were opposite and irreconcilable. They were sunk and lost in sensuality, and had no other interest, than that of their flesh. When man hath made himself a brute, he then thinks himself fittest to be a God. The interest of our souls must unite us with him: that of our flesh engages us against him. Some are through the power of his grace returning. What a pleasure would it be to us to behold ourselves among the reduces! those that are upon their return. That are, again, taking the Lord only to be their God, and his interest for their only interest!

3. Consider that our very name, as we are christians, obliges us to be of that obedient, happy number. For what is Christianity but the tendency of souls towards God, through the mediation, and under the conduct of Christ? Therefore is the initial precept of it, and the condition of our entrance into that blessed state, self-denial. We answer not our own name, further than as we are revolving, and rolling back, out of our single and separate state, into our original, most natural state, of subordination to God; wherein only we are capable of union with him, and final blessedness in him. This is discipleship to Christ, and the design of the Christian religion to be subdued in our spirits, and wrought down into compliance with the divine will, to be meek, lowly, humble, patient, ready to take up the cross, to bear any thing, lose any thing, be any thing, or be nothing, that God may be all in all. This is our conformity, not to the precepts only, but to the example too, of our great Lord. Who when he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God: made himself of no reputa-

tion, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man; and being found in fashion, as a man, humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Phil. 2. 6, 7, 8. And hereupon, because, he was so entirely devoted to the honour and service of God's great name (Father glorify thy name summed up his desires) therefore God highly exalted him, and gave him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, &c. ver. 9. 10. And whenever he shall have a church in the world, that he will think it fit to own with visible, unintermitted favours, it must consist of persons formed according to that pattern. And then, by losing their own name and little interests for God's, they will find all recovered, when their glorious Redeemer shall write upon them the name of his God, and the name of the city of his God, and his own new name. Rev. 3. 12.

4. Let it be further (in the last place) considered, with what cheerfulness and confidence, we may then pray; when our hearts are wrought to this pitch, that we sincerely design the honour of the divine name, as the most desirable thing; and which name above all things we covet to have glorified. For we are sure of being heard, and to have the same answer, which was given our Lord by a voice like that of thnnder, from heaven, when he prayed Father glorify thy name, (Joh. 12.) I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. Our hearts are not right in us, till we can count this a pleasant, grateful answer. And if we can, we can never fail of it. For we are told 1 Joh. 5. 14. That whatsoever we ask according to his will he heareth us. This will deliver our minds from suspence. When we pray for nothing whereof we are uncertain, but with great deference and submission, and for nothing absolutely, and with greatest engagement of heart; but whereof we are certain. Upon such terms we may pray with great assurance, as Daniel did, O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do; defer not for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city, and thy people are called by thy name. ch. 9.19. And though an angel be not thereupon sent to tell us, as was to him, so many weeks are determined upon thy people and thy holy city (so the matter is expressed; as it were kindly giving back the interest in them to Daniel, with advantage, that he had before acknowledged unto God) to finish the transgression, and to make an end of of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, &c. yet we are assured, of what reasonably ought to be as satisfying, that whatsoever shall befall our city, or our people, shall end in the eternal glory of God, and of the city of God.

A
SERMON,

DIRECTING

WHAT WE ARE TO DO AFTER A STRICT INQUIRY,

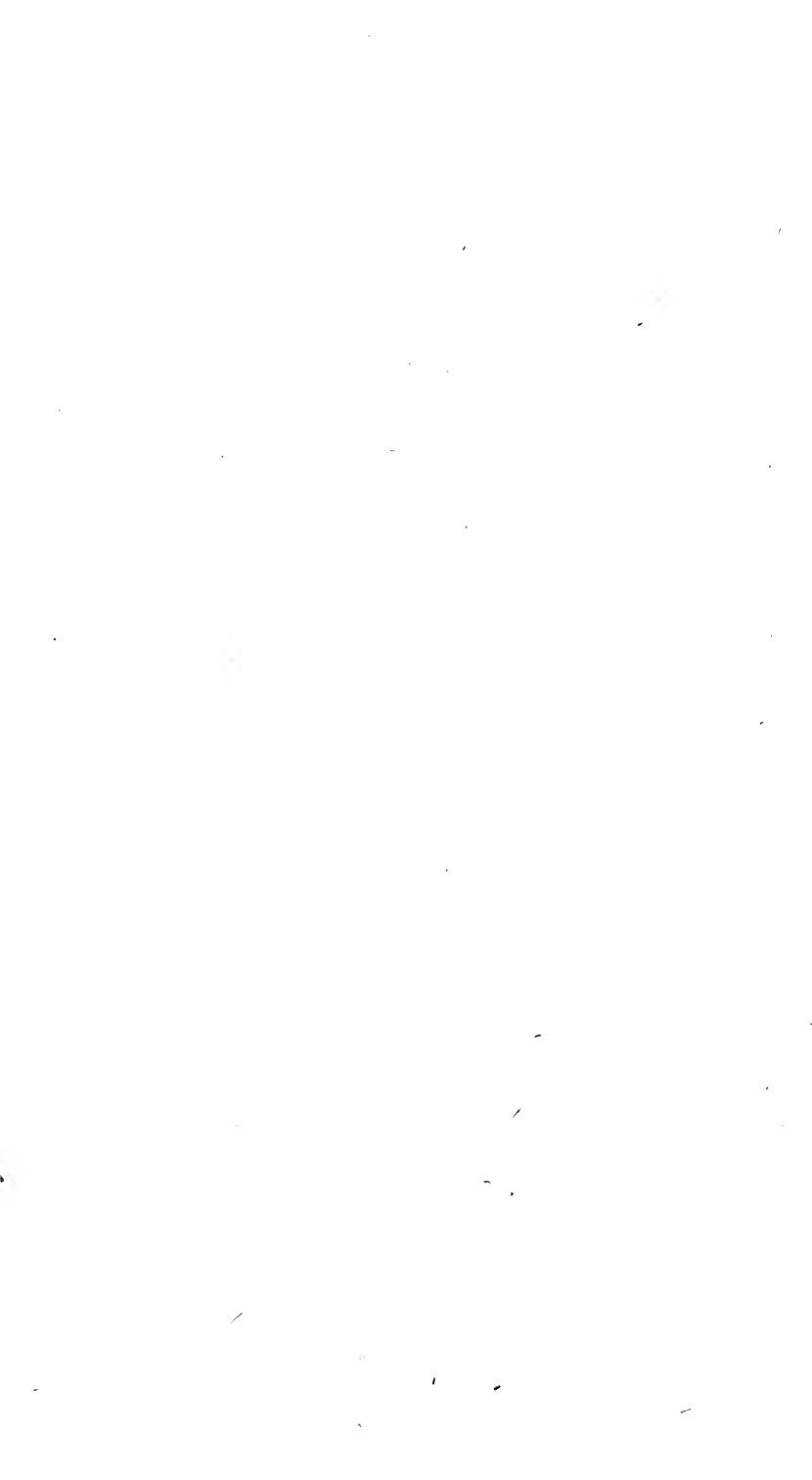
WHETHER OR NO WE TRULY

LOVE GOD.



John 5. 42.

BUT I KNOW YOU, THAT YE HAVE NOT THE LOVE OF GOD IN YOU



THE
EPISTLE.

YOU may remember what a solemn awe was upon our congregation, lately at the preaching of this ensuing sermon, and that not a few tears dropped at the hearing of it. This engaged some of us to entreat our reverend pastor, to give way, that by this publication it might be accommodated to your review. We know it is no more than one single thread that belongs to many other discourses upon the same subject, which have preceded, and to others which we hope will follow; but such as by your notes and memories may easily be wrought into the whole piece, It is but a thread, yet a golden one, and may contribute to the service of the tabernacle, as in Exod. 25. We know it is a great condescension in him to suffer such an imperfect piece to come abroad, but when the reverend dean of C. and other learned persons of the church of England, have denied themselves by suffering such small prints for the general good; we are persuaded, though he gave not a positive judgment for it, he will not dislike that which is for your service, and is intended to go no farther. Receive it therefore, read it over and over, and allot sometimes for the putting in practice the grand examination urged upon us, and do your utmost to persuade all under your roofs and commands to do the like; that which was preached, with so much holy fervour and affection, may beget in us and ours a bright flame of divine love to our good Lord, to whom we commend you, and are

Your affectionate brethren
and servants, &c.



SERMON.

John 5. 42.

But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.

YOU have heard several discourses from this Scripture, and from another in the same gospel, that we spake to alternately with this at several times; "Thou knowest all things Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," ch. 20. 17. And that which after doctrinal explication hath hitherto been insisted on, was an inquiry into the state of our own case in reference hereunto. Are we lovers of God in Christ, or are we not? There have been many things signified to you, by which this case might be discerned; and that which remains, and most naturally follows hereupon, is to direct you what you are to do, supposing your case upon inquiry, to be this or that. Why such an inquiry, if that hath been attended to at all amongst us; it must have signified somewhat, it must, one would think, have some or other result, and what should we suppose it to result into, but either this, I do not love God, or I do. These are most vastly different cases, it is a trial upon the most important point that could have been discussed among us; and supposing there should be two sorts among us, the effect of it is as if a parting line should be drawn through a congregation, severing the living from the dead; here are so many living, and so many dead souls. Indeed it is a very hard supposition, to suppose that there should be any one in all this assembly that doth not love God; a very hard supposition, I am extremely loth to make such a supposition; I would as much as in me is, not suppose it.

For truly it were a very sad case that we should agree so far as we do in many other things, and not agree in this; that is, that we should agree so many of us to come all and meet together here in one place, agree to worship God together, agree to sing his praises together, to seek his face together, to call upon his name together, to hear his word together, and not agree all to love God together: the God whom we worship, whom we invoke, whose name we bear, and unto whom we all of us pretend. For who is there among us will say, "I have no part in God?" And it were a most lovely thing, a most comely, desirable thing that all such worshipping assemblies, even this worshipping assembly, at this time, and all times, could still meet together under this one common notion, truly and justly assumed, as so many lovers of God. We are sure there will be an assembly, a general assembly, in which no one that is not a lover of God will be found; an assembly of glorious angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect, a numerous, an innumerable assembly, in which not one will appear but a sincere lover of God. What a blessed thing were it, if our assemblies on earth were such! But we cannot speak more gently, than to say there is cause to fear they are not such; it hath been actually otherwise among a people professing the true religion; "They come before thee, and sit before thee as my people, and with their mouth shew much love: with their face or in external appearance and shew (*ore tenus*) they are lovers of God, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them, (Ezek. 31. 31.) If such a case hath been actually, it is still possible, and is still too much to be feared to be but too common a case.

But now supposing that there be different cases among us, in reference to these different cases, there must be very different departments, and a very different management of ourselves. This text more naturally leads me to direct what is to be done upon the supposition of the sadder case, most deplorably sadder, than one is no lover of God; though we must be led on thereto by some things common to both cases.

I. Therefore that I may proceed by steps, this is requisite in the first place, that is, that we make one judgment of our case or another, that is, that we bring the matter some way to a judgment, nor let so great a thing as this, hang always in suspense. It is very plain (a little to press this) that

First. While the case hangs thus in suspense it suspends the proper subsequent duty too that should follow hereupon. What canst thou do that is certainly fit and proper for thy own soul, when thou dost not understand the state of its case? How canst thou guide thy course, or tell which way to apply or turn thyself? And

Secondly. To press it further, consider that the not bringing, or omitting to bring, this matter to a judgment, if it proceed from indifferency and neglect speaks the greatest contempt than can be both of God and thine own soul, the greatest that can be; that is, now supposing the question be asked, Dost thou love God? or dost thou not? And thou unconcernedly answerest, I cannot tell, I do not know; why, what to be carelessly ignorant whether thou lovest God, or lovest him not, there could not be a more concluding medium against thee, that thou dost not love him. It speaks thee at once to despise both God and thyself; what to have this matter hang in indifferency through neglect, whether thou lovest God, or lovest him not? It shews that neither regard to God, nor a just value of thyself makes thee care whether thou art a holy man or a devil. For know, that the loving God, or not loving him, does more distinguish a saint from a devil, than wearing a body, or not wearing it can do. A devil if he did love God, were a saint; a man that doth not love God, he is no other, though he wear a body, than an incarnate devil: it is the want of love to God that makes the devil a devil, makes him what he is.

II. For further direction, take heed of passing a false judgment in this case, a judgment contrary to the truth. For

First, That is to no purpose, it will avail thee nothing, you cannot be advantaged by it, for yours is not the supreme judgment. There will be another and superior judgment to yours, that will controul and reverse your false judgment, and make it signify nothing, it is therefore to no purpose. And,

Secondly, It is a great piece of insolency, for it will be to oppose your judgment, to his certain and most authorized; who, if this be your case hath already judged it, and tells you "I know you, that you have not the love of God in you." It belongs to him by office to judge, "The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son," as a little above in this chapter; from what will you depose him? dethrone him? disannul his judgment? condemn him? that you may be righteous? (to borrow that, Job 40. 8.)

Thirdly, It is most absurd, supposing such characters as you have heard do conclude a man in this case, yet to judge him-himself a lover of God. If against the evidence of such characters a man should pronounce the wrong judgment it would be the most unreasonable and absurd thing imaginable; for then let us but suppose, how that wronged judgment must lie related to those fore-mentioned characters, that have been given you. Let me remind you of some of them,—he that never put forth the act of love to God, cannot say he hath the principle,—he that is not inclined to do good to others, for the sake of

God, 1 John 3. 17.—he that indulges himself in the inconsistent love of this world, 1 John 2. 15.—he that lives not in obedience to his known laws, John 14. 14. 1 John 5. 3. (with many more.) Now if you will pass a judgment of your case, against the evidence of such characters, come forth then, let the matter be brought into clear sight, put your sense into plain words and this it will be. “I am a lover of God, or I have the love of God in me, though I cannot tell that ever I put forth one act of love towards him in all my life; I have the love of God in me, though I never knew what it meant to do good to any for his sake, against the express words of Scripture: How dwelleth the love of God in such a man? I have the love of God in me though I have constantly indulged myself in that which he maketh an inconsistent love, Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. I have the love of God in me though I would never allow him to rule me, though I never kept his commandments with a design to please him, and comply with his will. I have the love of God in me, though I never valued his love. I have the love of God in me, though I never cared for his image, for his presence, for his converse, for his interest and honour.” I beseech you consider how all this will sound! Can any thing be more absurdly spoken? and shall it be upon such improbabilities, or impossibilities as these, that any man will think it fit to venture his soul! “I will pawn my soul upon it, I will run the hazard of my soul upon it, I am a lover of God for all this?” Would you venture any thing else so besides your soul? Would you venture a finger so, an eye so? It is to place the name, where there is nothing of the thing; it is to place the name of the thing upon its contrary. The soul of man cannot be in an indifferency towards God, but if there be not love and propension; there is aversion, and that is hatred. And what! is hatred to be called love? If you bear that habitual disposition of soul towards God, to go all the day long with no inclination towards him; no thought of him; no design to please him, to serve him, to glorify him; if this be your habitual temper, and usual course will you call this love? Shall this contrariety to the love of God be called love to him? You may as well call water fire, or fire water, as so grossly misname things here; and therefore again,

III. That we may advance somewhat; plainly and positively pass the true judgment. If the characters that you have heard do carry the matter so, come at last plainly and positively to pass the true judgment of your own case, though it be a sad one; and tell your own souls, “Oh! my soul though I must *sadly* say it, I must say it, all things conclude and make against thee: the Love of God is not in thee.” Why is it not as good this should

be the present issue at your own bar, and at the tribunal of your own conscience, as before God's judgment seat? Why should you not concur and fall in with Christ the authorized Judge, whose judgment is according to truth? Why this is a thing that must be done, the case requires it, and God's express word requires it. 1. Cor. 11. 31. Other previous and preparatory duty plainly enjoined, doth by consequence enjoin it, and requires that it follow, 2. Cor. 13. 5. What is examination for, but in order to judgment? It must therefore be done, and I shall shew how it must be done, and proceed to some further directions.

First. You must do it solemnly. Take yourselves aside at some fit season or another, inspect your own souls, review your life, consider what your wonted frame, and your ordinary course has been. And if you find, by such characters as heretofore were given, this is the truth of your case; then let judgment pass upon deliberation: Oh my soul! Thou hast not the love of God in thee, whatsoever thine appearances hitherto have been; and whatsoever thy peace and quiet hath been, thou hast not the love of God in thee: let it be done with solemnity.

Secondly. Do it in the sight of God as before him, as under his eye, as under the eye of Christ. That eye that is as a flame of fire, that searches hearts, and tries reins; arraign thyself before him. "Lord I have here brought before thee a guilty soul, a delinquent soul, wretched and horrid delinquent, a soul that was breathed into me by thee, an intelligent, understanding soul, a soul that hath love in its nature, but a soul that never loved thee."

Thirdly. Judge thyself before him, as to the *fact*, and as to the *fault*. As to the *fact*: "I have never yet loved thee O God I own it to thee; Lord I accuse, I charge my soul with this before thee, this is the truth of the fact, I have not the love of God in me." And charge thyself with the *fault*. "Oh horrid creature that I am! I was made by thee, and don't love thee; thou didst breathe into me this reasonable immortal spirit, and it doth not love thee; it is thy own offspring, and does not love thee. It can never be blessed in any thing but thee, and it does not love thee." And then hereupon,

Fourthly. Join to this *self-judging* and *self-loathing*. That we are to *judge ourselves* is a law laid upon us by the supreme Law-giver, the one Law-giver, that hath power to save, and to destroy. And his word that enjoins it as plainly tells us what must go with it, that this self-judging must be accompanied with *self-loathing*, Ezek. 6. 9. ch. 20. 43. and 36. 31. Do God that right upon thyself, that thou mayest tell him, blessed God! I do even hate myself, because I find I have not loved thee; and I cannot but hate myself and I never will be

reconciled to myself, till I find I am reconciled to thee. This is doing justice, doth not the Scripture usually, and familiarly so represent to us the great turn of the soul to God; when poor sinners become penitents and return that they are brought to hate themselves, and loathe themselves in their own eyes? And is there any thing that can make a soul so loathsome *in itself* or ought to make it so loathsome *to itself*, as not to love God, to be destitute of the love of God? And then

Fifthly. Hereupon too, *pity* thyself, *pity* thy own soul. There is cause to *hate* it? to *loathe* it, and is there no cause to *pity* it? to lament it? Doth not this look like a lamentable ease “Oh! what a soul have I that can love any thing else, that can love trifles, that can love impurities, that can love sin; and cannot love God, Christ, the most desirable good of souls. What a soul have I? What a monster in the creation of God, is this soul of mine!” Methinks you should set yourselves, if any of you can find this to be the case, to weep over your own souls. Some may see cause to say, “Oh my Soul, thou hast in thee other valuable things, thou hast understanding in thee, judgment in thee, wit in thee; perhaps learning, considerable acquired endowments in thee; but thou hast not the love of God in thee. I can do many other commendable or useful things, I can discourse plausibly, argue subtilly, I can manage affairs dextreously but I cannot love God. Oh my soul, how great an essential dost thou want to all religion, to all duty, to all felicity! The one thing necessary thou wantest, thou hast every thing but what thou needest more than any thing, more than all things; and oh my soul, what is like at this rate to become of thee? where art thou to have thy eternal abode! to what regions of horror, and darkness, and woe art thou going? what society can be fit for thee? No lover of God! No lover of God! what, but of infernal accursed spirits, that are at utmost distance from him, and to whom no beam of holy vital light shall ever shine to all eternity! Thou, Oh my soul, art self-abandoned to the blackness of darkness for ever. Thy doom is in thy breast, thy own bosom, thy no love to God is thy own doom, thy eternal doom; creates thee a present hell and shews whither thou belongest.”

Sixthly, Let a due *fear and solicitude* hereupon be set on work in thee. For consider thyself as one shortly to be arraigned before the supreme tribunal, and then here is the critical, vertical point upon which thy judgment turns, lovers of God; or no lovers of God. All are to be judged in reference to what they were, and did in the body whether good or evil. As in 2. Cor. ch. 5, ver. 10. What wast thou as to this point, while thou wast in the body? For the last judgment regards that former state, what thou didst, and what was thy wont as to this, whilst thou wast in the body. Therefore by the way no hope, after thou art gone out of the body: go out of the body, no lover

of God, the departing soul, no lover of God, and this will be found your state at the judgment day. You are not to expect after death, a gospel to be preached, that you may then be reconciled to God. No, but what did you do in the body? According to that you are to be judged. Did you love God in this body while here yea, or no! And this is a trial upon the most fundamental point, for as all the law is comprehended in love, as was formerly hinted, if you be found guilty in this point that you were no lover of God, totally destitute of the love of God; you were a perpetual underminer of his whole government of the whole frame of his law, a disloyal creature, rebellious and false to the God that made you, to Jesus Christ that redeemed you by his blood. All disobedience and rebellion, is summed up in this one word, *Having been no lover of God*; and won't it make any man's heart to meditate terror, to think of having such a charge as this likely to lie against him in the judgment of that day; that day, when the secrets of all hearts are to be laid open? Every work must then be brought into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good or evil, Eccle. 12. 14. And it will be to the confusion of many a one. It may be your no love of God was heretofore a great secret, you had a heart in which was no love of God, but it was a secret, you took not care to have it writ in your forehead; you conversed with men so plausibly, nobody took you to be no lover of God, to have a heart disaffected to God. But now, out comes the secret that which you kept for a great secret all your days, out comes the secret; and to have such a secret as this disclosed to that vast assembly, before angels and men! Here was a creature a reasonable creature, an intelligent soul, that lived upon the divine bounty and goodness so many years in the world below, and hid a false disloyal heart by a plausible shew, and external profession of great devotedness to God, all the time of his abode in that world: Oh! what a fearful thing would it be to have this secret so disclosed? And do you think that all the loyal creatures, that shall be spectators and auditors in the hearing of that great day, will not all conceive a just and a loyal indignation against such a one when convicted of not loving God; convicted of not loving him that gave him breath, him whose he was, and to whom he belonged, whose name he bore? What a fearful thing will it be to stand convicted so upon such a point as this! And sure in the mean time, there is great reason for continual fear, why a man's heart should *meditate terror*! One would even think that all the creation should be continually every moment in arms against him! One would be afraid that every wind that blows, should be a deadly blast to destroy me! that when the sun shines upon me, all its beams should be turned into vindictive flames to execute vengeance upon me! I would fear that even

the very stones in the streets should fly against me, and every thing that meets me be my death! For what! I have not the love of God in me! What, to go about the streets from day to day with a heart void of the love of God! What a heart have I! *Fear* ought to be exercised in this case, we are bid to fear if we do evil against a human ruler; if thou do that which is evil be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain, Rom. 13. 4. But if I be *such an evil doer*, against the supreme Ruler, the Lord of heaven and earth; have I not reason to be afraid? and to think sadly with myself what will the end of this be? but yet I will add,

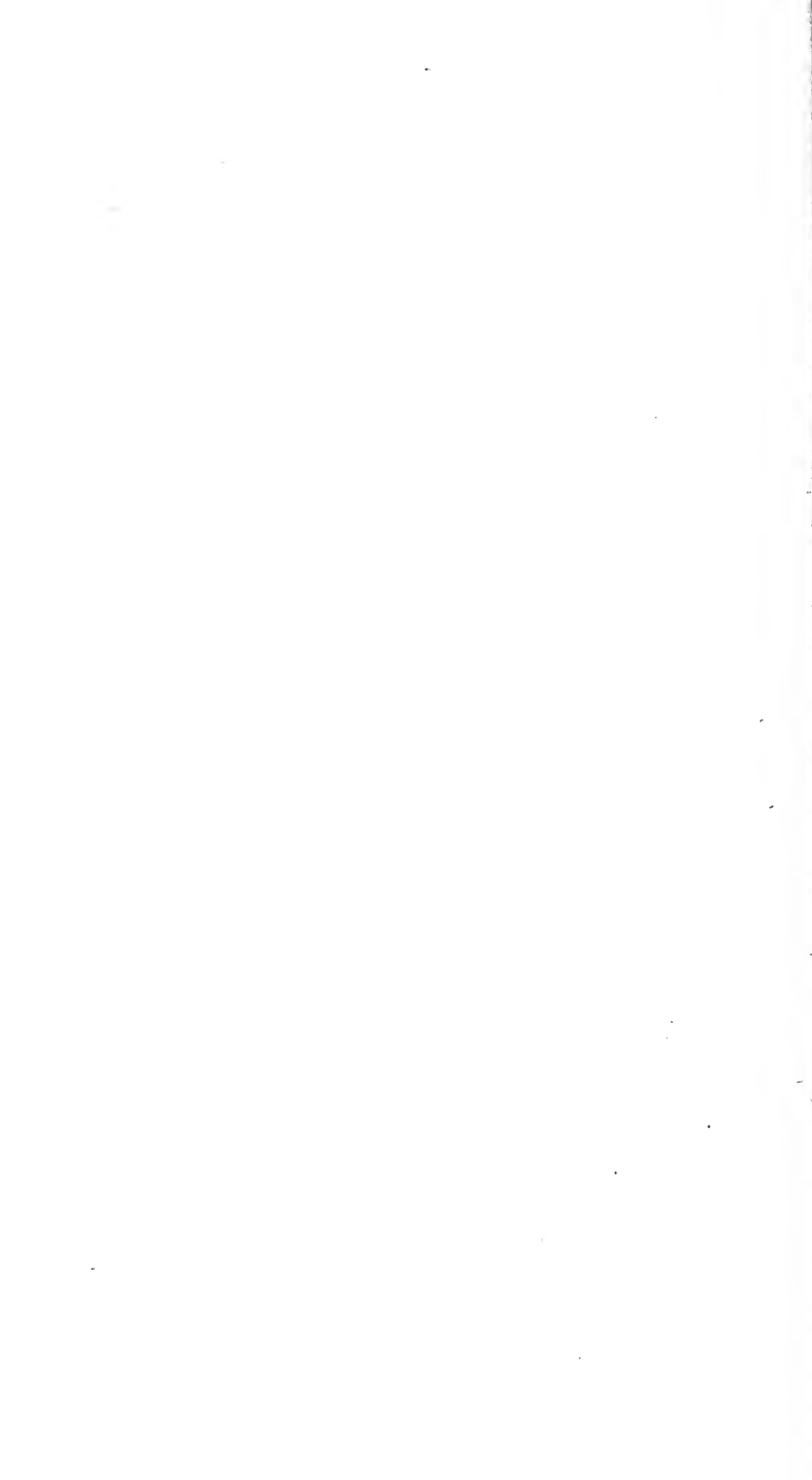
Seventhly, Don't *despair* for all this; God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, as in that, 2 Cor. ch. 5. ver. 19. that sin might not be imputed. He is in Christ to reconcile you, to win hearts, to captivate souls to the love of God; for what else is reconciliation on our part? He is in Christ to reconcile, to conquer enmity, to subdue disaffected hearts, to make such souls call and cry "My Lord, and my God! I have been a stranger to thee, I will through thy grace be so no longer." Therefore don't despair. Despair that ever you should do well without loving God, but don't despair you shall ever be brought to love him, by no means. You have to do with him, that is the Element of love, the God of love, the Fountain of love, the great Source of love, the Fountain at once both of loveliness and love, whose *nature* is love, and is with his *name* in his Son who was manifested in the flesh, full of grace and truth that is, sincerest love. He was incarnate love, love pointed at us, and is upon these terms able to transform all the world into love; the nature of God is all love 1 John 4. 16. and in Christ he is Immanuel God with us, so the divine love hath a direct aspect upon us. Why then apply yourselves to him, turn yourselves towards him, open your souls to him; say to him, "Lord, flow in with all the mighty powers of thine own love upon my soul, thou that canst of stones raise up children and make them the true genuine sons of Abraham; (and there can be no such children without love) Oh dissolve this stone, this stone in my breast, mollify this obdurate heart, turn it into love!" How soon may it be done upon due application. He can quickly do it, draw thee into a love union with himself, so as that thou should'st come to dwell in love; and dwell in God who is love, and he in thee. Then the foundations are surely laid, for all thy future duty, and for all thy future felicity. Then how pleasantly wilt thou obey, and how blessedly wilt thou enjoy God for ever! But such application must be made through Christ, and for the Spirit; which spirit is the Spirit of love and of power, and of a sound mind; as you have it in that first of the second to Tim. 5. 7. But these things I cannot now further insist upon.

A
SERMON
ON THE
THANKSGIVING DAY,

December 2, 1679.

Psalm. 29. ver. 11.

THE LORD WILL BLESS HIS PEOPLE WITH PEACE.



TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE
LORD HAVERSHAM.

I OFFER this discourse my honoured lord to your perusal, in confidence that the subject and design of it will be so far grateful to your lordship, as in some degree to atone for the imperfections of the management. I believe it will not offend against your lordship's very accurate judgment of things that I have not been so swayed by an authority which hath signified much in our age, as to represent the natural state of man, as a state of war; which either must signify man in his original constitution to have been a very ill natured creature, or must signify his nature to be less ancient than himself. For I cannot doubt, but the author of that maxim, would have disdained their way of speaking, who by nature mean vice; or to have been guilty of so pious a thought, that God at first made man any better thing than we find him. I shall the less passionately lament my infelicity, in losing the good opinion of men of that sentiment, if I stand right in your lordship's; not knowing any of your rank and figure in the world, with whom I count it a greater honour to agree in judgment, or do less fear to disgrace.

In matters of secular concernment, it becomes me not to profess any judgment at all, besides the public; unto which in things of that nature, every private man's ought to be, and is professedly resigned. Yet within that compass, notwithstanding the just esteem your lordship hath of noble endowments, which do then illustriously shine in the military profession, when there is a necessity of their being reduced to practice, I apprehend, that otherwise, your lordship hath no more grateful thoughts of war than I; nor more ungrateful of the necessary means of preserving peace. That which is the reproach of human nature, could never originally belong to it; nor can any thing more expose its ignominious deprivation, than it should ever be necessary, the sword should dispute right, and the longest decide it.

In the matters of religion, which is every man's business and whose sphere as it is higher must be proportionably wider and more comprehensive; I hope it is your lordship's constant care to add unto clearness and rectitude of thought, the pleasantness of taste; and that you apprehend it to consist, not more in a scheme of notions, than of vital principles; and that your love to it proceeds from hence, that you relish it and feel you live by it. You are hereby fortified against the reproach that attends it from their contempt of it, who are every day assaulting heaven, and would have the war not ended, but only transferred thitherward. That which some vent, and others admire as wit; even paganism itself has condemned as foolishness. Your lordship is in no more danger to be altered hereby from your chosen course, than a man in his health and senses, by satyrs against eating and drinking. I reckon your lordship is so much taken up with the great things of religion, as to be less taken with the adventitious things, men have thought fit to affix to it. I do not more emulate your lordship in any thing than a disdain of bigotry, nor more honour any thing I discern in you than true catholicism. And recounting what things and persons do truly belong to a church I believe your lordship is not professedly of a larger church, as counting it too large for you, but too narrow; and that you affect not to be of a self-distinguished party. Nor, besides the opportunity of avowing the just honour and obligations I have to your lordship and your noble consort, with my sincere concern for your hopeful and numerous offspring, did any thing more invite this address to your lordship, than the agreeableness of such your sentiments, to the mind and spirit of

My lord,

Your lordship's most justly devoted, and

most faithful, humble servant,

JOHN HOWE.

A
SERMON
ON THE
THANKSGIVING DAY,

December 2, 1679.

Psalm 29. ver. 11.

The Lord will bless his people with peace.

YOU so generally know the occasion of this our solemn assembly at this time; that none can be in doubt concerning the suitableness of this portion of Scripture, for our present consideration. Our business is to celebrate the divine goodness, in preserving our king abroad, and restoring him home in safety, after he had been the happy instrument of bringing about that peace, which puts a period to a long continued, wasting, and dubious war; under which we, and all Europe have groaned these divers years. And if we find the favourable workings of providence to concur and fall in with a divine word, pointing them to God's own people; as this for instance, the Lord will bless his people with peace; that is, he will vouchsafe this blessing to his own people in the fittest season, as it must be understood; this adds so much the more grateful and pleasant relish, to the mercy we are this day to acknowledge. It cannot but do so with right minds, unto which nothing is more agreeable than to desire and covet such favour, as God shews to his own people; and to be made glad with his inheritance, (Ps. 106. 4, 5.) from an apprehension that there must be somewhat very peculiar in such mercy, as God vouchsafes to his own, to a people peculiar and select, severed and set apart for himself, from the rest of men. It is true indeed that peace, abstractly considered, is neither the appropriate, nor the constant privilege of such a people; they neither alone enjoy it, nor at all times, when it is brought about, even for them; they have other partakers: but yet, such favours of providence as are of larger extent, and

reach to many besides God's own people, have a more peculiar, benign aspect upon them; and are attended, with reference to them; with such consequences, as wherein others, without being made of this people of his, are not sharers with them. Some intimation there is of this in this psalm, which the title speaks, a psalm of David; and which some think to refer unto the wars managed by him in his time with the Moabites, signified by the wilderness of Kadesh; and the Syrians, signified by the cedars of Lebanon, of whom he speaks in the prophetic stile, as if, by the terrible and amazing appearances of God's power against them, they were thunderstruck, like the trees of a forest, or as the hinds that are wont to inhabit amongst them. And so it is concluded, and shut up with this Epiphonema in the end of the psalm; the Lord will give strength to his people, the Lord will bless his people with peace, that is, he is in war their strength, and their felicity in peace; in war, he is the Author of all that power, wherewith they are enabled to oppose and overcome potent enemies; and in peace, he is, their truly felicitating good, and makes them by his own vouchsafed presence, a truly blessed people.

It is the latter of these, peace unto which the present occasion confines us. And concerning that, we might in the first place, note from the text, that wheresoever it is brought about, God is the Author of it, "God will bless his people with peace." That title which the Scripture gives him, the God of peace, with the many expressions of like import, wherewith it abounds, can leave them in no doubt, concerning the divine influence and agency in bringing about the grateful intervals of peace, after desolating, bloody wars, who have any reverence for the Sacred Oracles. And indeed, to insist upon such a subject as this, in a case so plain, so acknowledged amongst men who believe the Bible, were to reproach the auditory, as if it were made up of sceptics and atheists or of them that did not believe this world was made by God, or that it was made by him only by some casual stroke and without design; that he cared not for his reasonable, intelligent creatures when he had made them, what became of them, nor did at all concern himself in their most considerable concernments. I shall not therefore insist upon this, which seems rather slid in, and supposed in the text, or taken for granted; for among a people in visible relation and subjection to God, it had been as great an incongruity industriously to assert and prove such a thing, as it would be, by an elaborate discourse to prove that there is a sun in the firmament unto men that continually partake and enjoy his light and influences; and to whose sense, the vicissitudes

and distinctions of day and night, by his presence and absence, are brought under constant notice every twenty-four hours. I shall therefore I say pass on to what appears more directly to be the design of the text, and that seems to be twofold: first to represent to us in general the great blessing of peace, wherein, when God sees it fit he is pleased to make his own people partakers with others, secondly, because it is not without design that it is said, he will bless his people with peace, unto whom it is plain, this alone is not an appropriate privilege; it seems further designed to intimate, and couch in the concurrence and concomitancy of such things, as, superadded to peace, will make it a complete blessing. "The Lord will bless his people with peace." He will give them peace so and upon such terms, and with such concomitants and consequences, that to them it shall prove a real and a full blessing. These two things, therefore, I intend to insist upon—To shew you how valuable a good and (in the large and common sense) a blessing peace is, as it stands in opposition to bloody and desolating wars. And then—I shall shew you, what additions and concomitants are necessary to make it a complete blessing, such as may be appropriate and peculiar to God's own people, and so make use of the whole.

I. I shall shew you briefly, how valuable a good, peace is in itself, as it stands opposed unto bloody and destructive wars. And this will best be seen, by stating and viewing it in that opposition, and by representing to you somewhat of the horror of war; which we may do, by viewing it in its causes, in itself, and in its dismal consequences, wherewith it is wont to be attended. Consider it in its causes, and they are principally these two, the wickedness of men and the just vengeance of God thereupon. These two concurring, and falling in together, must be understood to be the causes of so great a calamity among men in this world; and I shall only consider these two in their complication, and not speak to them distinctly and separately. Very plain it is, that war is a mark of the apostacy, and stigmatizes man as fallen from God, in a degenerate revolted state; it is the horrid issue of men's having forsaken God, and of their being abandoned by him, to the hurry of their own furious lusts and passions; the natural and the penal effect of their having severed themselves and broke loose from the divine government. From whence are wars? Are they not from your lusts? Jam. 4. 1.—God most justly punishes men's injustice, not by infusing malignity, which he needs not, into their minds and natures; and which it is impossible he can be the Author of, whose very nature itself is goodness, and purity, and love; but having forsaken him, rebelled against him, disclaimed him as their

Ruler, refused any longer to be subject to him, they are forsaken of him, and left to take vengeance for it on one another; of which there cannot be a greater instance, than that when controversies do arise between men and men, between nation and nation, kingdom and kingdom, one people and another, it is presently to be decided by a bloody sword. This speaks a monstrous degeneracy in the intellectual world and from the original rectitude that belongs to the nature of men, which in his primitive state did stand in a temperament of reason and love. That there should be differences about *meum* and *tuum* in a creature of that constitution is itself a horrid thing; but then that such differences are to be determined only by violence, that presently they must hereupon run into war! Good God! What an indication is this, that reason, wisdom, justice, and love, are fled from this earth! And it speaks rebellion against God in the highest kind, it is a subversion of the most fundamental law of his kingdom over the intelligent world; Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, with all thy might, and thy neighbour as thyself.

It is impossible there should be any such thing as war in the world, but by the violation of this most fundamental divine law, the principal and most important thing that this government does as it were consist in over reasonable creatures, their loving him above all, and one another as themselves. This law observed must make this earth another heaven; this law violated and broken, makes it another hell. Men being fallen from God, and having lost their acquaintance with him, and all relish of divine things, think to repair their loss out of this sensible world, whereof no man thinks he hath enough; desire of more, blinds their eyes, that they cannot judge of right and wrong. Hence every man's cause, is right in his own eyes, appetite is the only measure they judge by; and power (whatsoever of it any one can grasp) the instrument by which they execute their perverse judgment. A dismal spectacle and subject of contemplation to the inhabitants of the purer, and more peaceful regions! To behold a divine offspring, the sons of God, now transformed into sons of the earth, and tearing in pieces one another, for what some possess and others covet! Yea, and to a calm uninterested spectator on our own globe, this can be no grateful prospect, to view the history of all times, and nations, and take notice how full it is of such tragedy: countries from age to age made *Aceldamas*, fields of blood, on this account of extending or confining empire and dominion; of invading another's, or defending one's own: but hereupon it is not strange when a world of intelligent, reasonable creatures are thus gone off from God,

and in rebellion against him in the most fundamental part of his government : that he suffers them to be the executioners of his just wrath, upon one another. And if we thus look upon war, first, in this its complicated causes, it is the opprobrium, the reproach of human nature, of intelligent reasonable creatures. But next look upon it in itself, and what is it but the destruction of human lives, of creatures, made after the image of God? of whom he has so high a value and whose lives, even for that very reason, he is pleased to fence and secure, by a severe law ; whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed ; for in the image of God made he man. But here is a formed design of destroying human lives by multitudes, lives of creatures, bearing the image of God. And by how much the more necessary this is in many cases, so much the more grievous and calamitous a thing it is that when to cut off and destroy by multitudes, so precious things as human lives, is tragical and horrid not to do it is so much worse ! Yea, that war itself is become an art, and that the valour and skill, which belong to it are laudable excellencies, is all aggravation of the sadness of this case.

And if we do consider the consequences and effects which do ensue upon such war, how full of horror and frightfulness are they and those most of all, that are least of all thought on and that lie most out of view ; for besides that property is gone, and no man knows what to call his own, laws lose their force, magistrates their authority and reverence, civil government is disobeyed and despised, common order is violated and turned into confusion, families torn in pieces, countries laid waste and desolate, towns and cities sacked, ravaged and made ruinous heaps : besides all this (I say) the sacred rites and mysteries of religion are neglected, and profaned, its holy solemnities interrupted worshipping assemblies are broken up. Men have little opportunity left them to mind their great concerns with God, and for another world ; care for immortal souls, when it is most necessary, is thrown out of doors, and reasonable creatures that should be employed adoring and worshipping their great Creator, the God of their lives, are employed in designing the mutual destruction of one another's lives, and it may be that is least considered, which carries the most of horror in it, that multitudes are hurried down to perdition, neither dreaded by themselves, nor apprehended by the destroyer ; souls are passing in shoals, into eternity, they not considering it who are sent, nor they that send them ! And what sport does this make for devils, those envious apostate spirits, that first drew men into a like apostacy ; that when God had given this earth to the children of men assigning to themselves a worse abode amidst infernal darkness, and flames, they should be tearing one another in pieces about this

their portion, under the sun, making God's bounty to them the occasion of their doing all manner of violence to one another! That the prince of the apostacy the usurping god of this world should have the opportunity of beholding man, sometime by divine grant the Lord of it, now its slave and his captive by it! Led by him at his will into whatsoever is most repugnant to the will, and the very nature of his Maker. That whereas he was at first made after God's own image a Godlike creature resembling his Maker especially in spirituality, and love; he now more resembles in sensuality beasts, and in malignity devils, and both by an inordinate love of this world; the friendship whereof, and a mind carnalized by it, is enmity against God, (Jam. 4. 4.—Rom. 8. 7.) and and whereof also, because every man thinks his own share too little, he becomes any one's enemy, that hath more of it than himself.

And thus have devils the pleasure of beholding men, by this very gift and expression of God's love and kindness to them transformed into enmity, and hatred of himself, and one another; forsaken of him, and destroying each other, and hastening once more into their horrid society, that as they were accomplices with them in their first rebellion, they may be partakers and associates with them in woe and torment. The most dismal part of the story, is that which lies most out of sight. Now let all this be considered and put together and surely peace is a valuable thing, it speaks man in some degree returned to himself, and in a right mind, when he can agree and be content to let another live quiet, and unmolested by him one man another man and one nation another nation. Thus far does peace appear a blessing apart and by itself, a valuable good, and according to the common notion and estimate, it may be called a blessing wherewith God blesses his people in common with others. But we are further to consider

II. What things are requisite to make this a real, and a complete blessing, capable of being appropriated unto God's own peculiar people; which seems also to be intended here. The Lord will bless his people with peace. In speaking to this I shall do these two things. Mention the requisites themselves and—Shew their requisite-ness, or shew what is requisite to make external peace a real and peculiar blessing. And then shew you upon what account the addition and concomitancy of such things are requisite.

First. I shall shew you the things that are requisite.

1. Such peace, as we have been hitherto speaking of, is then truly a blessing, when there is, in conjunction, with it, a very copious effusion of the Spirit of God; in such a concomitancy, peace will make a people, a blessed people. When, after such a calamitous dispensation was over and at an end, as we read of

Ezek. 39. wherein ver. 23. God is said to hide his face and many of his people were carried into captivity, and many fell by the sword; it comes at length to this, he will no more hide his face, or cover it with so ireful and gloomy aspects, and appearances that it cannot be comfortably beheld. It is for this very reason, because he pours forth his Spirit, upon the whole house of Israel, as it is in ver. 29. of that chapter, pouring forth signifies a copious communication; and if the Spirit of God be copiously communicated, the best of blessings are in great abundance contained in it, which will infer, or countervail whatsoever is valuable or needful besides, to make the state of such a people a blessed state.

2. It will be so, when the gospel of peace has its free course, and a large spread in the world. When, in conjunction with beating of swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks, the law goes forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; and nations shall say, come, let us go up to the house of the Lord, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his statutes; as in that of Micah. 4. 2, 3. And,

3. When, according to the dictate of divine wisdom, kings do reign (as Prov. 8. 15.) and princes decree justice; when God's people have judges, as at the first, counsellors as at the beginning, Isa. 1. 26. able men, men of truth, fearing God, and hating covetousness, Exod. 18. 21. When he is pleased to set kings on the throne, that scatter the wicked with their eyes, and so to establish the throne in righteousness; when there is a design, driven by those that bear the civil sword, the sword of justice, to be a terror to evil doers, but a praise to them that do well; so as it may be said upon this account, they are the ministers of God for good, whom he has been pleased to set in such stations.

4. When God gives pastors after his own heart that are able, and do make it their business to feed his people with knowledge and understanding. When he inspires such to cry mightily, to warn men off from sin, when watchmen, set over his people, are faithful in the business of their station, at once both to save their people and themselves, from having their blood required at the hands of either; this will make a peaceful state, a happy state; it will contribute a great deal towards it. And again when hereupon in the

5. Place, wickedness languishes, the lusts of men droop and wither. There is some visible restraint, if there be not an universal mortification of such fruits of the flesh, as those that are spoken of Gal. 5. 19. Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, envyings, murders, drunken-

ness, revellings and such like, that are inconsistent with a share in the inheritance of the kingdom of God, as it after follows. This does much to the making a peaceful state of things, a blessed state; it takes away much of the occasion of further controversy between God and such a people. But

6. When there is a very great diffusion of a holy new nature, which carries the matter higher, and is a great addition, though in certain conjunction with the former; as it is when the lusts and works of the flesh do cease to be reigning, and rampant among them who live under the gospel through the victorious and more powerful operation of the Spirit of grace, breathing in it. For then by the influence of the same Spirit, not only such vicious inclinations are plucked up by the roots, as certainly withstand a people's felicity; but such positive principles are implanted, as tend to promote it. Yet since this conjunction is not constant but such insolences of wickedness, as more directly tend to make a people miserable, may be repressed by inferior causes. I therefore more expressly add, that then peace may be reckoned a certain and a full blessing, when with it we behold a divine offspring continually rising up, of men appearing to be born of God, and to have received a Godlike nature, apt to do good, and become blessings to the world. When there is a rising generation of such, not proselyted to this or that party, but to real substantial Godliness and Christianity. When multitudes are thus turned unto the Lord, when there are numerous conversions, a new creation is springing up in visible and multiplied instances, so as that holiness comes to be both an extensive and illustrious thing. When multitude comes to give reputation to serious religion, when it is no longer a reproach to be a visible fearer of God, because generally men are so. When it is looked upon as no fashionable thing to be a despiser of God and heaven, and to breathe out contempt of the divine power, that gave us breath. And

7. When hereupon, the divine government obtains and takes place in the minds and consciences of men, when his authority is owned, with reverential submission; then God does bless a people, when his fear spreads far and near God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him; as in that Ps. 67. the latter end. And again,

8. When there is a manifest power and prevalency of divine love amongst men, that bear the same name of christians, when that peace of God rules in their hearts, unto which they are all called in one body. When they observedly keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace, when they have peace one towards another so as that it may be seen that they are all the sons of peace, the children of the same Father who has conveyed

it into them, as part of that divine nature which he communicates to the regenerate seed; when there is a natural propensity to one another, that they can no more violate and tear that vital bond of love and peace that is among them than they can endure to tear their own flesh, or pluck out their own eyes. When peace among christians appears to be a connatural thing, not the product of conveniency and prudential considerations only but a nature which none can more endure to counteract, than to offer violence to themselves, a thing which nature admits not, whose laws never allow it to act against itself. And

9. Whereupon all this, God appears to be reconciled unto such a people; for in his favour is life. When all these things do concur, as so many indications of his being at peace with them, that is, that he has entirely forgiven them all former offences; that their sins and iniquities he remembers no more; and these concur with such things as partly make, and partly argue them, the objects of his delight, that he has written his law in their hearts, he has put his Spirit into them, he has made them a company of Godlike creatures like himself, whose very nature is love; they are his living resemblances in that very respect, expressing herein his virtues, who has called them out of darkness, into his own glorious and marvellous light. Hereupon such a people may reckon themselves secure of God's own presence, he is in the midst of them, and his glory ceases to hover, becomes with them a fixed thing, settles its station, as not about to discontinue or remove, their land may now be called, the land of Immanuel, and bears the inscription, God with us, the tabernacle of God is with them and he is resolved to dwell with them, and be their God, and avow them before all the world, for his peculiar people. After the many things that do concur together, in an inferior kind, as the concomitants of a merely external peace, as that their sons grow up as plants, their daughters are so many polished corner stones, that join together the walls of a palace, that their garners be full, their sheep numerous, their oxen strong, and that there be no complaining in their streets; after all these things, it is subjoined, yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord, all the forementioned things, alone, will never make a blessing, worthy of a people peculiar to God. But when it can be said that the Lord is their God, they are a happy people indeed, Ps. 144. 12, 15. such as these are the things requisite to make peace a complete blessing. But now we are

Secondly. To shew you the requisiteness of the concurrence and concomitancy of such things, to the mentioned purpose; or how it may appear, that such things as these are necessary to complete this blessing, or to make it a truly valuable, or a special blessing, in order here to note,

1. That there is such a thing as a special blessing, very distinguishable from such blessings as are merely common. We read of one Jabez, 1 Chron. 4. 9, 10. said to be more honourable than his brethren; and somewhat very remarkable (as we are to reckon, when to the divine wisdom it was thought fit to be inserted amidst a genealogical discourse) is further said of him, namely, that he called to the God of Israel, saying, O that thou wouldst bless me indeed, &c. and it is added: God granted what he requested. It seems, besides what goes under the common notion of blessing, he reckoned there was somewhat more peculiar, which he calls blessing indeed. There is a known Hebraism in that expression, what we read bless me indeed, is bless me in blessing me; as if he had said, let me have a blessing within a blessing; let me have that blessing whereof the other is but a cortex, the outside; let me have that blessing, that is wrapt up and enclosed in the external blessing. And because it is said, and God granted his request, we have reason to understand it was somewhat very peculiar that God vouchsafed unto him; and that account which some give us, has a look that way, that God vouchsafed him somewhat more extraordinary in the kind of mental and intellectual endowments: for we are otherwise informed, that this Jabez became a noted doctor among the Jews, and that the city, called after his name, was thereupon afterwards the residence of such as were most learned in their laws, Vatabl. apud Critic. That is to be blessed indeed, to have these things conferred, that do reach the mind and affect the inner man; to be blessed with spiritual blessings from the heavenly places, as in that Eph. 1. 3. There is a spiritual sort of blessing, that may be enclosed in the external blessing; and particularly in this of peace, which while it is common to the people of God with other men, is itself not common.

2. I further note, that the things I have mentioned to you, they are of that special kind, they are either immediate spiritual blessings, or subservient to such; whereupon now we may, from several considerations, evince to you, that without them such an external good, as this of peace, is not a complete blessing.

(1.) It is no argument of God's special favour. The best and most valuable blessings are from the *Ευδοκία θεληματος*, *the good pleasure of his will*, Eph. 1. 3, 4, 5. Other men may enjoy external benefits, may both prosper in war, and flourish in peace, as well, and often more than God's own people. You read of time, wherein the whole earth is said to be at rest and quiet, Isa. 14. 7. Therefore mere peace is no mark of special divine favour, and so is not, abstractly considered, a complete blessing, not a self-desirable thing.

(2.) Men are not made by it the better men. They may en-

joy peace, and being carnal-minded men before, may still continue so, as great strangers to God as they were, as vain and sensual, as profligate and licentious, as useless in the world, as mischievous, every way as ill men as ever. And

(3.) They may, by mere external peace, become so much the worse men, that may be an occasion to them of their growing worse and worse, the prosperity of fools (that is of wicked men) slays and destroys them, Prov. 1. 32. It is an observation that runs through the course of time, that as wars at length beget an enforced peace, so peace infers free trade and commerce, and that plenty, and that pride and wantonness; so these run us back in an easy, but unhappy circle, to be as we were, in war again. And if that prove not the present, or the speedy consequence that ensues which is worse than war; unless God vouchsafe that other sort of blessing, which will influence and better men's minds. Vice springs up in the more fattened soil, men's lusts will soon prove more oppressive tyrants, than they can have freed themselves from, by the most just and most prosperous war; and will subdue them to a far viler and more ignoble servitude. An ingenious writer of those affairs observes that the former Scipio opened the way to the Roman power, the latter to their luxury; their virtue languished, and they were conquered by their own vices, who before could conquer the world. That noted moralist says, *Infirmi est animi non posse pati divitias*, it is a weak mind that cannot bear a prosperous condition; but where are there minds strong enough to bear it, if they be not blessed from above, with somewhat better than that prosperity itself?

(4.) Men may, notwithstanding mere external peace be as miserable in this and in the other world, as if they had never known it; and much more, if by it they have been the more wicked. I beseech you consider, are they a blessed people? or is that a blessed man, between whom and eternal misery there is but a breath; He may but breathe another breath, and be in the midst of flames; is he happy this moment, that may be as miserable as any devil the next? Those things can only be complete blessings to any, that are inseparable ones, and that will make them for ever blessed. For me to have but such a blessing as does not make me blessed; what an unblest blessing is this! A philosopher can tell you, blessedness cannot be a thing separable from myself; not a *χωριστον τι*, *Arist.* it can much less be such a thing as may leave me miserable to all eternity, least of all what may make me so, by degenerating into a curse as Malachi. 2. 2. therefore these are demonstrations, that mere external peace, without such additions as you have heard of, can never be a complete blessing, nor such as can be understood vouchsafed to the people of God as their ul-

timate and consummative felicity. It must in the mean time be acknowledged, that as a people may belong to God externally, more than another people; and may sometime be externally more reformed, than at other times, so peace, with other external good things, may thereupon be afforded them, as less expressive marks of God's favour, and approbation of their more regular course. And by the tenour of God's particular covenant with the people of Israel, might more certainly be expected so to be. Yet this is a state wherein it is not reasonable—or safe for any finally to acquiesce.

III. I therefore now come to the promised use, which will correspond to the two general heads, I have been discoursing of: to let you see—what cause of thanksgiving we have in reference to the former, the blessing of peace abstractly considered, and—what cause of supplication we have in reference to the latter, the additions that are requisite to make it a complete blessing.

First. As to the former. Since peace is so valuable a thing considered apart, as you have heard it is; this points out to us the matter of thanksgiving, for which this day is appointed that God has preserved our king, amidst so innumerable dangers abroad; that he has brought him home to us in safety; that he has made him the instrument of that peace that we find is at length brought about, wherein he is returned to us a greater conqueror than if he had routed and destroyed never so potent armies of our enemies in the field. We have reason to understand the matter so. By prevailing in war, he had only conquered by force; by prevailing for peace, he has conquered by wisdom and goodness. By prevailing in war he had only conquered the bodily power of our enemies, or their baser part; by prevailing for peace he has conquered their minds. By prevailing in war he had brought about the good only of one side; by prevailing for peace, he has brought about the real benefit of both sides, a far more diffusive blessing. By prevailing in war he had conquered enemies; by prevailing for peace he has conquered enmity itself. By prevailing in war, he had overcome other men; but in prevailing for peace considering his martial spirit, and his high provocations he has done a far greater thing, he has conquered himself, whom none ever conquered before. Besides what this great blessing of peace generally considered, contains in itself, we ought to amplify it to ourselves; being brought about by such means, wherein we have so particular a concern. This ought to add with us a very grateful relish to it, for it is a glory to our nation that God has set a prince on the English throne that could signify so much to the world: the beams of that glory God hath cast on him, reflect and shine upon his people; to be made the head among

other nations, and not the tail, God hath in his word taught us not to count it an inconsiderable thing. And it is our more peculiar glory that our king is renowned not by throwing death, and destruction every where round about him; but by spreading the benefits included in peace, through the neighbouring nations; and his return to us, leaving the rest of Europe only to lament that they all live not under his government. I pray God he may meet with no ungrateful returns, and that none may be so ill minded as to grudge at power so lodged as to save us, who were less concerned at its being lodged where it could only be designed to destroy us. In the mean time, it might excite us to the higher pitches of thankfulness, to Almighty God, for this blessing of the present peace, if we did consider—both what it hath cost, and—whereto it is improvable. But the former consideration I shall not insist upon lest any should make an undue use of it; and the latter I leave to the following particular which we are next to proceed to,

Secondly. To shew what matter of supplication remains to us, upon the latter account. That is with reference to such things as are yet wanting to make this blessing of peace a complete blessing, and without which it cannot be understood to be such; but we may be left at last a most miserable people and so much the more miserable, by how much the higher favours we have to account for, that not being improved must have been thrown away upon us. The mercies included in the peace, will be unimproved and lost, without the mentioned additions. Whereof all the several heads that were recited belong to one, namely, that of spiritual blessing. That therefore, in the general, we have to pray for, that God may be said to bless us indeed to bless us in blessing us; namely, that he would bless us with spiritual blessings, in the heavenlies (that is, in heavenly things or from the heavenly places) in Christ Jesus, as Eph. 1. 3. Let us I pray you, learn to distinguish between a self desirable good, that in its own nature is such, so immutably and invariably, that it can never degenerate, or cease to be such; and what is only such by accident, and in some circumstances may be much otherwise, spiritual good, that of the mind and spirit and which makes that better, especially that which accompanies salvation, (Heb. 6. 9.) That runs into eternity, and goes with us into the other world, is of the former sort. External good, is but *res media* capable of being to us sometimes good, and sometimes evil as the case may alter. Blessings of this kind may become curses Mal. 2. 2. I will curse your blessings, yea I have cursed them already. A man's table may become his snare, and that which was for his welfare, a trap, Ps. 69. 22. Merely external blessings, are curses, when they become the fuel of

lusts, when they animate men unto contests against heaven, rebellious against the divine government; when like Jeshurun, men wax fat by them, and kick against heaven, Deut. 32. this we are always liable to till spiritual blessings intermingle with our other blessings; and nothing should more convince the world, that the kindest and most benign part of the divine government lies in immediate influences on the minds of men; and that consequently their own felicity depends thereon. Let all things that can be imagined concur in the kind of external good, and they can never make him a happy man, that has an ill mind; he will always be his own hell and carry that about with him wheresoever he goes; he will be a constant spring and fountain of misery to himself, misery and he cannot be separated from one another: there is no peace to the wicked, saith my God; but he will be always a troubled sea, whose waters cast forth mire and dirt, Isa. 57. 20, 21. The philosophy of pagans would have made them ashamed to place their felicity in any thing without, or foreign to themselves.

But we are christians and shall we not much more be ashamed to take other, or even opposite measures of blessedness, to those which are given us by our divine Master! To be poor in spirit, upon just accounts mourners, meek, hungry and thirsty after righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peace-makers, to submit to be persecuted for righteousness sake, these are his characters of a blessed man; and he places that blessedness itself in congenerous things, Matt. 5. 3, 4, 5. &c. Let us learn from him, and collect that nothing but wickedness can make us miserable. What an overflowing deluge have we in view? tending to subvert our religion and our civil state together! nor have we another effectual remedy in view, but the Spirit of God if he will vouchsafe to pour it forth. The great enemy of mankind, is come in upon us like a flood, and only the Spirit of the Lord can lift up a standard against him, Isa. 59. 19. The Spirit of the Lord would be to us as a purifying flame, to burn up our filthiness, and enkindle in us that divine love, that would make us zealous of good works. And this should be with us the matter of earnest and incessant supplication not with diffidence, for he will give his Spirit, to them that ask him. Luke 11. 13. Not with diminishing thoughts of the necessity, and value of the gift; take heed of that, for that were to be miserable, and undone by a principle; to be misled, by a profane false judgment, into the contempt of the most highly valuable things, that are most necessary to our true welfare; and which are all contained in the gift of the Spirit, as you may see by comparing, Mat. 7. and Luke 11. with one another. In the one place it is said: he will give good things to them that ask him, in the other place it is said

his Spirit; implying, that the gift of the Spirit involves in it all good things. And certainly nothing can be good to any man, till he hath that Spirit, that makes him good; and we are greatly concerned to supplicate mightily for the effusion of that blessed Spirit, for these two purposes especially. First, that there may be a larger diffusion amongst us of vital religion, whereby we shall be at peace with God. Secondly, that christian love may more abound, whereby christians may be composed to mutual peace, and more disposed to mutual communion with one another.

1. That there may be a larger diffusion of vital religion. Wherein stands indeed their being at peace with God, when there is a mutual amplexus between him and them, mind touching mind, and spirit spirit; when he does, by his Spirit embrace the spirits of men and infuse light and life into them, and adapt and suit them for his communion. To this purpose, we have great cause to beg and supplicate earnestly, for a greater pouring forth of his Spirit, that this living religion may spread amongst us; for we appear to be under a doom, while it does not so, that seeing we should see, and not perceive, &c. Isa. 6. O the fearful guilt incurred, one Lord's-day after another! When great assemblies meet together, multitudes are besought and supplicated that they would be reconciled to God, but too few listen; peace with God seems not a valuable thing with us, his favour in which is life, is little set by. When with many a one a treaty is continued, in order to peace through many years, seven, ten, twenty, thirty, nay forty years, and yet this treaty brings not about a peace at last; but they stand out still hardened in their impenitency, infidelity, obstinacy, enmity against God and his Christ, through the power and dominion, that an earthly, vain, carnal mind has in them, and over them: what can our peace with men signify in this case? What, do we not know, that the friendship of this world is enmity against God? Jam. 4. 4. 1 Joh. 2. 15. And that it is as impossible, for a man to be a sincere lover of God, and an over intense lover of this world, as to have two Gods; that is, two supreme powers to govern him, two supreme goods to satisfy him. This must breed a perpetual war, till the case alters between thee, and him that made thee; and woe to him that strives with his Maker. To have the wrath of God, armed with omnipotency engaged against thee; and yet that thou shouldst not covet peace that yet thou shouldst not cry for peace! To have the peace-making blood of thy Redeemer crying to thee, O be at peace with God! to have him that shed it thus bespeaking thee, I am ready to do the part of a days-man, I have died upon the cross, that I might do so, that I might effect, and bring about a peace be-

tween God and thee ; I am ready to mediate, make use of me, I will undertake on God's part, that he shall pardon thee, that he shall forgive thee, and let the controversy fall, if yet thy heart on thy part will yield, melt and relent, and thou cry for mercy. He came with this design into this world, the proclamation of angels at his coming spake his design ; Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, and good-will towards men. Shall not all this be believed ? or shall men pretend to believe it, and not consider it, or not look upon it as a considerable thing ?

2. And there is as much need too, that we supplicate for this spirit, as a spirit of mutual love among christians, to reconcile them to one another. Which indeed is also but to christianize them, to make vital religion take place with them ; for that same Spirit of Christ, which animates his body, and makes them his living members, makes them such to one another. And the matter speaks itself, that opposite spirit unto truly christian peace and love, which appears amongst us, nothing but the Spirit of Christ can overcome ; we are not to expect a cure of our distempers in this kind, but by the pouring forth of this Blessed Spirit. And if there be not a cure, we are certainly to expect the pouring forth of his wrath ; and things look with a threatening aspect upon us to this purpose. Now that opportunity is so inviting, God's call so loud and the way so plain ; that yet an indisposition to peace should be so obstinate, that breaches should be kept open by trifles, and unaccountable things of which no man of sense can pretend to give an account, that there is strife too manifestly not from the love of truth, whereof not one hair needs be lost, (nor of any other valuable thing) but merely from the love of strife ; when as to the most material and important truths, men are agreed, but would seem to disagree, they mean the same things, but impute to one another a different meaning ; and pretend to know the others mind better than themselves, that on this pretence they may quarrel with them : all this looks fatally. And our unjust angers at one another are too expressive of God's just anger with us all ; that his good Spirit, that spirit of love, peace, kindness, benignity is so notoriously resisted, vexed, grieved, and despited by us. And the consequences are likely for some time to be very dismal ; though when God hath proceeded in a way of punitive animadversion, so far as he shall judge necessary for the vindication of his own name, and the honour of our religion so scandalously misrepresented to the world, it will be easy to him by one victorious effort of that spirit to reduce the Christian church to its original genuine temper and make it shine again, in its own native, light and lustre. But in the mean time, I cannot see that there

is greater need of an overpowering influence of the Holy Ghost to draw men into union with Christ, and thereby to bring back apostate souls to God, or to work in them faith, and repentance; than to bring them into union upon christian terms with one another. Or that the love of this world, or any of the most ignominious sensual lust, or vice (drunkenness, gluttony, or any other,) are more hardly, or more rarely overcome, than the envy, wrath, malice which Christians ordinarily are not at all shy of expressing toward one another.

I speak upon some experience lamenting that having this occasion (which sense of duty will not let me balk) I have also so much cause to mention that foregoing observation. For I cannot forget, that sometime discoursing with some very noted persons, about the business of union among christians it hath been freely granted me, that there was not so much as a principle left (among those the discourse had reference to) upon which to disagree; and yet the same fixed aversion to union, continued as before, as a plain proof they were not principles but ends we were still to differ for. In this case what but the power of an Almighty Spirit, can overcome? To quote texts of Scripture upon such occasions signifies nothing even to those who profess a veneration for those holy oracles of God. Let such places be mentioned as are expressly directed against division, wrath, strife, slandering or backbiting one another and they avail no more, than if the vice were the virtue, or the virtue the vice; no more than if it were a command to christians to malign, to traduce, to backbite one another. To urge so plain and numerous Scriptures in these cases, it is to as little purpose, as to oppose one's breath to a storm; it is the same thing, as if all Scriptures, that had any aspect or look this way, were quite put out of the canon; and all this, with men zealous for the divine authority of the Scripture, and indeed it is come to that pass, as to look like a jest to expect that any man should be swayed by Scripture, or the most convincing reason agreeable thereto, against his own passions, or humour; or against the (supposed, though never so grossly mistaken) interest of his party.

Nor is it mere peace that is to be aimed at, but free, mutual Christian communion with such, as do all hold the head, Christ. As peace between nations, infers commerce; so among Christian churches, it ought to infer, a fellowship in acts of worship, I wish there were no cause to say this is declined, when no pretence is left against it, but false accusation; none but what must be supported by lying, and calumny. Too many are busy at inventing of that which is no where to be found, that exists not in the nature of things, that they may have a colour for continued distance. And is not this to fly in the face of the autho-

rity, under which we live, that is the ruling power of the kingdom of Christ, the Prince of peace? It is strange they are not ashamed to be called Christians, that they do not discard and abandon the name that can allow themselves in such things! and it is here to be noted, that it is quite another thing, what is in itself true or false, right or wrong; and what is to be a measure or boundary of Christian communion. Are we yet to learn that Christian communion is not amongst men that are perfect; but that are labouring under manifold imperfections, both in knowledge and holiness! and whatsoever mistake in judgment, or obliquity in practice can consist with holding the head ought to consist also with being of the same Christian communion; not the same locally which is impossible but the same occasionally, as any providence invites at this or that time, and mentally in heart and spirit at all times. And to such peace (and consequently communion) we are all called in one body, Col. 3. 15. We are expressly required to receive one another (which cannot but mean into each other's communion) and not to doubtful disputations, Rom. 14. 1. If any be thought to be weak and thereupon to differ from us in some or other sentiments, if the difference consist with holding the head, they are not, because they are weak to be refused communion, but received; and received because the Lord has received them ver. 3. All that we should think Christ has received into his communion, we ought to receive into ours. Rom. 15. 7. Scriptures are so express to this purpose that nothing can be more. And indeed to make new boundaries of Christian communion is to make a new christianity, and a new gospel, and new rules of Christ's kingdom; and by which to distinguish subjects and rebels, and in effect to dethrone him to rival him in his highest prerogative; namely, the establishing the terms of life and death, for men living under his gospel. It is to confine salvation, in the means of it, to such or such a party, such a church, arbitrarily distinguished from the rest of christians; as if the privileges of his kingdom belonged to a part only; and that for instance, the Lord's table were to lose its name, and be no longer so called, but the table of this or that church, constituted by rules of their own devising. For if it be the Lord's table, they are to keep it free, to be approached upon the Lord's terms, and not their own. In the mean time, what higher invasion, can there be of Christ's rights? and since the Christian church became so over wise above what is written, in framing new doctrines, and rules of worship; how miserably it hath languished, and been torn in pieces, they cannot be ignorant, who have read any thing of the history of it.

And indeed there is not a difference to be found, amongst them that hold the head, but must be so minute, that it cannot be a pretence for refusing communion: for true Christian cha-

rity will, at least, resolve it into weakness. And men are generally so kind to themselves, that he from whom another differs, will be very apt to think himself the stronger, then does the rule conclude him, you that are strong bear the infirmities of the weak, and do not dispute with them, but receive them. This obligation immediately lies on the strong, and therefore must take hold of them that think themselves so, not to dispute with the others, but receive them; because the Lord has received them. Does he take them into his communion, and will not you take them into yours? To profess want of charity in excuse is to excuse a fault by a wickedness; it is to usurp Christ's judgment seat, and invade his office, Rom. 14. 4, 10. Therefore wheresoever there is any such case to be found, that let a man be never so sound in the faith, never so orthodox, let him be in all things else never so regular through his whole conversation, if he do not submit to some doubtful thing, thought perhaps a matter of indifferency on the one side and unlawful on the other; this person must be excluded Christian communion for no other known pretence, but only that he presumed to doubt somewhat in the imposed terms; for this very doubt he is to be treated as a heathen or publican or indeed no more to be received into our communion, than a dog, or a swine. How will this be justified at Christ's tribunal? but how much less justifiable is it, if not only communion be refused, but ruin designed to such as differ from us, about those our arbitrary additions to Christ's rules, and boundaries of Christian communion? and scarce can very serious persons (even in so serious a matter) forbear to smile, when they see them that have done so much harm to their fellow christians attempt to justify it, only in effect from their having power to do it; which would as well justify any thing, since no man does what he could not do.

Nor yet do I look upon this proneness to innovate, and devise other terms of Christian communion than Christ hath himself appointed, at the peculiar character of a party: but as a system of the diseased state of the Christian church, too plainly appearing in all parties: as I also reckon it too low and narrow a design, to aim at a oneness of communion among christians of this, and that single party and persuasion; which would but make so much the larger Ulcus and Tumor, a greater unnatural opostem and scession, in the sacred body of our blessed Lord. Nothing in this kind can be a design worthy of a christian, or suitable to the Spirit of Christ; but to have Christian communion extended, and limited, according to the extent and limits of visibly serious, and vital christianity. And hereof, that distinguishing judgment, which is necessary, is as little difficult, as in private conversation between a valuable friend, and a visible enemy; or in public and political, between a visible sub-

ject and a visible rebel. So far as a discrimination can, and according to Christ's rules (not our own unbounded fancies) ought to be made any serious living christian of whatsoever party or denomination I ought to communicate as such and with only such. For living christians to sever from one another, for to mingle with the dead, is an equal transgression; nor must our judgment of any such case, be guided by mere charity; but must guide it being itself guided by the known laws of Christ.

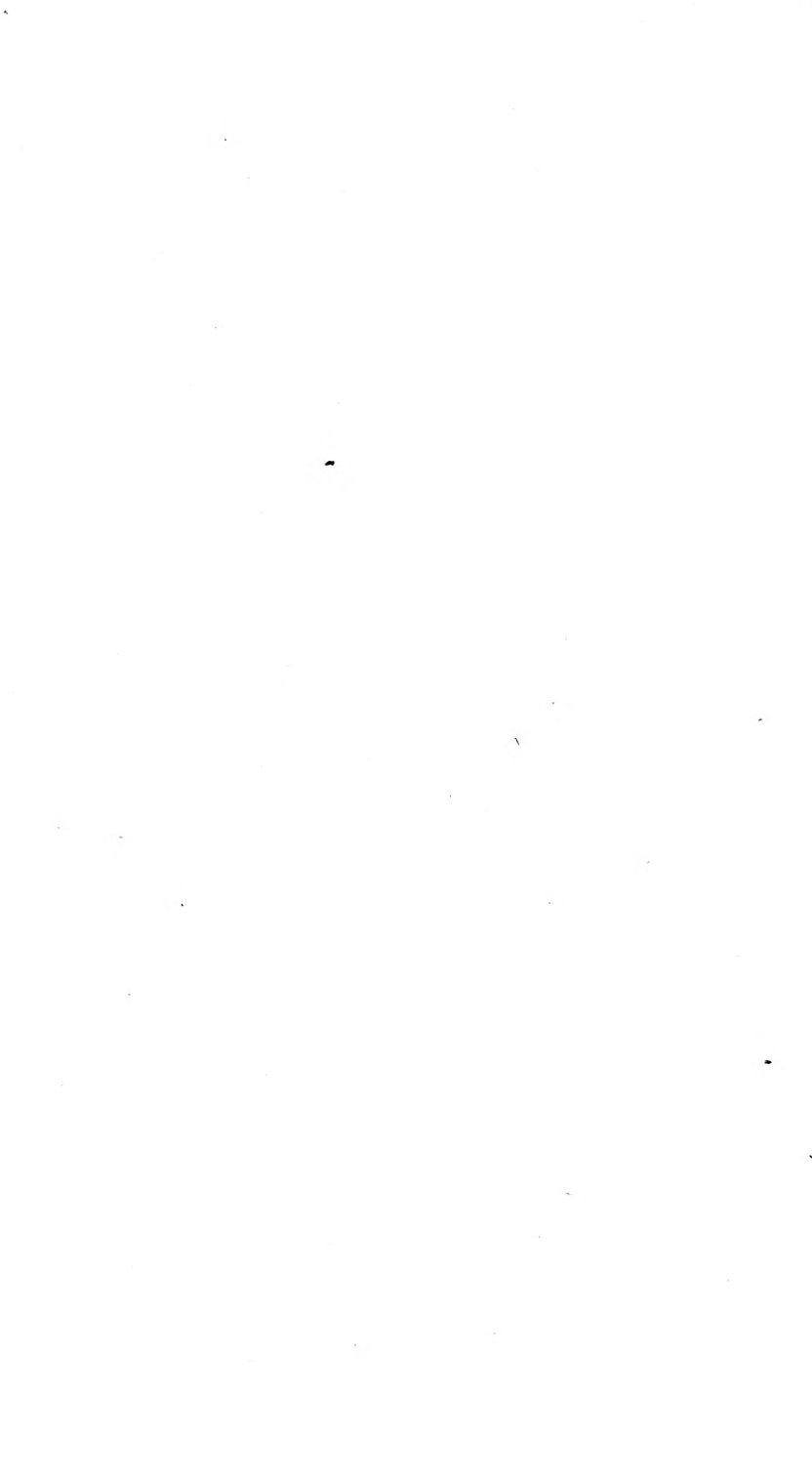
To sum up all; then shall we be in happy circumstances, when once we shall have learned to distinguish between the essentials of christianity, and accidental appendages; and between accidents of Christ's appointing, and of our devising; and to dread affixing of our own devices to so sacred institution. Much more, when every truth or duty, contained in the Bible, cannot be essential or necessary when we shall have learnt not only not to add inventions of our own, to that sacred frame, but much more not to presume to insert them into the order of essentials or necessities, and treat men as no christians, for wanting them. When the gospel shall have its liberty to the utmost ends of the earth. When the regenerating Spirit shall go forth with it, and propagate a divine and Godlike nature, every-where among men. When regeneration shall be understood to signify their communicating of such a nature: and such dispositions to men. When the weight of such words comes to be apprehended (he that hateth his brother, abideth in death, 1 Joh. 2.

When to be born of God, ceases to signify with us, being proselyted to this or that church, formed and distinguished by human device. When religious pretences cease to serve political purposes, when the interest of a party ceases to weigh more with us, than the whole Christian interest. When sincerity shall be thought the noblest embellishment of a christian. When the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow, and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together. And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, Isa. 4. 6, 7, 8, 9. Then will our peace be as a river, and our righteousness as the waves of the sea, Isa. 48. 18. And the glorious Lord will himself be to us a place of broad waters, ch. 33. 21. Where straits, and rocks, and shelves, shall no more affright, or endanger us. But if these things take no place with us, then have we cause to apprehend, that the things of our peace are yet hid from our eyes.

A
SERMON,
FOR THE
REFORMATION OF MANNERS.

Rom. 13. 4.

FOR HE IS THE MINISTER OF GOD, TO THEE FOR GOOD-----;



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THE temper of this our present assembly ought to be not only serious, but also mournful: for the occasion it hath reference to, is both very important, and most deplorable, and requires to be attended to, as with very intense consideration, so with deep sorrow. Even rivers of tears running down our eyes, as the words are, Ps. 119. 136. could not more than equal the sadness of the case, that is, the same there mentioned; because men (as is meant by the indefinite they) kept not God's law. That there should be such disorders in the intellectual world! That reasonable creatures should be so degenerate, that it is become hardly accountable why they are called so! They are said to be constituted and distinguished by reason, but disdain to be governed by it, accounting their senses and their vices, their better and wiser directors. With us the case is yet worse! that in a Christian city and kingdom, the insolencies of wickedness are so high, tumultuate at such a rate, and so daringly assault heaven, that the rigour of laws, the severity of penalties, the vigilancy and justice of magistrates, with the vigorous assisting diligence of all good men, in their several stations, are more necessary than sufficient to repress them. The same considerations that should excite our zeal, ought also to influence our grief; and the more apparently necessary it is that all possible endeavours be used for redress, and the stronger and more convictive arguments can be brought to

evince it, the deeper sense we ought to have of the evils that create this necessity, and the more feelingly we should lament them. And if this be the temper of this assembly and of all other, upon this occasion, this would give us measures, and set us right, as to the whole business of such a season. No body will then think it should be the business of the sermon, to please curious ears, or of the hearers to criticise upon the sermon, or that it ought to be my present business to compliment the worthy persons that have associated on this account, how laudable soever their undertaking is. But it will be the common agreed business of us all, to take to heart the sad exigency of the case, to be suitably affected with it, and quickened to what shall appear to be our duty in reference thereto. And though the words I have read do more directly respect the part and office of rulers, yet since there is that relation between them that govern, and those that are under government, that the duty of the one, will plainly imply, and connote the duty of the other. I shall so consider the words, as they may have a direct, or collateral reference to all sorts of hearers; and do point out the duty, as well of them that live under government, as of them that govern.

We are therefore to take notice, that the text admits, either of an absolute consideration, or a relative. *Absolutely* considered, it is in *assertion*; *relatively*, is in an argument. As the introductive particle, *for*, shews. For the *absolute* consideration of the words, as they are an assertion, we are to see what they assert. The person spoken of under the term *He*, is any ruler, supreme or subordinate, as in that parallel text, which we may take for a comment upon this, is expressed, I Pet. 2. 13, 14. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the King as supreme, or to governors sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. The words ἐξουσιαι, and ἀρχοντες, used in this context admit of the same extent. So among others, that great man Grotius understands this place also, not only of kings and princes, but whosoever are the *Tutores status publici*, (borrowing that expression from Seneca) any that are to take care of the public state, by whatsoever name they are designed. Indefinitely, any magistrate whatsoever. That which is said of such a one, contains an account of the original, and the end of his office and power. The *original* of it, that he is the minister of God, which signifies he is, as such, to act only by his authority, derived from him, as ver. 1. there is no power but from God, and the powers that be, are ordained of God. Which also implies, that such power

is to be used for God, and that consequently God is to be the ruler's first and last; and he is to be subordinate to God, both as his principle and end. Acting by his authority, he is by consequence to act for his interest; his minister, or servant is to serve him.

But besides what is thus implied of the general and ultimate end of the magistrate's power, in what is more directly said of the *original* of it; we have also a more explicit account of the *end* of it namely, the next, and more particular end, which is twofold. The end for *whom*, indefinitely expressed. For thee, that is, for every, or any one that lives under government; and by consequence, the whole governed community. For all the parts make up the whole. And further we have the end for *what*, that is, for good, the good of each individual, and of the whole community, as comprehending all the individuals. Thus we see what the words contain *absolutely* considered, as they are an *assertion*.

We are to consider them *relatively* as they were an *argument*. So the particle, *for*, shews their *relation*, and directs us backward, where we shall see what they argue. And we find they are brought in to enforce the duty before enjoined, which is twofold.—Primary, and more principal.—Consequential, deduced from the former.—The *primary* duty is that ver. 1. Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, or to the powers that are above us. Some blame the comparative expression, *sublimioribus*, *higher*, for which there is no pretence, from the word *ὑπερέχουσι*, that only signifies the powers mentioned, to be over us, whether in a higher or lower degree. Let them be less or more above us, we are to be subject to them.—The subsequent duty is double, first, that they are not to be resisted. A doctrine which from the terms of the context is capable of being so stated, as neither to be just matter of reproach or scandal to the wise and good, nor of sport and laughter to another sort of men. But that is not my present business. And secondly, that they are not to be (unduly) dreaded; or apprehended as a terror, that is, not otherwise, than (in the design of their appointment) they are so, namely, to evil works and the workers of them, not to the good, ver. 3. A fear of reverence is indeed due from all to their character, and the dignity of their station: a filial fear, that of children, for they are the fathers of their country; not a servile, or that of slaves, except from such as are so; evil doers, who are slaves of the vilest and more ignoble sort; to their own lusts, that enslave their minds, which might otherwise enjoy the most generous liberty, under the meanest and more oppressive external servitude. The text, according to its immediate reference, is but

an amplification of the reason alleged, why the magistrate is not to be looked upon with terror and affright, by any but such as resolve upon a profligately wicked course of life, not by such as intend only a course of well-doing. For, if thou be such, he is the minister of God to thee for good; his sword is only formidable when it fetches its blow from above, when it is bathed in heaven, as we may borrow the words, Isa. 34. 5. when it is wielded according to divine appointment, and God and he concur in the same stroke. When it is otherwise, it is true that the fallible or unrighteous human ruler, may for well doing afflict thee, and therein do thee wrong, but he can do thee no hurt, even though the stroke were mortal, Luke 12. 4. for our Lord forbids the fear of what is no worse; so said Socrates of them that persecuted him to death, they can kill me, but cannot hurt me. Who is it that can harm you (saith a great apostle) if ye be followers of that which is good? 1. Pet. 3. 13. And it is added, ver. 14. If ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye—And hath any man reason to be afraid of being happy?

But though this be the more immediate reference to these words "He is the minister of God to thee for good," and is therefore, not to be unduly feared, they do yet ultimately and more principally respect the grand precept first laid down, of being subject to the powers over us. Which is evident, for that upon this very ground, and the intervening consideration, which further illustrate it, this same precept is resumed and pressed upon conscience, and a necessity is put upon it, on the same account, namely, that because the magistrate, is the minister of God for good; and is to be a terror to evil-doers, and hath a sword put into his hands for that purpose, which he is not to bear in vain, but must be the minister of God in this kind, namely as a revenger, to execute wrath, upon such as do evil; that therefore we must needs be subject, and that not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. This is therefore the principal relation of these words, namely, as an argument to prove that he, the magistrate, is the minister of God to us for good; that therefore we ought not only not to resist him, when he is doing his duty, nor be afraid of him when we are but doing ours; but that we also ought to be subject to him; and that, not only that we may escape wrath, but that we may satisfy conscience. This is therefore the relation, according whereto we shall consider these words, namely, as they are an argument to enforce the required subjection. Which subjection that we may the more fully apprehend, it will be requisite with the more care to consider the propriety of the word, used to express it. It is a word that carries order, *ταξίς*, in the bowels of it, *υποτασσεσθαι*, ver. 1, and *υποτάσσεσθαι*, v. 4 and with the pre-

position $\upsilon\pi\theta$, it signifies order under another, as of inferiors under superiors; it imports therefore not to be subject only, but subordinate and subservient. And the form wherein it is here used, admitting of its being taken not strictly in the passive sense, but in the middle, whereupon it may be indifferently capable of being rendered actively, namely, not only to be subordinate, but by your own act, and with your own design subordinate yourselves to the magistrate, come into order under him, as he is God's minister invested by him with power for such and such purposes. This without straining, carries the sense yet higher.

And whereas $\tau\alpha\zeta\iota\varsigma$ is a word of known military import, and signifies the order of an army formed for battle, wherein every one knows his own rank, place and station, it is as if it were said, take your place, come into rank, that you may, under the commander's conduct, *in acie stare*; stand in order of battle; as the word $\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota\tau\omega\sigma\tau\epsilon\sigma\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\iota$ rendered to resist the ruler, is *ex adverso in acie stare, to stand in rank, or in battalia against him*. You are not only not to resist, but you are to assist, and in your place and station stand by him, whom God hath deputed to be his minister, as he is to promote common good, and be a terror to them that do evil. This was the just claim and demand of that excellent prince, Ps. 94. 16. Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers, and stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? This according to lexicographers of good note, is the import of that word, which we lay such weight upon, and accordingly very valuable expositors understand this place. By this time therefore you may see what place and order these words, I pitched upon, have in the series of the apostle's discourse; and thereupon what aspect they have upon the design for which we are met; pursuant whereto, they admit of being thus summed up.

That for this reason, and under this notion, as the magistrate is to be a terror to them that do evil, and therein God's minister for good to them over whom he is set; it belongs to every soul, or to all persons under his government, to be each one in his station, and according to his capacity, actively and with their own design, subordinate and subservient to him herein.—In speaking to this I shall shew,—That the magistrate is God's minister, upon the mentioned account, and that therefore such duty is incumbent upon all that live under government. The former whereof is a doctrinal proposition, the other the use of it.

I. That the magistrate is the minister of God, for the good of them over whom he is set. This we are to consider by parts. That

First. He is God's minister. Hereof none can doubt, who doubt or deny not the being of God. His being God's mi-

nister, signifies his deriving his power from him; who else can be the fountain of power, but he who is the Fountain of all being? It is true, the governing power hath not been always derived the same way, but it hath been always from the same fountain. When God was pleased to have a people within a peculiar sort of enclosure, more especially appropriate to himself; he was very particular in signifying his will, concerning all material things that concerned their government. What the form of it should be. What persons should govern, or in what way the power and right to govern should descend, and be conveyed to them. What laws they should be governed by. What the methods should be of governing, according to those laws.

Since it is very evident much is left to the prudence of men, always to be directed by general rules of equity, and as these allow, by immediate interpositions of his own providence; I resolve this discourse shall be involved in no controversies, and therefore shall not determine, nor go about to dispute as to what is so left, how much or how little that may be. But it is plain and indisputable, that the governing power he reserves, and claims to himself; that is, not to exercise it himself immediately, in a political way; but to communicate and transmit it to them that shall. So that in what way soever it is derived to this or that person, or under whatsoever form, the conferring of it he makes his own act: as we find it said to Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 2. 37. The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom. And he is told, ch. 4. 32. The Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whomsoever he will. And so much, you see, is in this context asserted to him over and over. Two things are plain in this matter.—That it is the mind of God there should be such a thing as magistracy, and government in this world.—And again that men shall be governed by men, by some or other of themselves; who shall be, as the text speaks, God's ministers. As he is the original of the governing power, the administration shall be in them. And of the mind of God in both these there is sufficient indication by the very law of nature; how is it conceivable such sentiments should be, so common if they were not from a common cause? He seems to me to have determined well (if it be considered in what way the course of nature is now continued, and by whom all things consist) that makes the governing power to be from God, as the Author of nature;* and that though government, as it is such and such, be *juris humani*, it is *juris divini* absolutely considered, or as it is government. It was most appa-

* Suar. de Leg. Lib. 5. C. 3. 4.

rently a thing worthy of God, when he peopled this world with such a sort of creatures as man, to provide for the maintaining of common order among them; who without government were but a Turba, a Colluvies, as a noted heathen speaks on a different account, a rout of men. Had man continued in unstained innocency, it is concluded on all hands there must have been a government among them; that is, not punitive or coercive, for which there could have been no occasion; but directive and conservative of superiority and inferiority, as it is also even among the angels of heaven, where are no inordinate dispositions to be repressed. Much more his government, in the severer parts of it, necessary for lapsed man on earth; the making of restrictive laws, and governing by them. And that God should design the governing of men by men, was also most agreeable to the perfections of his nature; especially his wisdom and his goodness, considered in comparison to the imperfection of this our present state. When the government over Israel was a theocracy, God used the ministry of men, in the management of it. That it should be his ordinary, stated course to govern by voices or visions, or by frightful appearances, such as those on Mount Sinai, had been very little suitable to this our state of probation; as his accurate wisdom we find hath determined; and was less agreeable to his benignity and goodness, which would not amazingly terrify, where he designed more gently to admonish and instruct. Hence had he regard to their frailty, who so passionately supplicated; let not God speak to us lest we die; and this his compassionate goodness we are led to consider, being next to treat of the end of this his constitution, namely

Secondly. That the magistrate is God's minister to men, for their good. Next to the sweet airs and breathings of the gospel itself, where have we a kinder or more significant discovery of God's good will to men? Here we are to stay and wonder, not to assent only, but admire! To behold the world in a revolt! The dwellers on earth in arms, against heaven! And the councils that are taken above are how to do them good: how God-like is this! How suitable to magnificent goodness! Or beneficent greatness; being secure from hurt by their impotent attempts, and when revenge was so easy, to study not only not to harm them, nor also how they might less harm and mischief themselves; but how to do them good: this was every way great and most suitable to the greatness of God; wherein it falls into conjunction with so immense and absolute goodness, as doth beyond what any created mind would ask or think. This imports not implacableness, nor destructive design towards the generality of mankind; but great benignity even to every soul, in as full extent as the command runs to be subject to the higher

powers. This is, we find, another medium by which God testifies, or leaves not himself, without witness, besides what we have elsewhere: that he gives men rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons.

The most compassionate eye of God beholds men, under the power of vicious inclination, bent upon destructive ways; whereas by the course of nature, which he hath fixed, he should give them ordinarily competent time, as he hath given them breath and being, and all things, Acts 17. that they might seek after him, and labour to feel and find him out. They live in a contemptuous neglect of him, and are cruel to themselves, often shorten their own time, live too fast, and make too much haste to dig their own graves, and turn their habitation into a charnal house; yea even bury themselves alive, in stupifying sensuality and vice. God, though provoked, hastens not their destruction by sudden revenge; he animadverts not upon them by flames, and thunderbolts, nor amazes them by astonishing appearances; his terrors make them not afraid. He only clothes some, from among themselves, with his authority, who shall appear on the stage with them, as gods among men, resembling themselves in human nature, and God in power, as they should in other Godlike excellencies; if men would so far co-operate towards their own welfare, as they ought, that by such gentler methods some stop might be put to the stream, and flood of miseries, wherewith otherwise unrestrained wickedness is continually ready to deluge the world. The magistrate is herein an instrument of good, and of wrath at once; these two things disagree not, to be a minister for good, and to execute wrath. This latter is said, in conformity to vulgar apprehension, because when men afflict one another, it is usually the effect of wrath; when a fixed, though most sedate and calm resolution to punish hath the same effect, this most different cause is called by the same name. In this allusion is wrath ascribed to God, the most serene and dispassionate of all beings; and hence they who represent him among men in authority, ought in this respect to be Godlike too. *Magistratus non debet irasci*, judges (as Cicero most aptly speaks) ought to be *Legum similes*, like the laws themselves, which are moved by no passion, are angry with no man, but keep one steady tenour, so as neither to despise an enemy, nor indulge a friend. To this temper it well agrees to design good (as in lancing a tumour) where one does a present hurt. Two ways may punishment be a proper and apt, though it be not always an effectual means of doing good.

1. As it may work the good of the offenders themselves. To which it hath in itself a tendency, if the disease be not so strong and stubborn, as to defy the remedy; as it puts them upon reflecting, and should awaken in them their considering power.

As in the matter of treason against a rightful power, *Deliberasse est descivisse, to deliberate whether to be loyal, or no, is to revolt*, so it is in the just and glorious rupture that is to be made of the bonds of vice, whereby men are held as slaves under the usurped power of the devil's kingdom. If once they come duly to consider, they will disdain so vile a servitude; when they meet with a check in their way, it may occasion them to check themselves, and consider their ways. No external means do any good to the minds of men, otherwise than as they themselves are engaged, drawn in, and made parties, in some sense against, but (as we are compounded) in a higher and nobler for ourselves. This comes in as one among external means of that kind, as do give some present uneasiness, but in order to after advantage; it afflicts it is true, and no affliction is for the present joyous, but grievous, but yields afterwards a peaceable fruit. When the magistrate's power is called a sword, it signifies its business is to wound; but as wounds are generally painful, some are sanative healing wounds, and so are these designed, and apt to be. They vex a while, but *vexatio dat intellectum*, it rouses the understanding, and is most apt to do so to good purpose in plain and undisputed cases; and where there is no pretence for conscience, in the cause one suffers for.

Where indeed a formed and fixed judgment of conscience, once hath place, for the practice which exposes a man to suffering; mullets and prisons, gibbets and faggots are very improper means of illumination, or of public utility; if the civil peace, and the substance of religion be not hurt by such practice. And the sincerity of that conscience is much to be suspected, that is ever altered by such methods; but no man will pretend it is against his conscience, not to be drunk, not to debauch, or to be sober, chaste and virtuous. Therefore a man's way lies open to that consideration which is most immediately to influence his practice, to correct a lewd, and begin a regular good course. He needs not be detained with any subtle disputes, or be put to solve perplexed doubts, or answer specious arguments, and objections. It is obvious to him to bethink himself: "What a strange sort of anomalous creature am I become, whom the law of mine own nature remonstrates against? How degenerate a thing! that after forsaking my own noble order of intelligent creatures, to herd with brutes!" That have made myself unfit for human society, otherwise than as one that must bear a mark, wear a disgraceful scar, from the wound of a sword not that of a public enemy, or my own; but a sword drawn in defence of the sacred rights of God, and to vindicate the honour of mankind! And hereupon if the crime be not capital, with the concurrent use of other appointed means, and the blessing

of God upon all (from whence only the good issue can be hoped for) may a vicious person be so reclaimed, as to become of great use in the world. Yea, and if the crime be capital, such as that the criminal survives not the punishment, but the sword of justice must cut him off from the land of the living; our charity will not let us doubt but there have been instances, wherein a prison and arraignment, and the sentence of death have been the blest effectual means to the offenders, of their escaping the more terrible sentence, and of obtaining eternal life. But however, though the ministry of civil justice doth often fail of its most desirable effects, as to the particular persons that suffer it (as even the ministration of the gospel of grace proves also ineffectual to many.) Yet

2. It is not only apt, but effectual to do much good to others and generally to the community. Punishment is justly said to be, in its proper design, medicinal to the delinquents; yet not always in the event.* But the common good it may serve, when contumacious offenders perish, under the deserved infliction of it. This was the thing designed by the righteous Judge of all the earth, when he gave so particular directions how to punish offenders in such and such kinds, that others might hear and fear and do no more so wickedly. And in all equal government, it is the design of penal laws that the terror might reach to all, the punishment itself but to a few. And when the utmost endeavours that can be used, shall have had that happy success to reduce a vast number of offenders to a paucity; we should rejoice to see that there needed to be but few examples made in such kinds. In the mean time, where this sword of the Lord, in the hands of his ministers of justice, is unsheathed, and used according to the exigency of the case; it is an apt and likely means to have a happy effect, for the good of the community; both as it may put a stop to the prevailing wickedness of men; and may avert, from a nation, the provoked wrath of God.

(1.) As it may give some check to the daringness and triumph of unrebuked wickedness, which indeed, naturally carries in it a pusillanimous meanness, and a vile abjection of mind, so as no where to insult, but where it meets, in those who should oppose it, a timorous fainting and succumbency; it so far resembles the devil, whose offspring it is, that being resisted it flees. When men find that while they dare to affront the universal Ruler, and offer indignities to his throne; there are those, that, clothed with his authority, and bearing his character, dare to vindicate the injury; when they feel the smart, and cost of open wickedness, it will no doubt, become at least, less open.

* Aquin. Sum. 1, 2æ. q. 87.

and seek closer corners. They will not long hold up the head, in so hopeless and deplorable a cause, that can afford them no support, no relief to their abject, sinking spirits, in suffering for it. What encouraging testimony of conscience can they have, that not only act from no direction of conscience, but in defiance of it? What God can they hope, will reward their sufferings which they incur by highest contempt of God? And if such gross immoralities be somewhat generally redressed, as more directly fall under the magistrate's animadversion, how great a common good must it infer, inasmuch as those evils, in their own nature, tend to the detriment, decay and ruin of a people where they prevail? They darken the glory of a nation which how great a lustre hath it cast abroad in the world from the Romans and Spartans, and other civilized people, when their sumptuary and other laws, were strictly observed, that repressed undue excesses; and when temperance, frugality, industry, justice, fidelity and consequently fortitude, and all other virtues excelled and were conspicuous among them. It were a great thing we should have to transmit to posterity, might we see England recover its former, or arrive to the further glory which it is to be hoped it may acquire in these kinds!

Yea and the vices which are endeavoured to be redressed, are such as not only prejudice the reputation, but the real welfare of any nation. Profane swearing tends gradually to take away the reverence of an oath; which, where it is lost, what becomes of human society? And more sensual vices tend to make us an effeminate mean-spirited, a desident, lazy, slothful, unhealthful people, useless to the glorious prince, and excellent government we live under, neither fit to endure the hardships, nor encounter the hazards of war, nor apply ourselves to the business, nor undergo the labours that belong to a state of peace, and do consequently tend to infer upon us a deplorable, but unpitied poverty; and (which all will pretend to abhor) slavery at length. For they are most unfit for an ingenuous, free sort of government, or to be otherwise governed than as slaves or brutes, who have learnt nothing of self-government; and are at the next step of being slaves to other men, who have first made themselves slaves to their own vicious inclinations. Thus are such liable to all sorts of temporal calamities and miseries in this world. Besides, what is of so far more tremendous import, that the same vile and stupifying lusts, tend to infer an utter indisposition to comport with, or attend to the glorious gospel of the blessed God; and so to ruin men's hopes for the other world, and make their case unconceivably worse, in the judgment of the great day, than theirs of Tyre or Sidon, Sodom or Gomorrha. But how much may a just, prudent, well tem-

pered vigilancy and severity do, towards the prevention of all this? and so much the more, by how much public animadversions, shall render the things men incur punishment for, not only in common estimate, unrighteous, but ignominious things.

That principle of shame in the nature of man, if by proper applications it were endeavoured to be wrought upon, would contribute more to the reforming a vicious world, than most other methods that have ever been tried to that purpose. It is a tender passion, of quick and most acute sense; things that are thought opprobrious, have so sensible a pungency with them, that (though all tempers are not herein alike) many that can feel little else, reckon a disgrace, an unsufferable thing. And I little doubt but if punishments for grosser vices, were more attempered to this principle, they would have much more effect. This hath been too much apprehended by the usurping god of this world; this engine he hath made it his business to turn, and manage to the contrary purpose, to drive or keep serious religion out of the world; yea to make men ashamed of being sober, temperate and regular in their conversation, lest they should also be thought religious, and to have any thing of the fear of God in them, and make them debauch, to save their reputation. A plain document to such as covet to see a reformation of manners in our days, what course ought to be endeavoured in order thereto. A great apprehension to this purpose that noble pagan* seems to have had, who inquiring whence legislation† had its rise, from some man or from God? and determining from God, if we will give the most righteous judgment that can be given; doth elsewhere write to this effect: that † Jupiter pitying the miseries of men, by their indulgence to vice, lest mankind should utterly perish sent Mercury to implant in them, together with justice, shame, as the most effectual means to prevent the total ruin of the world.

And so inseparable is the connexion between being wicked and being miserable, that whatsoever molestation and uneasiness tends to extinguish dispositions to wickedness, ought to be reckoned given with very merciful intentions. It is no improbable discourse which an ingenious modern writer,** hath to this purpose, (for I pretend not to give his words, not having the book now at hand) that though the drowning of the world was great severity to them who did then inhabit it; yet it was an act of mercy to mankind. For hereby (he reckoned) the former more luxuriant fertility of the earth, was so far reduced and checked, as not, so spontaneously, to afford nutriment to

* Plato. † De Leg, Lib. i. ‡ In Protog. ** Dr. Woodward's Essay.

vice ; that men in after time, must hereby be more constrained to labour and industry, and made more considerate, and capable of serious thoughts ; and that when also they should find their time by this change of the state of the world naturally contracted within narrower limits, they would be more awakened to consider and mind any overtures, which should be, in following time, made to them in order to their attaining a better state in another world ; and consequently the more susceptible of the gospel, in the proper season thereof. If God were severe with so merciful intentions, what lies within the compass of these ministers of justice, appointed for common good, ought certainly to be endeavoured ; in imitation of him, whom they represent.

(2.) The administration of punitive justice, when the occasion requires it, tends also to the common good ; as it may contribute towards the appeasing of God's anger against a sinful people, and the turning it away from them.

What may be collected from that noble instance of Phinehas's heroical zeal, upon which a raging plague was stayed, compared with the effect which Ahab's humiliation, and Nineveh's repentance had in averting temporal judgments, would signify not a little to this purpose. But I must pass to the

II. Head of discourse proposed, namely, to argue and enforce from hence the duty incumbent upon all, under government, as their several stations and capacities can admit, to be, in due subordination, assisting and serviceable to the magistrate, as in executing punitive justice, he is the minister of God for good. And this (as hath been said) is to be the use of the former part of the discourse, which will answer the design of the apostle's discourse, and agree to the natural order of the things discoursed in this context. For the magistrate is the minister of God for good, to us, is a doctrine. And let every soul be subject or subordinate to him, accordingly an exhortation which was at first proposed, and is afterwards resumed and pressed, ver. 5. as of absolute necessity from that doctrine. Wherefore it is necessary that we be, or we must needs be subject. There is an *αναγκη* put upon it, a cogent ineluctable necessity, arising even from hence, namely, from this doctrinal assertion as it is proposed, and as it is afterward applied to this purpose ; we are not to be dispensed with in the case, but we must every one do our parts in subordination to the magistrate, and that not only for wrath, but for conscience sake. We shall therefore shew,—what duty we who are in private capacities are exhorted to, and—shew the strength of the apostle's argument, as it is proposed in the text, and amplified in what follows, to engage us to that duty.

First. For the duty we are exhorted to, that we may understand what it is, I shall only premise some few plain things, and then leave it to yourselves to judge, and conclude what it is, and cannot but be.

1. It is plain, private persons are not to do the magistrate's part, are not to invade his office, nor usurp his authority; they are to act but in subordination to him, as their charge given them plainly imports.

2. They are not only not to oppose him. As the former would be too much, this would be too little. The arguments used to enforce it, import much more. What! because he is the minister of God for good, and to me, am I therefore only not to oppose him? Can it be thought there should be such an apparatus of argument, to draw from it so faint and dilute an inference? Ought not every man so far to reverence God's authority as to endeavour it may not lose its design? And ought not every man to co-operate to a common good, wherein each man claims a part?

3. It is not only to save myself from punishment, by not doing the evil which would expose me to the stroke of the sword; for my duty, I am to do, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake, which plainly respects God and his authority and interest, which I am to obey and serve. And I am to endeavour not only that he may not be a terror to me as an evil-doer, but that he may be a terror to them that are such.

4. Somewhat positive is manifestly carried in the word *υποτασσεσθαι*, to subject or subordinate myself to him, under this very notion, as the minister of God for good. Is this doing nothing? He is plainly said to be the minister of God for good, under this special notion, as he is the administrator of punitive justice, namely, as he bears the sword, and is to be a terror to evil-doers. I am so to subordinate myself, as that herein he may effectually serve the end of his office, and not bear the sword in vain. Now upon all this, judge you yourselves what is it that is left to be my duty in a private capacity, that is less than the magistrate's part; more than the mentioned negatives, and yet so much, as whereby I am to take care to my uttermost, that he may do good in his office of punishing wickedness? So as that his doing his duty must some way depend upon my doing mine, and be the effect of it, or of theirs who are in like circumstances, and so but under the same common obligation with me, so that ordinarily his duty cannot be done, without any care or concern of theirs or mine. What, I say, can it be less than to bring punishable matters under his cognizance? Otherwise, if no obligation lie upon private persons, to this purpose, he will only be to punish such wicked-

ness as he beholds with his own eyes; and then how narrow will his precinct be? What multitudes of magistrates must there then be? And what a monster thereupon would the body politic become!

But here if any man ask me the question (because what is to be done herein is to be done for conscience sake) am I bound in conscience to discover to a magistrate all the evil that I know by any man that is justly punishable by law? To this I shall only at present say, that cases of conscience can only be with judgment resolved in hypothesis, and with application to this or that person, when material circumstances, relating thereto, are distinctly known. I must have clear grounds if I will conceal such a man's punishable fault, upon which I may judge, that more good is likely to be done to his soul, that the honour of God and the public good, will be more served by the concealment, than by the discovery, and the government not hurt or endangered. But if the crime be such as is national, and imports contempt of God and his laws, and in reference where-to, the offender expresses, more shame of the punishment than of the fault, and I will yet, upon private respects, to him or myself, conceal it, I shall herein while I pretend conscience in the case, cheat my conscience and not satisfy it. And I add in reference to this case let any man that would exempt his conscience from any sense of obligation to endeavour the punishment of offenders in the mentioned kinds, take great care he do not ground his concealment upon other, than very peculiar grounds, or not common to him, with any other man in a like case. Is it because such a one is my friend? or he may bear me a grudge? or I lose his custom, &c? These are things so common, that guiding myself by such measures, is both to overthrow magistracy and conscience too. Upon the whole, therefore, what is ordinarily a private man's duty in such cases, is sufficiently evident. Therefore,

Secondly. Let us see the force of the apostle's arguings, to engage us to it.

1. That the magistrate, as he is the dispenser of punitive justice, is God's minister. It is the authority of God that he is invested with, he bears a sword which God hath put into his hand. Is that authority to be eluded, and made to signify nothing? Is that sword to be borne in vain? What an awe should this lay upon our spirits? It is therefore to be served for conscience sake, which hath principal reference to God. We need not here dispute, whether human laws bind conscience, no doubt they do, when they have an antecedent reason, or goodness. If men command what God forbids, the apostles make their appeal to enemies, as judges whom they were to obey. He is the

minister of God for good, not for hurt, or for no good; it is a perverting of God's authority, to do mischief by the pretence of it, a debasing it, to trifle with it. But the question is out of doors, when human laws are but subsidiary to divine, and enjoin the same thing. And as that celebrated saying of St. Austin is applied, by him, to the former case of a supposed contradiction of the proconsul's command to the emperor's for disobeying the inferior; it is equally applicable, as fortifying the obligation to obey both, when they are coincident.

And this consideration can be insignificant with none, but such as say in their hearts there is no God, that think this world hath no universal, sovereign Ruler, or no Lord over it; and it might as well be supposed to have no intelligent Maker, to have become what it is by chance: an imagination which the most vicious, that make any use of thoughts, begin to be ashamed of; and have therefore thought fit to quit the absurd name of atheist for the more accountable, as well as more convenient name of deist. But then it is strange they should not see the consequence from Maker, to Ruler, and from God's having made this, world, to its being under his present government, and liable to his future judgment; or that from any just apprehension of the nature of God, they should not collect so much of the nature of their own souls, as to judge them capable of subsisting out of these bodies, and in another world; and consequently of their being liable to a future judgment, for what they have been, and done in this! Or that a Being of so much wisdom and goodness in conjunction with power, as to have made such a world as this, and such a creature as man in it; should not have made him for nobler ends, than are attainable in this world!

If any of themselves had power enough to make such another sort of creature, and furnish him with faculties capable of such acquisitions, and attainments, only to fetch a few turns in the world, and form plots, and projects in it, that must, with himself, shortly come to nothing; they would have little cause to boast of the performance: they would have cause to be ashamed of it, to use so unconceivable power only to play tricks, that neither themselves nor any one else should ever be the better for! And though they might, hereby, awhile amuse the world, they would gain little reputation of wisdom, or goodness above other men, by being the authors of so useless a design, that would at length appear to have nothing of design in it; for finally it terminates in mere nothing. But the great God hath not left himself without witness, the illustrious characters of his Godhead shine every where. He doth insist upon, and will assert his rights, in this lower world; it is a part of his creation, though a meaner part; he rules in the kingdoms of men, and he that

rules will judge. The jests and laughter of fools will not overturn his throne, they that have taught themselves to turn his laws, and the whole frame of his government over the world, into ridicule; (because it is to be hoped they do not use to laugh always) should be advised by a wise and great man in his time, than to judge of their jest, when they have done laughing;* sometime they will have done, and shall consider that he, to whom it belongs, will judge over their heads, as he will over us all.

And if his throne and government are as insolently, as they are vainly attempted against by many, and the most connive; we shall all be taken for a combination of rebels, against our rightful Lord. It will be a heavy addition to be partakers of other men's sins, when every one hath more than enough of his own. Let me ask, would you not dread to be found guilty of misprision, of treason against the government under which we live? Why doth the fear of the great God, and the dread of being found accomplices against him, signify less with us? And what means it, that the charge of punishing great offenders is given to the community, thou, every individual, as in the text, thee, all the individuals making up the community? Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live, Ex. 22. 18. And so for the idolater, thou shalt bring forth that man or woman, and stone him—Deut. 13. 13, 14. ch. 17. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Is it that all the people were magistrates? no, but that it was not to be supposed that so horrid impieties could long escape unpunished, but by the people's, as well as the magistrate's neglect; upon which all would be taken as conspirators against the great Lord of all.

2. Take the other part of the argument, that the magistrate is God's minister (for good to us) is it enough for us not to hinder? Are we not all obliged, in our stations, to promote our own, our neighbours, and the common good? Our own, as we keep ourselves from being accessaries: our neighbours offending, as we contribute our endeavour that they may be less wicked and (which we should further design) that they may become good; our unoffending neighbours, for if grosser wickedness rule without controul, who that are pious, sober, and virtuous can long live in peace, by such ill neighbours? We are for this directed to pray, 1 Tim. 2. 1, 2. For rulers, even all that are in authority, that we may live peaceable and quiet lives, in all godliness and honesty. And what we are to pray for, we do that ludicrously, if we endeavour it not too. Besides that the untainted, as yet, are liable to worse hurt, by the contagion of their example; and the common good

* Lord Verulam's Instaur. Mag.

is many ways to be served, as hath been shewn. How laudable an excellency, among noble minded pagans, was love to their country ! And even in this way to serve the common good, was reckoned by them a praiseworthy thing. He (saith one of them) that doth no harm, is honourable ; but he is worthy of double honour that prevents it ; and he that assists the magistrate in punishing it, is most honourable, and far excels all his other citizens.* So far were they from thinking it an ignominious thing, to bring offenders to punishment, and especially for impieties, or whatsoever signified a contempt of religion ; such regard they had to the honour of their gods, who were no gods. Shall we reckon the true and living God to deserve from us less regard, to his violated honour ? The common good, which in this way we are to promote, is so common, as all good men can, without scruple, concur in the design ; and blessed be God, they so generally do so. We have the greatest encouragement hereto, by considering the immediate fountain of the magistrate's power and office, our glorious and ever blessed Redeemer and Lord ; to whom all power is given in heaven, and earth by whom kings reign, who is head of all things to the church ; and through whom the divine goodness flows towards a lost world. This infers an obligation upon all, that bear the christian name, to serve the proper ends of this branch of his power ; as they have, in general, to acknowledge him for Lord and Christ.

They who therefore make it their business to promote this design do not herein serve the interest of a party, but the interest of the universal Ruler, of our blessed Redeemer and of mankind. And they who are agreed, with sincere minds, upon so great and important an end, as the serving this most comprehensive interest, are agreed in a greater thing than they can differ in. To differ about a ceremony or two, or a set of words, is but a trifle, compared with being agreed in absolute devotedness to God and Christ, and in a design, as far as in them lies, of doing good to all. An agreement in substantial godliness, and christianity, in humility, meekness, self-denial, in singleness of heart, benignity, charity, entire love to sincere christians, as such, in universal love to mankind, and in a design of doing all the good we can in the world (notwithstanding such go under different denominations, and do differ in so minute things) is the most valuable agreement that can be, among christians. They that are thus agreed, are more one, and do less differ in the temper and complexion of their minds, from one another, than they who are never so much agreed in being for, or against this or that exter-

* Plat. de Leg. lib. 5. *τοῦ ἀλλήλων τοῖς ἀρχαῖσι*

nal form, or mode of religion ; but are full of envy, wrath, malice, bitterness, falsehood, do differ from them all, and from all good men. And I doubt not, when God's time comes of favouring Zion, we shall have churches constituted, by congregating what is of one kind, such as (for the main) are of one mind, spirit, character and temper ; and severing whatsoever is of a different kind, and quite alien hereto ; and cease to have them constituted by what is unnecessary, much less by what is inconsistent with their very being. Pride, ambition, vain glory, and a terrene spirit, with carnal self-design, will not always prevent this. Heaven will grow too big for this earth ! And the powers of the world to come, for those of this present evil world.

In the mean time let us draw as near one another as we can. And particularly unite in the most vigorous endeavour of carrying on this excellent design, which is now before us. And let it be with a temper of mind, agreeing with God's kind design towards men, in appointing the magistrate to be his minister to them, that is, for the doing them good. Let it be with minds, full of all goodness, in conformity to the original first good, from whom as such, this constitution proceeds. Despond not, as apprehending the stream is too strong, and there is no good to be done. That is to yield the day to victorious wickedness. It is to give vice the legislature, to let it be the law of the age, and govern the world : and it is to give up ourselves and our nation to perish as a lost people. Let us not be lost, before we are lost. Much good hath been done in this kind heretofore. There was a time when (at Antioch) the severity of the magistrate was much regretted in the reign of that great prince Theodosius, and upon an ill occasion, the contemptuous subversion of his statutes. This cost Chrysostom divers orations or sermons to the people while yet presbyter there ; in one whereof he asks them : what hurt had the terror of the magistrate done them ? It hath shaken off our sloth, made us more honest, diligent, industrious.* He had told them above, and tells them after : they ought to give God thanks for it, that now there was not one drunken person, or one that sang lascivious songs to be seen. Their city was become as a chaste matron, where great wantonness before did generally appear. Your experience hath told you, much hath been done, you are still getting ground ; God hath, we are to hope, effectually engaged the government in this blessed design ; in subordination thereto, go on with alacrity.

Let me finally set before your eyes, the instructive practice of that excellent prince Jehoshaphat, in a like case, 2 Chron. 19.

* Hom. 6. ἀνδρεῖ ἀνίτων

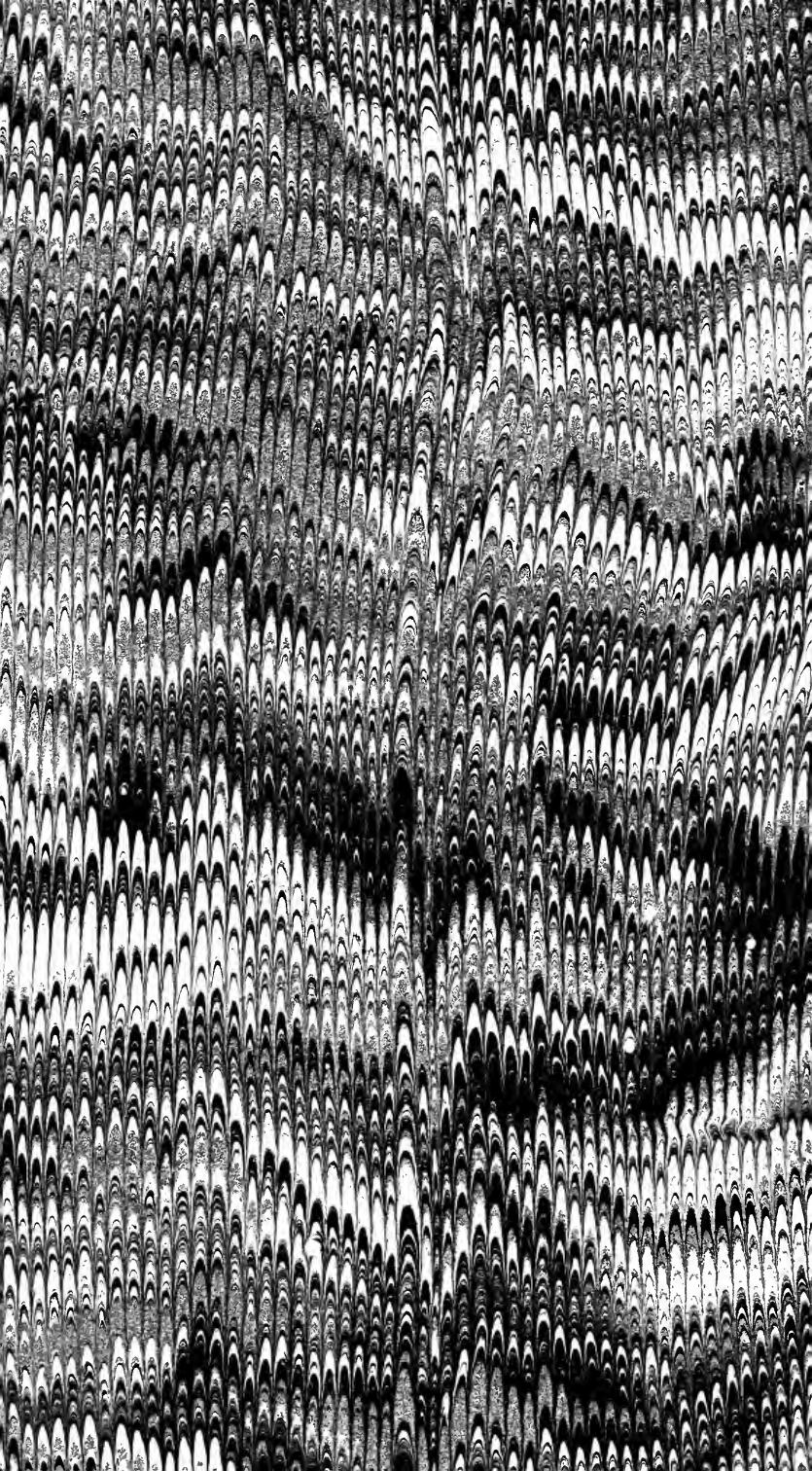
when he was bringing back the people to the Lord God of their fathers, v. 4. And had set judges in the land, warning them to take heed as being to judge not for men, but for the Lord, v. 6. which shewed they were not mere matters of *Meum* and *Teum* only, they were to judge in, but matters immediately relating to the interest and honour of God, for he distinguishes the judgment of the Lord, and controversies, v. 8. He charges all to whom he spake, as they were severally concerned (and they were not concerned all alike) to do their work, v. 9. In the fear of the Lord faithfully and with a perfect heart; and concludes as I do, with these words, v. 11. deal courageously; and the Lord shall be with the good.

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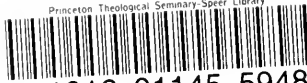
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