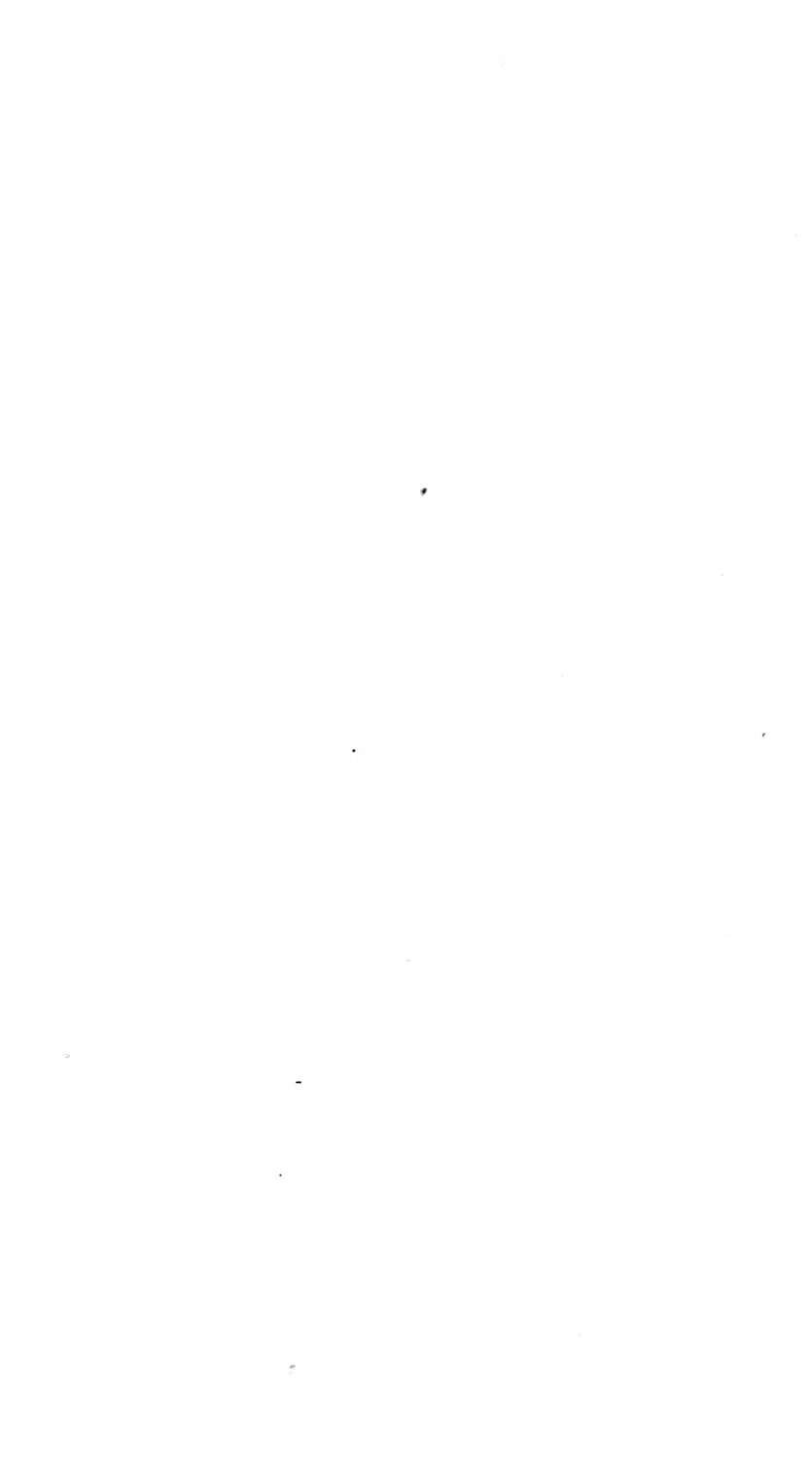


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The whole works of the Rev.
John Howe







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

IN EIGHT VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

CONTAINING

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OVER LOST SOULS—WITH AN
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THE
REDEEMER'S TEARS
WEPT OVER LOST SOULS.

—
A TREATISE

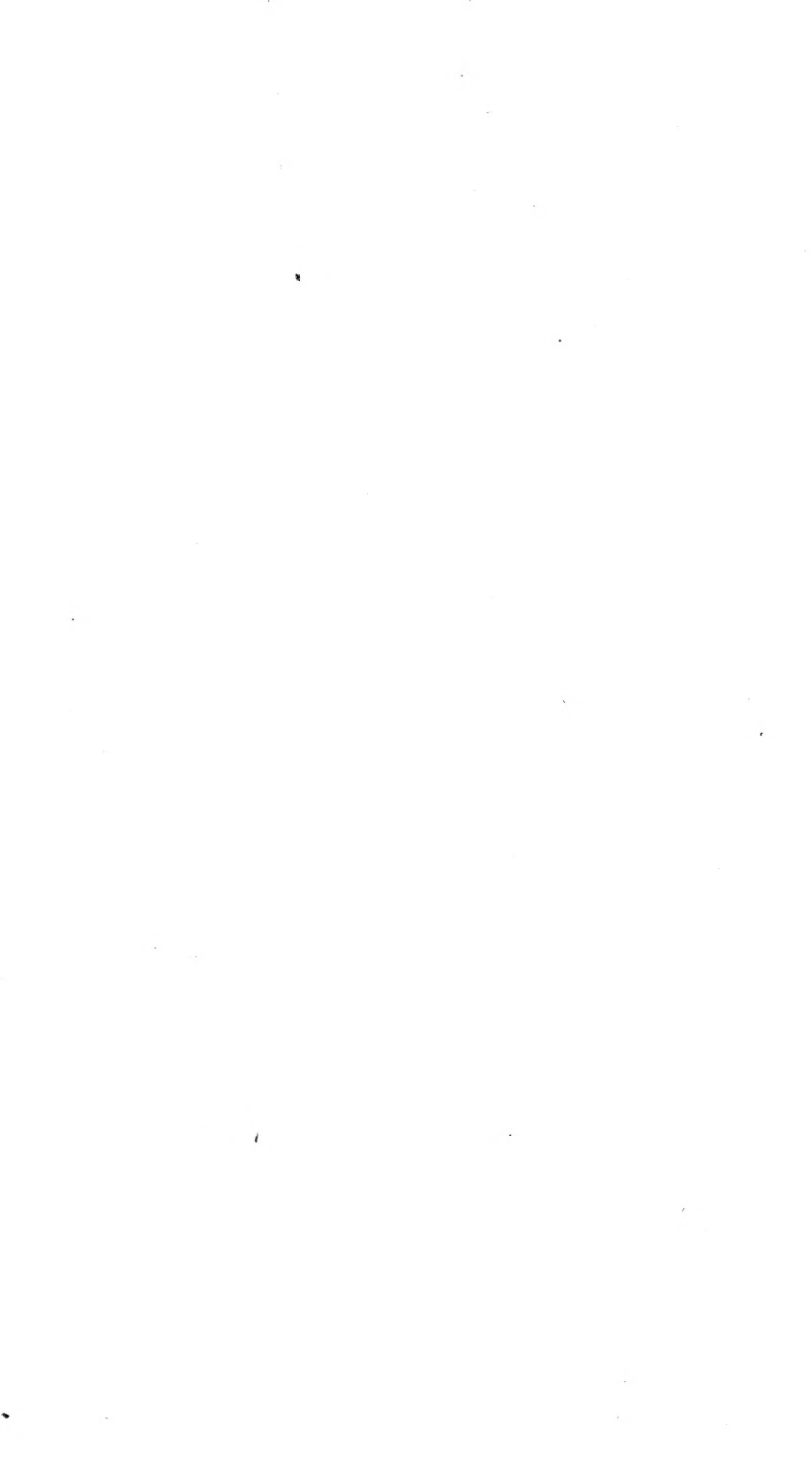
On Luke xix. 41, 42.

WITH AN APPENDIX,

Wherein somewhat is occasionally discoursed,

CONCERNING

THE BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST, AND HOW
GOD IS SAID TO WILL THE SALVATION OF
THEM THAT PERISH.



PREFACE.

WHEN spiritual judgments do more eminently befall a people great outward calamities do often ensue. We know it was so in the instance, which the text here insisted on refers to. But it is not always so; the connection between these two sorts of judgments is not absolutely certain and necessary, yea and is more frequent with the contraries of each. For this reason therefore, and because judgments of the former kind are so unexpressibly greater, and more tremendous, this discourse insists only upon them, about which serious monitions both have a clearer ground, and are of greater importance; and wholly waves the latter.

Too many are apt first to fancy similitudes between the state of things with one people and another, and then to draw inferences; being perhaps imposed upon by a strong imagination in both; which yet must pass with them for a spirit of prophecy, and perhaps they take it not well, if it do not so with others too. It were indeed the work of another prophet certainly to accommodate, and make application of what was spoken by a former, to a distinct time and people. It is enough for us to learn from such sayings as this of our Saviour, those rules of life and practice, such instructions and cautions as are common to all times, without arrogating to ourselves his prerogative, of foretelling events that shall happen in this or that. The affectation of venturing upon futurity, and of foreboding direful things to kingdoms and nations, may, besides its being without sufficient ground, proceed from some or other very bad principle. Dislike of the present methods of providence, weariness and impatience of our present condition, too great proneness to wish what we take upon ourselves to predict, the prediction importing more heat of anger than certainty of foresight, a wrathful spirit, that would presently fetch down fire from heaven upon such as favour not our inclinations and desires, so that (as the poet speaks) whole cities should be overturned at our request, if the heavenly powers would be so easy, as to comply with such furious imprecations: a temper that ill agrees with humanity itself, not

to care at what rate of common calamity, and misery, a purchase be made of our own immunity from sufferings. Nay, to be willing to run the most desperate hazard in the case, and even covet a general ruin to others, upon a mere apprehended possibility that our case may be mended by it; when it may be more probable to become much worse. But O how disagreeable is it to the Spirit of our merciful Lord and Saviour, whose name we bear, upon any terms, to delight in human miseries! The greatest honour men of that complexion are capable of doing the Christian name, were to disclaim it. Can such angry heats have place in Christian breasts, as shall render them the well pleased spectators, yea authors of one another's calamities and ruin! Can the tears that issued from these compassionate, blessed eyes, upon the foresight of Jerusalem's woful catastrophe, do nothing towards the quenching of these flames!

But I add, that the too-intent fixing of our thoughts upon any supposable events in this world, argues, at least, a narrow, carnal mind, that draws and gathers all things into time, as despairing of eternity; and reckons no better state of things considerable, that is not to be brought about under their own present view, in this world; as if it were uncertain or insignificant, that there shall be unexceptionable, eternal order and rectitude in another.

It is again as groundless, and may argue as ill a mind, to prophesy smooth and pleasant things, in a time of abounding wickedness. The safer, middle course, is, without God's express warrant, not to prophesy at all, but as we have opportunity, to warn and instruct men, with all meekness and long-suffering; for which the Lord's ordinary messengers can never want his warrant. And, after our blessed Saviour's most imitable example, to scatter our tears over the impenitent, even upon the (too probable) apprehension of the temporal judgments which hang over their heads, but most of all upon the account of their liability to the more dreadful ones of the other state; which in the following discourse, I hope it is made competently evident, this lamentation of our Saviour hath ultimate reference unto. For the other, though we know them to be due, and most highly deserved; yet concerning the actual infliction of them, even upon obstinate and persevering sinners, we cannot pronounce. We have no settled constitution, or rule, by which we can conclude it, any more than that outward felicity, or prosperity, shall be the constant portion of good men in this world. The great God hath reserved to himself a latitude of acting more arbitrarily, both as to threatenings and promises of this nature. If the accomplishment of either, could be certainly expected, it should be of the promises rather; because as to promised rewards God is pleased to make himself debtor, and a right accrues to them to whom the promise is made, if either the promise be absolute, or made with any certain condition, that is actually performed. But God is always the *creditor pœnæ*, the right to punish wholly in himself, the exacting whereof he may therefore suspend, without any appearance of wrong, as seemeth good unto him. If therefore he may withhold temporal blessings, from good and pious men, to which they have a remote and fundamental right, as having reserved to himself the judgment of the fit time and season of bestowing them; much

more doth it belong to his wisdom, to fix the bounds of his patience and long-suffering; and determine the season of animadverting upon more open and insolent offenders by temporal punishments, according as shall make most for the ends of his government, and finally prove more advantageous to the dignity and glory of it. The practice therefore of our Saviour, in speaking so positively, concerning the approaching fall and ruin of Jerusalem, is no pattern unto us. He spake not only with the knowledge of a prophet, but with the authority of a judge: and his words may be considered both as a prediction and a sentence. We can pretend to speak in neither capacity, touching things of this nature.

But for the everlasting punishments in another world, that belong to unreconciled sinners, who refuse to know the things of their peace, the gospel-constitution hath made the connection firm and unalterable, between their continuing, unrepented wickedness, and those punishments. When therefore we behold the impudent, provoking sins of the age wherein we live, against the natural, eternal law of our Creator, persisted in with all the marks of infidelity, and obduration, against the truth, and grace that so gloriously shine forth in the gospel of our Redeemer, we may (after him) speak positively, he that believeth not shall be damned,---is condemned already;---shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. If ye believe not that I am *He*, ye shall die in your sins. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. And here, how doth it become us too, in conformity to his great example, to speak compassionately, and as those that, in some measure, know the terror of the Lord! O how doful is the case, when we consider the inconsistent notions of many, with, not this or that particular doctrine, or article of the Christian faith, but with the whole sum of Christianity, the atheism of some, the avowed mere theism of others! The former sort far outdoing the Jewish infidelity. Which people, besides the rational means of demonstrating a Deity, common to them with the rest of mankind, could upon the account of many things peculiar to themselves, be in no suspence concerning this matter. How great was their reverence of the books of the old testament, especially those of Moses! their knowledge most certain of plain, and most convincing matters of fact. How long the government of their nation had been an immediate theocracy! what evident tokens of the divine presence had been among them from age to age! in how wonderful a manner they were brought out of Egypt, through the red sea, and conducted all along through the wilderness! how glorious an appearance and manifestation of himself God afforded to them at the giving of the law, upon mount Sinai! and by how apparent exertions of the divine power, the former inhabitants were expelled, and they settled in the promised land! Upon all this, they could be in no more doubt concerning the existence of a Deity, than of the sun in the firmament. Whereas we are put to prove, in a Christian nation, that this world, and its continual successive inhabitants, have a wise intelligent Maker and Lord, and that all things came not into the state wherein they are, by (no man can imagine what) either fatal necessity, or casualty.

But both sorts agree in (what I would principally remark) the disbelief of Christ being the Messiah. And so, with both, the whole business of Christianity must be a fable and a cheat. And thus it is determined, not by men that have made it their business to consider, and examine the matter (for the plain evidence of things cannot but even obtrude a conviction upon any diligent enquirer) but by such as have only resolved not to consider; who have before hand settled their purpose, never to be awed by the apprehension of an invisible Ruler, into any course of life that shall bear hard upon sensual inclination, have already chosen their master, enslaved themselves to brutal appetite, and are so habituated to that mean servility, made it so connatural, so deeply inward to themselves, so much their very life, as that, through the pre-apprehended pain, and uneasiness of a violent rupture, in tearing themselves from themselves, it is become their interest not to admit any serious thought. Any such thought they are concerned (they reckon) to fence against, as against the point of a sword; it strikes at their only life, the brute must die, that (by a happy *παλιγενεσις* birth) they may be again born men. That is the design of Christianity, to restore men to themselves again, and because it hath this tendency, it is therefore not to be endured. And all the little residue of human wit which is yet left them (which because the sensual nature is predominant, is pressed into a subserviency to the interest, and defence of the brutal life) only serves them to turn every thing of serious religion into ridicule, and being themselves resolved never to be reasoned into any seriousness, they have the confidence to make the trial, whether all other men can be jested out of it.

If this were not the case, if such persons could allow themselves to think, and debate the matter, how certain would the victory, how glorious would the triumph be, of the Christian religion, over all the little cavils, they are wont to allege against it! Let their own consciences testify in the case, whether ever they have applied themselves to any solemn disquisition, concerning this important affair, but only contented themselves with being able, amidst transient discourse, to cast out, now and then, some oblique glance, against somewhat or other, that was appendant, or more remotely belonging, to the Christian profession (in so much haste, as not to stay for an answer) and because they may have surprised, sometimes, one or other, not so ready at a quick repartee, or who reckoned the matter to require solemn, and somewhat larger discourse (which they have not had the patience to hear) whether they have not gone away puffed, and swollen with the conceit, that they have whiffled Christianity away, quite off the stage, with their profane breath; as if its firm and solid strength, wherein it stands stable, as a rock of adamant, depended upon this or that sudden, occasional, momentary effort on the behalf of it. But if such have a mind to try whether any thing can be strongly said in defence of that sacred profession, let them considerably peruse what hath been written by divers to that purpose. And not to engage them in any very tedious longsome task, if they like not to travel through the somewhat abstruser work of the most learned Hugo Grotius, *de veritate Christianae religionis*, or the more voluminous Huc-

thus his *Demonstratio Evangelica*, or divers others that might be named, let them but patiently and leisurely read over, that later very plain and clear, but nervous and solid discourse of Dr. Parker upon this subject, and judge then, whether the Christian religion want evidence, or whether nothing can be alleged, why we of this age, so long after Christ's appearance upon the stage of the world, are to reckon ourselves obliged to profess Christianity, and observe the rules of that holy profession.

And really, if, upon utmost search, it shall be found to have firm truth at the bottom, it makes itself so necessary (which must be acknowledged part of that truth) that any one that hath wit enough, to be the author of a jest, might understand it to be a thing not to be jested with. It trifles with no man. And, where it is once sufficiently propounded, leaves it no longer indifferent whether we will be of it or no. Supposing it true, it is strange if we can pretend it not to be sufficiently propounded to us. Or that we are destitute of sufficient means to come by the knowledge of that truth! "Was this religion instituted only for one nation, or age?" Did the Son of God descend from heaven, put on flesh, and die? had we an incarnate Deity conversant among men on earth, and made a sacrifice for the sins of men? and hath he left the world at liberty, whether, upon any notice hereof, they should inquire and concern themselves about him or no? being incarnate he could not, as such, be every where; nor was it fit he should be long here; or needful, (and therefore not fit) he should die often. It was condescension enough that he vouchsafed once to appear, in so mean and self-abasing a form, and offered himself to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself. And whereas he hath himself founded a dominion over us in his own blood, did die, and revive, and rise again, that he might be Lord of the living and of the dead; and the eternal Father hath hereupon highly exalted him, given him a name above every name, that at his name every knee should bow, and that all should confess that he is Lord, to the praise and glory of God: and hath required that all should honour the Son as himself is to be honoured; hath given him power over all flesh; and made him head of all things to the church. Was it ever intended, men should, generally, remain exempt from obligation, to observe, believe, and obey him? was it his own intention to wave, or not insist upon, his own most sacred, and so dearly acquired rights? to quit his claim to the greatest part of mankind? why d.d he then issue out his commission as soon as he was risen from the dead, to teach all nations, to proselyte the world to himself, to baptize them into his name, (with that of the Father and the Holy Ghost. O the great and venerable names that are named upon professing Christians!) Could it be his intention, to leave it lawful to men to choose this, or any, or no religion, as their humours, or fancies, or lusts should prompt them; to disregard, and deride his holy doctrines, violate and trample upon his just and equal laws, reject and contemn his offered favours and mercy, despise and profane his sacred institutions! When he actually makes his demand, and lays his claim, what amazing guilt

how swift destruction must they incur, that dare adventure to deny the Lord that bought them! And they that shall do it, among a christianized people, upon the pretended insufficiency of the revelation they have of him, do but heighten the affront and increase the provocation. It is to charge the whole Christian institution with foolery, as pretending to oblige men, when they cannot know to what, how, or upon what ground they should be obliged; to pronounce the means and methods inept, and vain, which he hath thought sufficient (and only fit) for the propagating and continuing Christianity in the world; to render the rational reception of it from age to age, impossible, in his appointed way; or unless men should be taught by angels, or voices from heaven, or that miracles should be so very frequent, and common, as, thereby also to become useless to their end; and so would be to make the whole frame of Christian religion an idle impertinency; and, in reference to its avowed design, a self-repugnant thing, and consequently were to impute folly to him who is the wisdom of God.

And how are other things known, of common concernment, and whereof an immediate knowledge is as little possible? Can a man satisfy himself that he hath a title to an estate, conveyed down to him by very ancient writings, the witnesses whereof are long since dead and gone? or that he is obliged by laws made many an age ago? Or could any records be preserved with more care and concern, than those wherein our religion lies? or be more secure from designed, or material depravation? But this is no place to reason these things. Enough is said by others, referred to before. I only further say, if any that have the use of their understandings, living in a Christian nation, think to justify their infidelity and disobedience to the Son of God, by pretending they had no sufficient means to know him to be so, the excuse will avail them alike, as that did him, who insolently said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I, &c. For have not we as good means to know who Christ is, as the Egyptians, of that time had, to know who was the God of Israel, though afterwards he was more known by the judgments which he executed? Although the knowledge of the only true God be natural, and the obligations thereto common to men; yet the indisposition to use their understanding this way, is so great and general, and the express revelation that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, requires so much less labour to understand it, than there is in arguing out the existence and attributes of God, by an inlabile, sluggish mind, that the difference cannot be great, if any on that side. This latter only needs the inquiry, whence the revelation comes, which as it is not difficult in itself, so this occasion, namely of its being proposed, doth invite and urge to it; whereas the generality of the pagan world have little of external inducement, leading them into enquiries concerning the true God. Therefore, all circumstances considered, I see not how they that live under the gospel, can be thought to have less advantage and obligation, to own Jesus of Nazareth to be the Son of God, than the rest of the world, to own the only living and true God; or that the former should be less liable to the revela-

tion of the wrath of God from heaven for holding supernatural truth in unrighteousness, than the other, for doing so injurious violence to that which is merely natural. Unto what severities then, of the divine wrath and justice, even of the highest kind, do multitudes lie open in our days.

For besides those (much fewer) mental, or notional, infidels, that believe not the principles of the Christian religion, against the clearest evidence, how vastly greater is the number of them that are so, in heart and practice, against their professed belief! that live in utter estrangement from God; as without him in the world, or in open enmity against him, and contrariety to the known rules of the religion they profess! How many that understand nothing of its principal and plainest doctrines! as if nothing were requisite to distinguish the Christian from the pagan world, more than an empty name; or as if the Redeemer of sinners had died upon the cross, that men might more securely remain alienated from the life of God, not to reconcile and reduce them to him! or that they might with safety indulge appetite, mind earthly things, make the world their God, gratify the flesh, and make provision to fulfil the lusts of it, defy heaven, affront their Maker, live in malice, envy, hatred to one another! not to bless them, by turning them from these impieties and iniquities! As if it were so obscurely hinted, as that it could not be taken notice of, that the grace of God, which bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared, teaching them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, so looking for the blessed hope. And that Christ gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify us to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works! How many, again, are christians, they know not why! upon the same terms that others are mahometans, because it is the religion of their country, by fate or by accident, not by their own choice and judgment! the same inconsideration makes them be christians, that makes others be none.

And now, shall our Redeemer be left to weep alone, over these perishing souls! have we no tears to spend upon this doleful subject? Oh that our heads were waters, and our eyes fountains! Is it nothing to us, that multitudes are sinking, going down into perdition, under the name of Christian, under the seal of baptism, from under the means of life and salvation! perishing! and we can do nothing to prevent it. We know they must perish that do not repent and turn to God, and love him above all, even with all their hearts and souls, and mind and might; that do not believe in his Son and pay him homage, as their rightful Lord, sincerely subjecting themselves to his laws and government. But this they will not understand, or not consider. Our endeavours to bring them to it, are ineffectual, it is but faint breath we utter. Our words drop and die between us and them! We speak to them in the name of the eternal God that made them, of the great Jesus who bought them with his blood, and they regard it not. The Spirit of the Lord is in a great degree departed from a-

mong us, and we take it not to heart! We are sensible of lesser grievances, are grieved that men will not be more entirely proselyted to our several parties and persuasions, rather than that they are so disinclined to become proselytes to real *christianity*; and seem more deeply concerned to have Christian religion so or so modified, than whether there shall be any such thing! or whether men be saved by it or lost!

This sad case, that so many were likely to be lost under the first sound of the gospel; and the most exemplary temper of our blessed Lord in reference to it, are represented in the following treatise; with design, to excite their care for their own souls, who need to be warned, and the compassions of others, for them who are so little apt to take warning. The good Lord grant it may be, some way or other, useful for good!

JOHN HOWE.

THE

REDEEMER'S TEARS

WEPT OVER LOST SOULS.

Luke xix. 41, 42.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

WE have here a compassionate lamentation in the midst of a solemn triumph. Our Lord's approach unto Jerusalem at this time, and his entrance into it (as the foregoing history shews) carried with them some face of regal and triumphal pomp, but with such allays, as discovered a mind most remote from ostentation ; and led by judgment, (not vain glory) to transmit through a dark umbrage, some glimmerings only of that excellent majesty which both his sonship and his mediatorship entitled him unto : a very modest and mean specimen of his true indubious royalty and kingly state : such as might rather intimate than plainly declare it, and rather afford an after instruction to teachable minds, than beget a present conviction and dread in the stupidly obstinate and unteachable. And this effect we find it had, as is observed by another evangelical historian, who relating the same matter, how in his passage to Jerusalem the people met him with branches of palm-trees, and joyful hosannas, he riding upon an ass's colt (as princes or judges to signify meekness as much as state, were wont to do, Judges, 5. 10.) tells us, these things his disciples understood not at the first, but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these

things unto him, John 12. 16. For great regard was had in this as in all the other acts of his life and ministry, to that last and conclusive part, his dying a sacrifice upon the cross for the sins of men; to observe all along that mediocrity, and steer that middle course between obscurity and a terrifying overpowering glory, that this solemn oblation of himself might neither be prevented, nor be disregarded. Agreeably to this design, and the rest of his course, he doth, in this solemnity, rather discover his royal state and dignity by a dark emblem, than by an express representation; and shews in it more of meekness and humility, than of awful majesty and magnificence, as was formerly predicted, Zech. 9. 9. Rejoice greatly. O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.

And how little he was taken with this piece of state, is sufficiently to be seen in this paragraph of the chapter. His mind is much more taken up in the foresight of Jerusalem's sad case; and therefore being come within view of it, (which he might very commodiously have in the descent of the higher opposite hill, Mount Olive,) he beheld the city, it is said, and wept over it. Two things concur to make up the cause of this sorrow:—The greatness of the calamity: Jerusalem, once so dear to God, was to suffer, not a scar, but a ruin;—“The days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another:” and —The lost opportunity of preventing it;—“If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.” ver. 42. And again, “Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”

First. The calamity was greater in his eyes, than it can be in ours. His large and comprehensive mind could take the compass of this sad case. Our thoughts cannot reach far, yet we can apprehend what may make this case very deplorable; we can consider Jerusalem as the city of the great King, where was the palace and throne of the Majesty of heaven, vouchsafing to “dwell with men on earth.” Here the divine light and glory had long shone: here was the sacred Shechinah, the dwelling place of the most high, the symbols of his presence, the seat of worship, the mercy seat, the place of receiving addresses, and of dispensing favours: “The house of prayer for all nations.” To his own people this was the city of their solemnities, whither the

tribes were wont to go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord: for there were set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David, psal. 122. 4, 5. He that was so great a lover of the souls of men, how grateful and dear to his heart had the place been where through the succession of many by-past ages the great God did use (though more obscurely) to unfold his kind propensions towards sinners, to hold solemn treaties with them, to make himself known, to draw and allure souls into his own holy worship and acquaintance! And that now the dismal prospect presents itself of desolation and ruin, ready to overwhelm all this glory! and lay waste the dwellings of divine love! his sorrow must be conceived proportionable to the greatness of this desolating change.

Secondly. And the opportunity of prevention was quite lost! There was an opportunity: "He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: he came to them as his own." Had they received him, O how joyful a place had Jerusalem been! How glorious had the triumphs of the love of God been there, had they repented, believed, obeyed! These were the "things that belonged to their peace;" this was their opportunity, their "day of visitation;" these were the things that might have been done within that day: but it was now too late, their day was over, and the things of their peace hid from their eyes: and how fervent were his desires, they had done otherwise! taken the wise and safe course. If thou hadst known! the words admit the optative form, *ei* being put, as it is observed to be sometimes with other authors, for *εσθε*, *utinam*; O that thou hadst known, I wish thou hadst; his sorrow must be proportionable to his love. Or otherwise we may conceive the sentence incomplete, part cut off by a more emphatical *aposiopesis*, tears interrupting speech, and imposing a more speaking silence, which imports an affection beyond all words. They that were anciently so over-officious as to rase those words "and wept over it" out of the canon, as thinking it unworthy so divine a person to shed tears, did greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures (which elsewhere speak of our Lord's weeping.) nor the power of divine love (now become incarnate) nor indeed the true perfections and properties of human nature: otherwise they had never taken upon them to reform the gospel, and reduce not only Christianity, but Christ himself to the measures and square of their stoical philosophy: but these have also met with a like-ancient confutation.

One thing (before we proceed) needs some disquisition, namely.—Whether this lamentation of our blessed Lord do re-

fer only or ultimately to the temporal calamity he foresaw coming upon Jerusalem:—or whether it had not a further and more principal reference to their spiritual and eternal miseries that were certain to be concomitant, and consequent thereunto? Where let it be considered.

1. That very dreadful spiritual plagues and judgments did accompany their destruction very generally; which every one knows who is acquainted with their after-story, that is that takes notice what spirit reigned among them, and what their behaviour was towards our Lord himself, and afterwards towards his apostles and disciples all along to their fearful catastrophe (as it may be collected from the sacred records, and other history) what blindness of mind, what hardness of heart, what mighty prejudice, what inflexible obstinacy, against the clearest light, the largest mercy, the most perspicuous and most gracious doctrine, and the most glorious works, wrought to confirm it, against the brightest beams and evidences of the divine truth, love and power! what persevering impenitency and infidelity against God and Christ, proceeding from the bitterest enmity! (Ye have both seen and hated me and my Father, John 15. 24.) what mad rage and fury against one another, even when death and destruction were at the very door! Here were all the tokens imaginable of the most tremendous infatuation, and of their being forsaken of God. Here was a concurrence of all kinds of spiritual judgments in the highest degree.

2. That the concomitancy of such spiritual evils with their temporal destruction, our Lord foreknew as well as their temporal destruction itself. It lay equally in view before him; and was as much under his eye. He that knew what was in man, could as well tell what would be in him. And by the same light by which he could immediately look into hearts, he could as well see into futurities, and as well the one futurity as the other. The knowledge of the one he did not owe to his human understanding: to his divine understanding, whereby he knew all things, the other could not be hid.

3. The connection between the impenitency and infidelity that prove to be final; and eternal misery, is known to us all. Of his knowledge of it therefore (whose law hath made the connection, besides what there is in the nature of the things themselves) there can be no doubt.

4. That the miseries of the soul, especially such as prove incurable and eternal, are in themselves far the greatest, we all acknowledge: nor can we make a difficulty to believe, that our Lord apprehended and considered things according as they were in themselves, so as to allow every thing its own proper weight and import in his estimating of them. These things seem all

very evident to any eye. Now though it be confessed not impossible, that of things so distinct from one another as outward and temporal evils, and those that are spiritual and eternal, even befalling the same persons, one may for the present consider the one without attending to the other, or making distinct reflection thereon at the same time; yet how unlikely is it, these things bordering so closely upon one another as they did, in the present case; that so comprehensive a mind as our Saviour's was, sufficiently able to inclose them both; and so spiritual a mind, apt no doubt to consider most what was in itself most considerable, should in a solemn lamentation of so sad a case, wholly overlook the saddest part! and stay his thoughts only upon the surface and outside of it! That he mentions only the approaching outward calamity. (ver. 43. 44.) was that he spake in the hearing of the multitude, and upon the way, but in passing, when there was not opportunity for large discourse; and therefore he spake what might soonest strike their minds, was most liable to common apprehension, and might most deeply affect ordinary, and not yet enough prepared hearers.

And he spake what he had no doubt, a deep sense of himself. Whatever of tender compassions might be expected from the most perfect humanity and benignity, could not be wanting in him, upon the foresight of such a calamity as was coming upon that place and people. But yet, what was the sacking of a city, the destroying of pompous buildings that were all of a perishable material, the mangling of human flesh, over which the worm was otherwise shortly to have had dominion; to the alienation of men's minds from God, their disaffection to the only means of their recovery, and reconciliation to him, and their subjection to his wrath and curse for ever! When also it is plain he considered that perverse temper of mind and spirit in them, as the cause of their ruin! which his own words imply; that "the things which belonged to their peace were hid from their eyes;" and that the things he foretold, should befall them, because "they knew not the day of their visitation." For what could the things be that belonged to their peace, but turning to God, believing in himself, as the Messiah, bringing forth of fruits meet for repentance? Whence also there must be another latent, and concealed meaning of their peace itself; than only their continued amity with the Roman state; their peace with heaven; their being set right, and standing in favour and acceptance with God. For was it ever the first intention of the things enjoined in the gospel, but to entitle men to earthly secular benefits?

Nor can we doubt but the same things lay deep in the mind

of our blessed Lord, when he uttered these words, as when he spoke those so very like them, Mat. 23. 37, 38. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. These other were not spoken indeed at the same time, but very soon after: *those* we are considering, in his way to the city, *these* when he was come into it; most probably, by the series of the evangelical history the second day, after his having lodged the first night at Bethany. But it is plain they have the same sense, and that the same things lay with great weight upon his spirit; so that the one passage may contribute much to the enlightening and expounding of the other.

Now what can be meant by that "I would have gathered you as the hen her chickens under her wings?" Could it intend a political meaning; that he would have been a temporal prince and saviour to them? which he so earnestly declined and disclaimed; professing to the last, his kingdom was not of this world. It could mean no other thing, but that he would have reduced them back to God, have gathered and united them under his own gracious and safe conduct in order thereto, have secured them from the divine wrath and justice, and have conferred on them spiritual and eternal blessings. In a like sense their *peace* here, was no doubt more principally to be understood; and their loss and forfeiture of it, by their not understanding the things belonging thereto, considered and lamented.

Therefore the principal intendment of this lamentation, though directly applied to a community, and the formed body of a people, is equally applicable unto particular persons living under the gospel, or to whom the ordinary means of their conversion and salvation are vouchsafed, but are neglected by them and forfeited. We may therefore thus sum up the meaning and sense of these words:—That it is a thing in itself very lamentable, and much lamented by our Lord Jesus, when such as living under the gospel, have had a day of grace, and an opportunity of knowing the things belonging to their peace, have so outworn that day, and lost their opportunity, that the things of their peace are quite hid from their eyes:—where we have these distinct heads of discourse to be severally considered and insisted on.

- I. What are the things necessary to be known by such as live under the gospel, as immediately belonging to their peace.
- II. That they have a day or season wherein to know not these

things only, but the whole compass of their case, and what the knowledge of those things more immediately belonging to their peace supposes, and depends upon.

III. That this day hath its bounds and limits, so that when it is over and lost : those things are for ever hid from their eyes.

IV. That this is a case to be considered with deep resentment and lamentation, and was so by our Lord Jesus.

I. What are the things necessary to be known by such as live under the gospel, as immediately belonging to their peace? Where we are more particularly to inquire,—what those things themselves are—and what sort of knowledge of them it is that is here meant, and made necessary.

1. What the things are which belong to the peace of a people living under the gospel? The things belonging to a people's peace, are not throughout the same with all. Living, or not living under the gospel makes a considerable difference in the matter. Before the incarnation and public appearance of our Lord, something was not necessary among the jews, that afterwards became necessary. It was sufficient to them before, to believe in a Messiah to come, more indefinitely. Afterwards he plainly tells them, if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins, John. 8. 24. Believing in Christ cannot be necessary to pagans that never heard of him, *as a duty*, howsoever necessary it may be *as a means*. Their not believing in him cannot be itself a sin, though by it they should want remedy for their other sins. But it more concerns us who do live under the gospel, to apprehend aright what is necessary for ourselves. That is a short and full summary which the apostle gives, Acts 20. 21. Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel finds us in a state of apostacy from God, both as our sovereign Ruler, and sovereign Good, not apt to obey and glorify him, as the former, nor enjoy him, and be satisfied in him, as the latter. Repentance towards God cures and removes this disaffection of our minds and hearts towards him, under both these notions. By it the whole soul turns to him, with this sense and resolution. "I have been a rebellious disloyal wretch, against the high authority, and most rightful government of him who gave me breath, and whose creature I am, I will live no longer thus. Lo now I come back unto thee, O Lord, thou art my Lord and God. Thee I now design to serve and obey, as the Lord of my life, thee I will fear, unto thee I subject myself, to live no longer after my own will, but thine; I have been hitherto a miserable forlorn distressed creature, destitute of any thing that could satisfy me, or make me happy; have set my heart upon a vain and thorny world, that had nothing in it answerable to my real necessities, that

hath flattered and mocked me often, never satisfied me, and been wont to requite my pursuits of satisfaction from it with vexation and trouble, and "pierce me through with many sorrows." I have borne in the mean time a disaffected heart towards thee, have therefore cast thee out of my thoughts, so that amidst all my disappointments and sorrows, it never came into my mind to say, "Where is God my Maker?" I could never savour any thing spiritual or divine, and was ever ready, in distress, to turn myself any way than (that which I ought) towards thee. I now see and bemoan my folly, and with a convinced, self-judging heart, betake myself to thee; the desires of my soul are now unto thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. Whom have I in heaven but thee, or on earth that I can desire besides thee."

This is "Repentance towards God," and is one thing belonging, and most simply necessary to our peace. But though it be most necessary, it is not enough. It answers to something of our wretched case, but not to every thing. We were in our state of apostacy, averse, and disaffected to God. To this evil, repentance towards him is the opposite, and only proper remedy. But besides our being without inclination towards him we were also without interest in him. We not only had unjustly cast off him, but were also most justly cast off by him. Our injustice had set us against him, and his justice had set him against us; we need, in order to our peace with him, to be relieved as well against his justice, as our own injustice. What if, now we would return to him, he will not receive us? and he will not receive us for our own sakes. He must have a recompence for the wrong we had done him, by our rebellion against his government, and our contempt of his goodness. Our repentance is no expiation. Nor had we of our own, or were capable of obliging him to give us the power and grace to repent. Our high violation of the sacred rights and honour of the godhead, made it necessary, in order to our peace and reconciliation, there should be a sacrifice, and a mediator between him and us. He hath judged it not honourable to him, not becoming him to treat with us, or vouchsafe us favours upon other terms. And since he thought it necessary to insist upon having a sacrifice, he judged it necessary too, to have one proportionable to the wrong done; lest he should make the majesty of heaven cheap, or occasion men to think it a light matter to have fundamentally overturned the common order which was settled between himself and men. The whole earth could not have afforded such a sacrifice, it must be supplied from heaven. His co-eternal Son made man, and so uniting heaven and earth in his own person,

undertakes to be that sacrifice, and, in the virtue of it, to be a standing continual Mediator between God and us; through him, and for his sake, all acts and influences of grace are to proceed towards us. No sin is to be forgiven, no grace to be conferred but upon his account. It is reckoned most God-like, most suitable to the divine greatness, once offended, to do nothing that shall import favour towards sinners, but upon his constant interposition. Him hath he set over us, and directed that all our applications to himself, and all our expectations from him, should be through him. Him hath he exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give us repentance and remission of sins. Acts 5. 31. Now to one so high in power over us, he expects we should pay a suitable homage. That homage the holy Scripture calls by the name of faith, believing on him. God hath set him forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Rom. 3. 25, 26. So that when by repentance we turn to God, as our end, we must also apply ourselves by faith, to our Lord Jesus Christ, as our way to that end. Which till we do, we are in rebellion still, and know not what belongs to our peace. He insists that his Son into whose hands he hath committed our affairs, should be honoured by us, as he himself requires to be. John 5. 23.

Now these two things sum up our part of the covenant between God and us. By repentance we again take God for our God. Repenting we return to him as our God. By faith we take his Son for our Prince and Saviour. These things, by the tenour of the evangelical covenant, are required of us. Peace is settled between God and us (as it is usually with men towards one another after mutual hostilities) by striking a covenant. And in our case, it is a covenant by sacrifice, as you have seen. Nor are harder terms than these imposed upon us. Dost thou now, sinner, apprehend thyself gone off from God? and find a war is commenced and on foot, between God and thee? He can easily conquer and crush thee to nothing, but he offers thee terms of peace, upon which he is willing to enter into covenant with thee. Dost thou like his terms? Art thou willing to return to him, and take him again for thy God? to resign and commit thyself with unfeigned trust and subjection, into the hands of his Son thy Redeemer? These are "the things which belong to thy peace." See that thou now know them.

2. But what knowledge of them is it that is here meant? The thing speaks itself. It is not a mere contemplative knowledge. We must so know them as to do them; otherwise the

increase of knowledge is the increase of sorrow. Thy guilt and misery will be the greater. To know any thing that concerns our practice, is to no purpose if we do not practise it. It was an hebrew form of speech, and is a common form, by words of knowledge to imply practice. It being taken for granted that in matters so very reasonable and important, if what we are to do, once be rightly known, it will be done. Thus elsewhere the same great requisites to eternal life and blessedness are expressed by our Lord. This is life eternal to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent; it being supposed and taken for granted that a true, vivid knowledge of God and Christ will immediately form the soul to all suitable dispositions and deportments towards the one and the other; and consequently to all men also, as christian precepts do direct to all the acts of sobriety, justice and charity unto which the law of Christ obliges. An habitual course of sin in any kind, is inconsistent with this knowledge of the things of our peace, and therefore with our peace itself. All sin is in a true sense reducible to ignorance; and customary sinning into total destitution of divine knowledge. According to the usual style of the sacred writings, 1 Cor. 15. 34. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God. He that sinneth, that is, that is a doer of sin, *κακοποιων*, *a worker of iniquity*, hath not seen God. 3, John 11.

II. Such as live under the gospel have a day, or a present opportunity, for the obtaining the knowledge of these things immediately belonging to their peace, and of whatsoever is besides necessary thereunto. I say nothing what opportunities they have who never lived under the gospel; who yet no doubt might generally, know more than they do; and know better what they do know. It suffices us who enjoy the gospel, to understand our own advantages thereby. Nor, as to those who do enjoy it, is every one's day of equal clearness. How few in comparison, have ever seen such a day as Jerusalem at this time did! made by the immediate beams of the Sun of righteousness! our Lord himself vouchsafing to be their Instructor, so speaking as never man did; and with such authority as far outdid their other teachers, and astonished the hearers. In what transports did he use to leave those that heard him, wheresoever he came, wondering at the gracious words that came out of his mouth! And with what mighty and beneficial works was he wont to recommend his doctrine, shining in the glorious power, and savouring of the abundant mercy of heaven, so as every apprehensive mind might see the Deity was incarnate, God was come down to treat with men, and allure them into the knowledge and love of himself. The word was made flesh. What

unprejudiced mind might not perceive it to be so? He was there manifested and veiled at once; both expressions are used concerning the same matter. The divine beams were somewhat obscured, but did yet ray through that veil; so that his glory was beheld as the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1. 14. This Sun shone with a mild and benign but with a powerful, vivifying light. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. Such a light created unto the jews this their day. Happy jews, if they had understood their own happiness! And the days that followed, to them (for a while) and the gentile world were not inferior, in some respects brighter and more glorious (the more copious gift of the Holy Ghost being reserved unto the crowning and enthroning of the victorious Redeemer) when the everlasting gospel flew like lightning to the utmost ends of the earth; and the word which began to be spoken by the Lord himself, was confirmed by them that heard him, God also himself bearing them witness, with signs, and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Heb. 2. 4. No such day hath been seen this many an age. Yet whithersoever the same gospel, for substance, comes, it also makes a day of the same kind, and affords always true, though diminished light; whereby, however, the things of our peace might be understood and known. The written gospel varies not; and if it be but simply and plainly proposed (though to some it be proposed with more advantage, to some with less, yet) still we have the same things immediately relating to our peace extant before our eyes; and divers things besides, which it concerns us to be acquainted with that we may the more distinctly, and to better purpose understand these things. For instance,

1. We have the true and distinct state of the quarrel between God and us. Pagans have understood somewhat of the apostacy of man from God; that he is not in the same state wherein he was at first. But while they have understood that something was amiss, they could scarce tell what. The Gospel reveals the universal pravity of the degenerate nature even of all men, and of every faculty in man. That there is none that doth good, no not one; and that every one is altogether become filthy and impure, (Rom. 3. 12.) that there is an entire old man to be put off; wholly corrupt by deceivable lusts, (Eph. 4. 22.) that the *ακορπωλις*, the noblest powers are vitiated, the mind and conscience defiled, that the spirit of the mind needs renewing, is sunk into carnality; and that the carnal mind is enmity against God; and is not subject to his law, nor can be; (Rom. 8. 7.) nor capable of savouring the things of God; that the sinner is in the flesh, under the dominion and power, and in the

possession of the fleshly, sensual nature, and can therefore neither obey God, nor enjoy him; that it is become impossible to him either to please God, or be pleased with him. That the sinners quarrel therefore with God is about the most appropriate rights of the Godhead; the controversy is who shall be God, which is the supreme authority and which is the supreme good. The former peculiarity of the Godhead, the lapsed creature is become so insolent, as to usurp and arrogate to himself. When he is become so much less than a man (a very beast) he will be a God. His sensual will shall be his only law. He lives and walks after the flesh, serves divers lusts and pleasures, and says "Who is Lord over me?" But being conscious that he is not self-sufficient, that he must be beholden to somewhat foreign to himself for his satisfaction, and finding nothing else suitable to his sensual inclination; that other divine peculiarity to be the supreme good he places upon the sensible world; and for this purpose *that* shall be his God; so that between himself and the world he attempts to share the undivided Godhead. This is a controversy of a high nature, and about other matters than even the Jewish rabbins thought of, who when Jerusalem was destroyed, supposed God was angry with them for their neglect of the recitation of their psalteries morning and evening; or that they were not respectful enough of one another; or that distance enough was not observed between superiors and inferiors, &c. The Gospel impleads men as rebels against their rightful Lord; but of this treason against the majesty of heaven men little suspect themselves till they are told. The gospel tells them so plainly, represents the matter in so clear light, that they need only to contemplate themselves in that light, and they may see that so it is. Men may indeed, by resolved, stiff winking, create to themselves a darkness amidst the clearest light. But open thine eyes man, thou that livest under the gospel, set thyself to view thine own soul, thou wilt find it is day with thee; thou hast a day, by being under the gospel, and light enough to see that this is the posture of thy soul, and the state of thy case Godward. And it is a great matter towards the understanding the things of thy peace, to know aright what is the true state of the quarrel between God and thee.

2. The gospel affords light to know what the issue of this quarrel is sure to be, if it go on, and there be no reconciliation. It gives us other and plainer accounts of the punishments of the other world; more fully represents the extremity, and perpetuity of the future miseries, and state of perdition appointed for the ungodly world, speaks out concerning the "Tophet prepared of old, the lake of fire and brimstone;" shews the miseries of that state to be the immediate effects of divine dis-

pleasure; that “the breath of the Almighty as a river of brimstone” always foment those flames; that “indignation and wrath cause the tribulation and anguish” which must be the portion of evil doers; and how “fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God!”* Gives us to understand what accession men’s own unaltered vicious habits will have to their miseries; their own outrageous lusts and passions, which here they made it their business to satisfy, becoming their insatiable tormentors; that they are to receive “the *things done* in the body, according to what they have done;” and that “what they have sowed *the same* also they are to reap;” and what their own guilty reflections will contribute, the bitings and gnawings of the worm that dies not, the venomous corrosions of the viper bred in their own bosoms, and now become a full-grown serpent; what the society and insultation of devils, with whom they are to partake in woes and torments, and by whom they have been seduced and trained into that cursed partnership and communion; and that this fire wherein they are to be tormented together is to be everlasting, “a fire never to be quenched.” If men be left to their own conjecture only, touching the danger they incur by continuing and keeping up a war with heaven, and are to make their own hell, and that it be the creature only of their own imagination; it is like they will make it as easy and favourable as they can; and so are little likely to be urged earnestly to sue for peace by the imagination of a tolerable hell. But if they understand it to be altogether intolerable, this may make them bestir themselves, and think the favour of God worth the seeking. The gospel imports favour and kindness to you, when it imports most of terror, in telling you so plainly the worst of your case if you go on in a sinful course. It makes you a day, by which you may make a truer judgment of the blackness, darkness and horror of that everlasting night that is coming on upon you; and lets you know that black and endless night is introduced by a terrible preceeding day, that day of the Lord the business whereof is judgment. They that live under the gospel cannot pretend they are in darkness so as that day should overtake them as a thief; and that, by surprize, they should be doomed and abandoned to the regions of darkness. The gospel forewarns you plainly of all this: which it does not merely to fright and torment you before the time, but that you may steer your course another way, and escape the place and state of torment. It only says this that it may render the more acceptable to you what it hath to say besides; and only threatens you with these things if there be no reconciliation between God and you. But then at the same time,

* Isa. 30, 33. Rev. 21, 8. Rom. 2, 8. Heb. 10, 31

3. It also represents God to you as reconcilable through a Mediator. In that gospel "peace is preached to you, by Jesus Christ." That gospel lets you see God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, that sin may not be imputed to them. That gospel proclaims glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will towards men. So did the voices of angels sum up the glad tidings of the gospel, when that Prince of peace was born into the world. It tells you "God desires not the death of sinners, but that they may turn and live;" that he would "have all men be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth:" that he is "long suffering towards them, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," that he "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The rest of the world cannot but collect, from darker intimations, God's favourable propensions towards them. He spares them, is patient towards them, that herein, "his goodness might lead them to repentance." He sustains them, lets them dwell in a world which they might understand was of his making, and whereof he is absolute Lord. "They live move and have their being in him, that they might seek after him, and by feeling find him out." He doth them "good, gives them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." He lets "his sun shine on them," whose far extended beams shew forth his kindness and benignity to men, even "to the utmost ends of the earth. For there is no speech or language whither his line and circle reaches not." But those are but dull and glimmering beams in comparison of those that shine from the Sun of righteousness through the gospel-revelation, and in respect of that divine glory which appears in the face of Jesus Christ. How clearly doth the light of this gospel-day reveal God's design of reducing sinners, and reconciling them to himself by a Redeemer! How canst thou but say, sinner, thou hast a day of it? and clear day-light shewing thee what the good and acceptable will of God towards thee is? Thou art not left to guess only, thou mayst be reconciled and find mercy, and to grope and feel thy way in the dark, unless it be a darkness of thy own making. And whereas a sinner, a disloyal rebellious creature, that hath affronted the majesty of heaven, and engaged against himself the wrath and justice of his Maker, and is unable to make him any recompence, can have no reason to hope God will shew him mercy, and be reconciled to him for his own sake, or for any thing he can do to oblige or induce him to it; the same gospel shews you plainly, it is for the Redeemer's sake, and what he hath done and suffered to procure it. But inasmuch also as the

sinner may easily apprehend, that it can never answer the necessities of his state and case, that God only be not his enemy, that he forbear hostilities towards him, pursue him not with vengeance to his destruction. For he finds himself an indigent creature, and he needs somewhat beyond what he hath ever yet met with to make him happy; that it is uneasy and grievous to wander up and down with craving desires among varieties of objects that look speciously, but which, either he cannot so far compass as to make a trial what there is in them, or wherewith, upon trial, he finds himself mocked and disappointed, and that really they have nothing in them: he finds himself a mortal creature, and considers that if he had all that he can covet in this world, the increase of his present enjoyments doth but increase unto him trouble and anguish of heart, while he thinks what great things he must shortly leave and lose for ever; to go he knows not whither, into darksome, gloomy regions; where he cannot so much as imagine any thing suitable to his inclinations and desires. For he knows all that is delectable to his present sense he must here leave behind him; and he cannot divest himself of all apprehensions of a future state, wherein if God should make him suffer nothing, yet if he have nothing, to enjoy, he must be *always* miserable.

4. The gospel, therefore, further represents to him the final, eternal blessedness, and glorious state, which they that are reconciled shall be brought into. They that live under the gospel are not mocked with shadows, and empty clouds, nor with fabulous elysiums. Nor are they put off with some unintelligible notion of only being happy in the general. But are told expressly wherein their happiness is to consist. "Life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel." It is given them to understand how great a good is laid up in store. "The things which eye hath not seen, and ear not heard, and which otherwise could not have entered into the heart of man, the things of God's present and eternal kingdom, are set in view. It shews the future state of the reconciled shall consist not only in freedom from what is evil, but in the enjoyment of the best and most delectable good: that God himself in all his glorious fulness will be their eternal and most satisfying portion. That their blessedness is to lie in the perpetual fruitive vision of his blessed face, and in the fulness of joy, and the everlasting pleasures which the divine presence itself doth perpetually afford. And whereas their glorious Redeemer is so nearly allied to them, flesh of their flesh, and bone of their bone, who inasmuch as the children were made partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, (Heb. 2. 14.) and is become by special title their authorized Lord, they are assured

(of that, than which nothing should be more grateful to them) "they shall be for ever with the Lord;" that they are to be where he is, "to behold his glory;" and shall be "joint-heirs with Christ," and be "glorified together with him," shall partake, according to their measure and capacity, in the same blessedness which he enjoys. Thou canst not pretend, sinner, who livest under the gospel, that thou hast not the light of the day to shew thee what blessedness is. Heaven is opened to thee. Glory beams down from thence upon thee to create thee a day, by the light whereof thou mayest see with sufficient clearness, what is "the inheritance of the saints in light." And though all is not told thee, and it do not in every respect appear what we shall be; so much may be foreknown that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, and shall see him as he is. 1 Johh 3. 1. 2. And because the heart, as yet carnal, can favour little of all this; and finding itself strange and disaffected to God, affecting now to be without Christ and without God in the world, may easily apprehend it impossible to it to be happy in an undesired good, or that it can enjoy what it dislikes; or, in the mean time, walk in a way to which it finds in itself nothing but utter averseness and disinclination.

5. The gospel further shews us what is to be wrought and done in us to attemper and frame our spirits to our future state and present way to it. It lets us know we are to be born again, born from above, born of God, made partakers of a divine nature, that will make the temper of our spirits connatural to the divine presence. That whereas "God is light, and with him is no darkness at all;" we, "who were darkness shall be made light in the Lord:" that we are to be "begotten again to a lively hope, to the eternal and undefiled inheritance that is reserved in the heavens for us:" that we are thus to be made "meet to be partakers of that inheritance of the saints in light." And as we are to be eternally conversant with Christ, we are here to put on Christ, to have Christ in us the hope of glory. And whereas only the way of holiness and obedience leads to blessedness, that we are to be "created in Christ Jesus to good works to walk in them." And shall thereupon find the ways prescribed to us by him, who is the wisdom of God, to be all "ways of pleasantness and paths of peace:" that he will "put his Spirit into us, and cause us to walk in his statutes," and to account that "in keeping them there is great reward." And thus all that is contained in that mentioned summary of the things belonging to our peace, "Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," will all become easy to us, and as the acts of nature; proceeding from that new and holy nature imparted to us.

And whosoever thou art that livest under the gospel, canst thou deny that it is day with thee, as to all this? wast thou never told of this great necessary heart-change? Didst thou never hear that the "tree must be made good that the fruit might be good?" that thou must become a "new creature, have old things done away, and all things made new?" Didst thou never hear of the necessity of having "a new heart, and a right spirit" created and renewed in thee; that except thou wert "born again," or from above (as that expression may be read) thou couldst "never enter into the kingdom of God?" wast thou kept in ignorance that a form of godliness without the power of it would never do thee good? that a name to live without the principle of the holy, divine life would never save thee? that a specious outside, that all thy external performances, while thou wentest with an unrenewed, earthly, carnal heart would never advantage thee as to thy eternal salvation and blessedness? And this might help thine understanding concerning the nature of thy future blessedness, and will be found most agreeable to it, being aright understood; for as thou art not to be blessed by a blessedness without thee and distant from thee, but inwrought into thy temper, and intimately united with thee, nor glorified by an external glory but by a glory revealed within thee: so neither canst thou be qualified for that blessed glorious state otherwise than by having the temper of thy soul made habitually holy and good. As what a good man partakes of happiness here is such, that he is "satisfied from himself," so it must be hereafter, not originally from himself, but by divine communication made most intimate to him. Didst thou not know that it belonged to thy peace, to have a peace-maker? and that the Son of God was he? and that he makes not the peace of those that despise and refuse him, or that receive him not, that come not to him and are not willing to come to God by him? Couldst thou think, living under the gospel, that the reconciliation between God and thee was not to be mutual? that he would be reconciled to thee while thou wouldst not be reconciled to him, or shouldst still bear towards him a disaffected, implacable heart? For couldst thou be so void of all understanding as not to apprehend what the gospel was sent to thee for? or why it was necessary to be preached to thee, or that thou shouldst hear it? who was to be reconciled by a gospel preached to thee but thyself? who was to be persuaded by a gospel sent to thee? God, or thou? who is to be persuaded but the unwilling? The gospel, as thou hast been told, reveals God willing to be reconciled, and thereupon beseeches thee to be reconciled to him. Or could it seem likely to thee thou couldst ever be reconciled to God, and continue unreconciled to thy Reconciler? To what purpose is there a days-man,

a middle person between God and thee, if thou wilt not meet him in that middle person? Dost thou not know that Christ avails thee nothing if thou still stand at a distance with him, if thou dost not unite and adjoin thyself to him, or art not in him? And dost thou not again know that divine power and grace must unite thee to him? and that a work must be wrought and done upon thy soul by an almighty hand, by God himself, a mighty transforming work to make thee capable of that union? that whosoever is in Christ is a new creature? (2 Cor. 5. 17.) that thou must be of God in Christ Jesus, who then is made unto thee of God also wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; (1 Cor. 1. 30.) every way answering the exigency of thy case, as thou art a foolish, guilty, impure, and enslaved, or lost creature? Didst thou never hear, that none can come to Christ but whom the Father draws? and that he draws the reasonable souls of men not violently or against their wills (he draws, yet drags them not) but makes them willing in the day of power, by giving a new nature, and new inclinations to them. It is sure with thee not dark night, not a dubious twilight, but broad day as to all this.

Yes, perhaps thou mayest say, but this makes my case the worse not the better; for it gives me at length to understand that what is necessary to my peace and welfare is impossible to me; and so the light of my day doth but serve to let me see myself miserable and undone, and that I have nothing to do to relieve and help myself. I therefore add,

6. That by being under the gospel, men have not only light to understand whatsoever is any way necessary to their peace, but opportunity to obtain that communication of divine power and grace whereby to comply with the terms of it. Whereupon, if this be made good, you have not a pretence left you to say your case is the worse, or that you receive any prejudice by what the gospel reveals of your own impotency to relieve and help yourselves; or determines touching the terms of your peace and salvation, making such things necessary thereto, as are to you impossible, and out of your own present power; unless it be a prejudice to you not to have your pride gratified; and that God hath pitched upon such a method for your salvation, as shall wholly turn to the praise of the glory of his grace, or that you are to be *of him* in Christ Jesus—that whosoever glories might glory in the Lord. 1 Cor. 1. 30. 31. Is it for a sinner that hath deserved, and is ready to perish, to insist upon being saved with reputation? or to envy the great God upon whose pleasure it wholly depends whether he shall be saved or not saved, the entire glory of saving him? For otherwise, excepting the mere business of glory and reputation; is it not all one to you

whether you have the power in your own hands of changing your hearts, of being the authors to yourselves, of that holy, new nature, out of which actual faith and repentance are to spring, or whether you may have it from the God of all grace, flowing to you from its own proper divine fountain? Your case is not sure really the worse that your salvation from first to last is to be all of grace, and that it is impossible to you to repent and believe, while it is not simply impossible; but that he can effectually enable you thereto, unto whom all things are possible; supposing that he will: of which I shall speak presently. Nay and it is more glorious and honourable, even to you, if you understand yourselves, that your case is so stated as it is. The gospel indeed plainly tells you that your repentance must be given you. Christ "is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance, and remission of sins." And so must your faith, and that frame of spirit which is the principle of all good works. By grace ye are saved, through faith, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast: for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Ephes. 2. 8,—10. Is it more glorious to have nothing in you but what is self-sprung, than to have your souls the seat and receptacle of divine communications; of so excellent things as could have no other than an heavenly original? If it were not absurd and impossible you should be self-begotten, is it not much more glorious to be born of God? As they are said to be that receive Christ. John. 1. 12, 13. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And now that by being under the gospel, you have the opportunity of getting that grace, which is necessary to your peace and salvation; you may see, if you consider what the gospel is, and was designed for. It is the ministration of the Spirit; that Spirit by which you are to be born again. John. 3. 3, 5, 6. The work of regeneration consists in the impregnating, and making lively and efficacious in you the holy truths contained in the gospel. Of his own good will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures, Jam. 1. 18. And again, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, 1 Pet. 1. 23. So our Saviour prays. Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth, John. 17. 17. The gospel is upon this account called the word of life, Phil. 2. 16. as by which the principles of that divine and holy life are implant-

ed in the soul, whereby we live to God, do what his gospel requires, and hath made our duty, and that ends at length in eternal life. But you will say. Shall all then that live under the gospel obtain this grace and holy life? Or if they shall not, or, if so far as can be collected, multitudes do not, or perhaps in some places that enjoy the gospel very few do, in comparison of them that do not, what am I better? when perhaps it is far more likely that I shall perish notwithstanding, than be saved? In answer to this, it must be acknowledged, that all that live under the gospel do not obtain life and saving grace by it. For then there had been no occasion for this lamentation of our blessed Lord over the perishing inhabitants of Jerusalem, as having lost their day, and that the things of their peace were now hid from their eyes, and by that instance it appears too possible, that even the generality of a people living under the gospel, may fall at length into the like forlorn and hopeless condition. But art thou a man that thus objectest? A reasonable understanding creature? or dost thou use the reason and understanding of a man in objecting thus? Didst thou expect, that when thine own wilful transgression had made thee liable to eternal death and wrath, peace and life, and salvation should be imposed upon thee whether thou wouldst or no, or notwithstanding thy most wilful neglect and contempt of them, and all the means of them? Could it enter into thy mind, that a reasonable soul should be wrought and framed for that high and blessed end, whereof it is radically capable, as a stock or a stone is for any use it is designed for; without designing its own end or way to it? Couldst thou think the gospel was to bring thee to faith and repentance whether thou didst hear it or no? or ever apply thy mind to consider the meaning of it, and what it did propose and offer to thee? or when thou mightest so easily understand that the grace of God was necessary to make it effectual to thee, and that it might become his power (or the instrument of his power) to thy salvation, couldst thou think it concerned thee not, to sue and supplicate to him for that grace? when thy life lay upon it, and thy eternal hope? Hast thou lain weltering at the foot-stool of the throne of grace in thine own tears (as thou hast been formerly weltering in thy sins and impurities) crying for grace to help thee in this time of thy need? And if thou thinkest this was above thee and without thy compass, hast thou done all that was within thy compass in order to the obtaining of grace at God's hands? But here perhaps thou wilt inquire, "Is there any thing then to be done by us, whereupon the grace of God may be expected certainly to follow?" To which I answer,

(1.) That it is out of question nothing can be done by us

to deserve it, or *for which* we may expect it to follow. It were not grace if we had obliged, or brought it by our desert under former preventive bonds to us. And

(2.) What if nothing can be done by us *upon which* it may be *certainly* expected to follow? Is a certainty of perishing better than a high probability of being saved?

(3.) Such as live under the gospel have reason to apprehend it highly probable they may obtain that grace which is necessary to their salvation, if they be not wanting to themselves. For

(4.) There is generally afforded to such, that which is wont to be called common grace. I speak not of any further extent of it, it is enough to our present purpose, that it extends so far, as to them that live under the gospel, and have thereby a day allowed them wherein to provide for their peace. Now though this grace is not yet certainly saving, yet it tends to that which is so. And none have cause to despair but that being duly improved and complied with, it may end in it.

And this is that which requires to be insisted on, and more fully evinced. In order whereto let us be considered, that it is expressly said to such, they are to work out their salvation with fear and trembling for this reason, that God works (or is working *ΕΣΤΙΝ Ο ΕΠΕΡΓΑΖΩΝ*) in them, that is, steadily and continually at work, or is always ready to work in them, to will, and to do, of his own good pleasure. Phil. 2. 12, 13. The matter fails not on his part. He will work on in order to their salvation, if they work in that way of subordinate co-operation, which his command, and the necessity of their own case oblige them unto. And it is further to be considered, that where God had formerly afforded the symbols of his gracious presence, given his oracles, and settled his church, though yet in its non-age, and much more imperfect state, there he however communicated those influences of his Spirit, that it was to be imputed to themselves if they came short of the saving operations of it. Of such it was said, thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them. Nehem. 9. 20. And to such, turn ye at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, but ye set at nought my counsel, and despised all my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity, &c. Prov. 1. 23, 24. We see whence their destruction came, not from God's first restraint of his Spirit, but their refusing, despising, and setting at nought his counsels and reproofs. And when it is said, they rebelled and vexed his Spirit, and he therefore turned, and fought against them, and became their enemy, Isa. 63. 10. It appears that before, his Spirit was not withheld, but did variously, and often make essays and

attempts upon them. And when Stephen immediately before his martyrdom thus bespeaks the descendants of these jews, Ye stiff necked, and uncircumcised,—ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye. Act. 7. 51. It is implied the Holy Ghost had been always striving from age to age with that stubborn people: for where there is no counterstriving there can be no resistance, no more than there can be a war on one side only. Which also appears to have been the course of God's dealing with the old world, before their so general lapse into idolatry and sensual wickedness, from that passage, Gen. 6. 3. according to the more common reading and sense of those words.

Now whereas the gospel is eminently said to be the ministration of the Spirit in contradistinction not only to the natural religion of other nations, but the divinely instituted religion of the jews also, as is largely discoursed 2 Cor. 3. and more largely through the epistle to the Galatians, especially chap. 4. and whereas we find that, in the Jewish church, the Holy Ghost did generally diffuse its influences, and not otherwise withhold them, than penally, and upon great provocation, how much more may it be concluded that under the gospel, the same blessed Spirit is very generally at work upon the souls of men, till by their resisting, grieving and quenching of it, they provoke it to retire and withdraw from them.

And let the consciences of men living under the gospel testify in the case. Appeal sinner to thine own conscience; Hast thou never felt any thing of conviction, by the word of God? hadst thou never any thought injected of turning to God, of reforming thy life, of making thy peace? have no desires ever been raised in thee, no fears? hast thou never had any tastes and relishes of pleasure in the things of God? whence have these come? What! from thyself, who art not sufficient to think any thing as of thyself? that is, not any good or right thought. All must be from that good Spirit that hath been striving with thee; and might still have been so unto a blessed issue for thy soul, if thou hadst not neglected and disobeyed it.

And do not go about to excuse thyself by saying, that so all others have done too, it is like at one time or other; and if that therefore be the rule and measure that they that contend against the strivings and motions of God's Spirit must be finally deserted, and given up to perish, who then can be saved? Think not of pleading so for thy neglecting and despising the grace and Spirit of God. It is true that herein the great God shews his sovereignty, when all that enjoy the same advantages for salvation deserve by their slighting them to be forsaken alike; he gives instances and makes examples of just severity,

and of the victorious power of grace as seems him good, which there will be further occasion to speak more of hereafter. In the mean time the present design is not to justify thy condemnation but procure thy salvation, and therefore to admonish and instruct thee, that, though thou art not sure, because some others that have slighted and despised the grace and Spirit of God are notwithstanding conquered and saved thereby, it shall therefore fare as well with thee; yet thou hast reason to be confident, it will be well and happy for thee if, now, thou despise and slight them not. And whether thou do or do not, it is however plain that by thy being under the gospel thou hast had a day, wherein to mind the things of thy peace, though it is not told thee it would last always, but the contrary is presently to be told thee.

And thou mayst now see it is not only a day in respect of *light*, but *influence* also; that thou mightest not only know notionally what belonged thereto, but efficaciously and practically, which you have heard is the knowledge here meant. And the concurrence of such light and influence has made thee a season wherein thou wast to have been at work for thy soul. The day is the proper season for work: when the night comes working ceases, both because that then light fails, and because drowsiness and sloth are more apt to possess men. And the night will come. For (which is the next thing we are to speak to,)

III. This day hath its bounds and limits, so that when it is over, and lost with such, the things of their peace are for ever hid from their eyes. And that this day is not infinite and endless, we see in the present instance. Jerusalem had her day; but that day had its period, we see it comes to this at last, that *now* the things of her peace are hid from her eyes. We generally see the same thing, in that sinners are so earnestly pressed to make use of the present time. To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, Psal. 95. quoted and urged Heb. 3. 7. 8. They are admonished to seek the Lord while he may be found, to call upon him while he is nigh. Isa. 55. 6. It seems some time he will not be found, and will be afar off. They are told this is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation. Isa. 49. 8. 2 Cor. 6. 2.

This day, with any place or people, supposes a precedent night, when the day-spring from on high had not visited their horizon, and all within it sat in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death. Yea and there was a time, we know, of very general darkness, when the gospel-day, "the day of visitation" had not yet dawned upon the world; "times of ignorance," wherein God as it were winked upon the nations of the earth; the beams of his eye did in a sort overshoot them, as

the word *ωπεριδων* imports. But when the eyelids of the morning open upon any people, and light shines to them with direct beams, they are *now* commanded to repent, (Act. 17. 30.) limited to the present point of time with such peremptoriness, as that noble Roman used towards a proud prince, asking time to deliberate upon the proposal made to him of withdrawing his forces that molested some of the allies of that state, he draws a line about him with the end of his rod, and requires him now, out of hand, before he stirred out of that circle to make his choice, whether he would be a friend or enemy to the people of Rome. So are sinners to understand the state of their own case. The God of thy life, sinner, in whose hands thy times are, doth with much higher right, limit thee to the present time, and expects thy present answer to his just and merciful offers and demands. He circumscribes thy day of grace; it is inclosed on both parts, and hath an evening as well as a morning; as it had a foregoing, so it hath a subsequent night, and the latter, if not more dark, yet usually much more stormy than the former! For God shuts up this day in much displeasure, which hath terrible effects. If it be not expressly told you what the condition of that night is that follows your gospel-day: if the watchman being asked, "What of the night?" do only answer it cometh as well as the morning came; black events are signified by that more awful silence. Or it is all one if you call it *a day*; there is enough to distinguish it from the *day of grace*. The Scriptures call such a calamitous season indifferently either by the name of night or day: but the latter name is used with some or other adjuncts to signify, that *day* is not meant in the pleasant or more grateful sense: a day of wrath, an evil day, a day of gloominess and thick darkness, not differing from the most dismal night; and to be told the morning of such a day is coming, is all one, as that the evening is coming of a bright and a serene day.

And here perhaps, reader, thou wilt expect to be told what are the limits of this day of grace? It is indeed much more difficult punctually to assign those limits, than to ascertain thee there are such: but it is also less-necessary. The wise and merciful God doth in matters of this nature little mind to gratify our curiosity; much less is it to be expected from him, that he should make known to us such things, whereof it were better we were ignorant, or the knowledge whereof would be much more a prejudice to us than an advantage. And it were as bold and rash an undertaking, in this case, as it would be vain and insignificant, for any man to take upon him to say, in it, what God hath not said, or given him plain ground for. What I conceive to be plain and useful in this matter I shall lay down

in the following propositions, insisting more largely where the matter requires it, and contenting myself but to mention what is obvious, and clear at the first sight.

1. That there is a great difference between the ends and limits of the day or season of grace as to particular persons, and in reference to the collective body of a people, inhabiting this or that place. It may be over with such or such a place, so as that they that dwell there, shall no longer have the gospel among them, when as yet it may not be over with every particular person belonging to it, who may be providentially east elsewhere, or may have the "ingrafted word" in them, which they lose not. And again it may be over with some particular persons in such a place, when it is not yet over with that people or place, generally considered.

2. As to both there is a difference between the ending of such a day, and intermissions, or dark intervals, that may be in it. The gospel may be withdrawn from such a people, and be restored. And God often no doubt, as to particular persons, either deprives them of the outward means of grace, for a time (by sickness, or many other ways) or may for a time, forbear moving upon them by his Spirit, and again try them with both.

3. As to particular persons, there may be much difference between such, as, while they lived under the gospel, gained the knowledge of the principal doctrines, or of the sum and substance of Christianity; though without any sanctifying effect, or impression upon their hearts, and such as through their own negligence, lived under it in total ignorance hereof. The day of grace may not be over with the former, though they should never live under the ministry of the gospel more. For it is possible, while they have the seeds and principles of holy truth laid up in their minds, God may graciously administer to them many occasions of recollecting and considering them, wherewith he may so please to co-operate, as to enliven them, and make them vital and effectual to their final salvation. Whereas, with the other sort, when they no more enjoy the external mean, the day of grace is like to be quite over, so as that there may be no more hope in their case than in that of pagans in the darkest parts of the world, and perhaps much less, as their guilt hath been much greater by their neglect of so great and important things. It may be better with Tyre and Sidon, &c.

4. That yet it is a terrible judgment to the most knowing, to lose the external dispensation of the gospel, while they have yet no sanctifying impression upon their hearts by it, and they are east upon a fearful hazard of being lost for ever, being left by

the departed gospel, in an unconverted state. For they need the most urgent inculcations of gospel-truths, and the most powerful enforcing means, to engage them to consider the things which they know. It is the design of the gospel to beget not only light in the mind, but grace in the heart. And if that were not done while they enjoyed such means, it is less likely to be done without them. And if any slighter, and more superficial impressions were made upon them thereby, short of true and thorough conversion, how great is the danger that all will vanish, when they cease to be pressed and urged, and called upon by the public voice of the gospel ministry any more. How naturally desident is the spirit of man, and apt to sink into deadness, worldliness and carnality, even under the most lively and quickening means; and even where a saving work hath been wrought; how much more when those means fail, and there is no vital principle within, capable of self-excitation and improvement. O that they would consider this, who have got nothing by the gospel all this while, but a little cold, spiritless, notional knowledge, and are in a possibility of losing it before they get any thing more!

5. That as it is certain death ends the day of grace with every unconverted person, so it is very possible it may end with divers before they die; by their total loss of all external means, or by the departure of the blessed Spirit of God from them, so as to return and visit them no more. How the day of grace may end with a person, is to be understood by considering what it is that makes up and constitutes such a day. There must be some measure and proportion of time to make up this (or any) day which is as the *substratum* and ground forelaid. Then there must be light superadded, otherwise it differs not from night, which may have the same measure of mere time. The gospel revelation, some way or other, must be had, as being the light of such a day. And again there must be some degree of liveliness, and vital influence, the more usual concomitant of light; the night doth more dispose men to drowsiness. The same sun that enlightens the world, disseminates also an invigorating influence. If the Spirit of the living God do no way animate the gospel revelation, and breathe in it, we have no day of grace. It is not only a day of light, but a day of power, wherein souls can be wrought upon, and a people made willing to become the Lord's. Psal. 110. As the Redeemer revealed in the gospel, is the light of the world, so he is life to it too, though neither are planted, or do take root every where. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. That light that rays from him is vital light in itself, and in its tendency and design, though it be disliked, and not entertained by the most.

Whereas therefore these things must concur to make up such a day: if either a man's time, his life on earth expire, or if light quite fail him, or if all gracious influence be withheld, so as to be communicated no more; his day is done, the season of grace is over with him. Now it is plain that many a one may lose the gospel before his life end; and possible that all gracious influence may be restrained, while as yet the external dispensation of the gospel remains. A sinner may have hardened his heart to that degree, that God will attempt him no more, in any kind, with any design of kindness to him, not in that more inward, immediate way at all, that is by the motions of his Spirit, which peculiarly can import nothing but friendly inclination, as whereby men are personally applied unto, so that cannot be meant; nor by the voice of the gospel, which may either be continued for the sake of others, or they continued under it, but for their heavier doom at length. Which though it may seem severe, is not to be thought strange, much less unrighteous.

It is not to be thought strange to them that read the Bible, which so often speaks this sense, as when it warns and threatens men with so much terror, as Heb. 10. 26,—29. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law, died without merey, under two or three witnesses; Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath *done despite unto the Spirit of grace?* and when it tells us, after many overtures made to men in vain, of his having given them up, &c. Psal. 81. 11, 12. But my people would not hearken to my voice: and Israel would none of me; so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust; and they walked in their own counsels; and pronounces, Let him that is unjust, be unjust still, and let him which is filthy, be filthy still, Rev. 22. 11. and says, In thy filthiness is lewdness, because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged; thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee. Ezek. 24. 13. Which passages seem to imply a total desertion of them, and retraction of all gracious influence. And when it speaks of letting them be under the gospel, and the ordinary means of salvation, for the most direful purposes: as that, this child (Jesus) was set for the fall, as well as for the rising, of many in Israel, Luke. 2. 34. As to which text the very learned Grotius glossing upon the words

κατα and εις πλωση, says, *Accedo iis qui non necdum eventum, sed et consilium*, that he is of their opinion who think that not the naked event, but the counsel or purpose of God is signified by it, the same with τισθεται; and alleges several texts where the active of that verb must have the same sense, as to appoint, or ordain; and mentions divers other places of the same import with this so understood; and which therefore to recite will equally serve our present purpose, as that Rom. 9. 33. Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling stone, and rock of offence. And I Pet. 2. 8. The stone which the builders refused, is made a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed. With that of our Saviour himself, John 9. 39. For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not, might see; and that they which see, might be made blind. And most agreeable to those former places is that of the prophet Isa. 28. 13. But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken. And we may add, that our Lord hath put us out of doubt that there is such a sin as that which is eminently called the sin against the Holy Ghost; that men may, in such circumstances, and to such a degree, sin against that blessed Spirit, that he will never move, or breathe upon them more, but leave them to a hopeless ruin: though I shall not in this discourse, determine or discuss the nature of it. But I doubt not is somewhat else, than final impenitency, and infidelity; and that every one that dies, not having sincerely repented and believed, is not guilty of it, though every one that is guilty of it, dies impenitent and unbelieving; but was guilty of it before; so as it is not the mere want of time, that makes him guilty. Whereupon therefore, that such may outlive their day of grace, is out of question.

But let not such, as, upon the descriptions the gospel gives us of that sin, may be justly confident they have not perhaps committed it, therefore think themselves out of all danger of losing their season of making their peace with God before they die. Many a one may, no doubt, that never committed the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost as he is the witness, by his wonderful works, of Christ being the Messiah. As one may die, by neglecting himself, that doth not poison himself, or cut his own throat. You will say, "But if the Spirit retire from men, so as never to return, where is the difference?" I answer, The difference lies in the *specific nature*, and greater heinousness of that sin, and consequently, in the deep-

er degrees of its punishment. For though the reason of its unpardonableness lies not principally in its greater heinousness, but in its direct repugnancy to the way of obtaining pardon, yet there is no doubt of its being much more heinous than many other sins, for which men perish. And therefore it is in proportion more severely punished. But is it not misery enough to dwell in darkness and woe for ever, as every one that dies unreconciled to God must do, unless the most intense flames and horror of hell be your portion? As his case is sufficiently bad that must die as an ordinary felon, though he is not to be hanged, drawn, and quartered.

Nor is there any place, or pretence for so prophane a thought, as if there were any colour of unrighteousness in this course of procedure with such men. Is it unjust severity to let the gospel become deadly to them, whose own malignity perverts it, against its nature, and genuine tendency, into a savour of death, (as 2 Cor. 2. 16.) which it is, *τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις*, that is to them, (as the mentioned author speaks) who may be truly said to seek their own destruction? or that God should intend their more aggravated condemnation, even from the despised gospel itself, who, when such light is come into the world, hate it, shew themselves *lucifugæ, tenebriones*, (as he also phrases it, speaking further upon that first mentioned text,) *such as fly from the light, choose and love to lurk in darkness?* He must have very low thoughts of divine favour and acceptance, of Christ and grace, and glory, that can have hard thoughts of God, for his vindicating, with greatest severity, the contempt of such things. What could better become his glorious majesty, and excellent greatness, than, as all things work together for good towards them that love him, so to let all things work for the hurt of them that so irreconcilably hate him, and bear a disaffected and implacable mind towards him? Nor doth the addition of his designing the matter so, make it hard. For if it be just to punish such wickedness, is it unjust to intend to punish it? and to intend to punish it according to its desert, when it cannot be thought unjust actually to render to men what they deserve?

We are, indeed, to account the primary intention of continuing the gospel to such a people, among whom these live, is kindness towards others, not this higher revenge upon them; yet nothing kinders but that this revenge upon them, may also be the fit matter of his secondary intention. For should he intend nothing concerning them? Is he to be so unconcerned about his own creatures, that are under his government? While things cannot fall out to him unawares, but that he hath this dismal event in prospect before him, he must at least intend to let it be, or not to hinder it. And who can expect he should?

For, that his gracious influence towards them should, at length cease, is above all exception: that it ceasing, while they live still under the gospel, they contract deeper guilt, and incur heavier punishment, follows of course. And who could say he should not intend to let it follow? For should he take away the gospel from the rest, that these might be less punished? that others might not be saved, because they will not?

Nor can he be obliged to interpose extraordinarily, and alter for their sakes, the course of nature and providence, so as either to hasten them the sooner out of the world, or cast them into any other part of it, where the gospel is not, lest they should, by living still under it, be obnoxious to the severer punishment. For whither would this lead? He should, by equal reason, have been obliged to prevent men's sinning at all, that they might not be liable to any punishment. And so not to have made the world, or have otherwise framed the methods of his government, and less suitably to a whole community of reasonable creatures; or to have made an end of the world long ago, and have quitted all his great designs in it, lest some should sin on, and incur proportionable punishment! or to have provided extraordinarily that all should do and fare alike; and that it might never have come to pass, that it should be less tolerable for Capernaum, and Chorazin, and Bethsaida than for Tyre, and Sidon, and Sodom, and Gomorrah. But is there unrighteousness with God? Or is he unrighteous in taking vengeance? or is he therefore unjust, because he will render to every one according to his works; to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek glory, honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath, tribulation, and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also, of the Gentile? Rom. 2. 6,—9. Doth righteousness itself make him unrighteous? O sinner, understand how much better it is to avoid the stroke of divine justice, than accuse it! God will be found true, and every man a liar, that he may be justified when he speaks, and be clear when he judges. Psal. 51. 4.

6. Yet are we not to imagine any certain fixed rule, according whereto (except in the case of the unpardonable sin) the divine dispensation is measured in cases of this nature: namely, That, when a sinner hath contended just so long, or to such a degree, against his grace and Spirit in his gospel, he shall be finally rejected; or if but so long, or not to such a degree, he is yet certainly to be further tried, or treated with. It is little to be doubted, but he puts forth the power of victorious grace, at length, upon some more obstinate, and obdurate sinners,

and that have longer persisted in their rebellions; (not having sinned the unpardonable sin) and gives over some sooner, as it seems good unto him. Nor doth he herein owe an account to any man of his matters. Here sovereign good pleasure rules, and arbitrates, that is tied to no certain rule. Neither, in these variations, is there any shew of that blamable *προσωποληψια* or *accepting of persons*, which, in his own word, he so expressly disclaims. We must distinguish matters of right, (even such as are so by promise only, as well as others) and matters of mere unpromised favour. In matters of right, to be an acceptor of persons, is a thing most highly culpable with men, and which can have no place with the holy God: that is, when a human judge hath his rule before him, according whereto he is to estimate men's rights, in judgment; there, to regard the person of the rich, or of the poor to the prejudice of the justice of the cause, were an insufferable iniquity; as it were also in a private person to withhold another's right, because he hath no kindness for him. So even the great God himself, though of mere grace, he first fixed and established the rule, (fitly therefore called the covenant, or law of grace) by which he will proceed in pardoning, and justifying men, or in condemning, and holding them guilty, both here, and in the final judgment; yet having fixed it, he will never recede from it; so as either to acquit an impenitent unbeliever, or condemn a believing penitent. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive. None shall be ever able to accuse him of breach of faith, or of transgressing his own rules of justice. We find it therefore said in reference to the judgment of the last day, when God shall render to every man according to his works, whether they be jews or gentiles, that there is no respect of persons with God. Rom. 2. 6,—11. yet (*qui promisit pœnitenti veniam, non promisit peccanti pœnitentiam: he who has promised pardon to the penitent, hath not promised penitence to the sinner,*) whereas he hath, by his evangelical law, ascertained pardon to one that sincerely obeys it, but hath not promised grace to enable them to do so, to them that have long continued wilfully disobedient and rebellious, this communication of grace is, therefore, left arbitrary, and to be dispensed, as the matter of free and unassured favour, as it seems him good. And indeed, if in matters of arbitrary favour, respect of persons ought to have no place, friendship were quite excluded the world, and would be swallowed up of strict and rigid justice: I ought to take all men for my friends alike, otherwise than as justice should oblige me to be more respectful to men of more merit.

7. Wherefore no man can certainly know, or ought to conclude, concerning himself or others, as long as they live, that

the season of grace is quite over with them. As we can conceive no rule God hath set to himself to proceed by, in ordinary cases of this nature; so neither is there any he hath set us to judge by, in this case. It were to no purpose, and could be of no use to men, to know so much; therefore it were unreasonable to expect God should have settled and declared any rule, by which they might come by the knowledge of it. As the case is then, namely, there being no such rule, no such thing can be concluded; for who can tell what an arbitrary, sovereign, free agent will do, if he declare not his own purpose himself? How should it be known, when the Spirit of God hath been often working upon the soul of a man, that this or that shall be the last act, and that he will never put forth another? And why should God make it known? To the person himself whose case it is, it is manifest it could be no benefit. Nor is it to be thought the holy God will ever so alter the course of his own proceedings, but that it shall finally be seen to all the world, that every man's destruction was, entirely, and to the last, of himself. If God had made it evident to a man, that he were finally rejected, he were obliged to believe it. But shall it ever be said, God hath made any thing a man's duty, which were inconsistent with his felicity. The having sinned himself into such a condition wherein he is forsaken of God, is indeed inconsistent with it. And so the case is to stand, that his perdition be in immediate connection with his sin, not with his duty. As it would be in immediate, necessary connection with his duty, if he were bound to believe himself finally forsaken, and a lost creature. For that belief makes him hopeless, and a very devil, justifies his unbelief of the gospel, towards himself, by removing and shutting up, towards him, the object of such a faith, and consequently brings the matter to this state, that he perishes, not because he does not believe God reconcilable to man, but because, with particular application to himself, he ought not so to believe.*

And it were most unfit, and of very pernicious consequence, that such a thing should be generally known concerning others. It were to anticipate the final judgment, to create a hell upon earth, to tempt them whose doom were already known, to do all the mischief in the world, which malice and despair can suggest, and prompt them unto; it were to mingle devils with men! and fill the world with confusion! How should parents know how to behave themselves towards children, a husband towards the wife of his bosom in such a case, if it were known they were no more to counsel, exhort, admonish them, pray with or for them than if they were devils!

* See more to this purpose in the Appendix.

And if there were such a rule, how frequent misapplications would the fallible and distempered minds of men make of it? so that they would be apt to fancy themselves warranted to judge severely, or uncharitably. (and as the truth of the case perhaps is) unjustly concerning others, from which they are so hardly withheld, when they have no such pretence to embolden them to it, but are so strictly forbidden it: and the judgment-seat so fenced, as it is, by the most awful interdicts, against their usurpation and encroachments. We are therefore to reverence the wisdom of the divine government, that things of this nature are among the arcana of it; some of those secrets which belong not to us. He hath revealed what was fit and necessary for us and our children, and envies to man no useful knowledge.

But it may be said, when the apostle (1 John. 5. 16.) directs to pray for a brother whom we see sinning a sin that is not unto death, and adds, there is a sin unto death, I do not say he shall pray for it; is it not implied that it may be known when one sins that sin unto death, not only to himself, but even to others too? I answer it is implied there may be too probable appearances of it, and much ground to suspect and fear it concerning some, in some cases; as when any against the highest evidence of the truth of the Christian religion, and that Jesus is the Christ, or the Messiah (the proper and most sufficiently credible testimony whereof, he had mentioned in the foregoing verses, under heads to which the whole evidence of the truth of Christianity may be fitly enough reduced) do notwithstanding, from that malice, which blinds their understanding, persist in infidelity, or apostatize and relapse into it, from a former profession, there is great cause of suspicion, lest such have sinned that sin unto death. Whereupon yet it is to be observed, he doth not expressly forbid praying for the persons whose case we may doubt; only he doth not enjoin it, as he doth for others, but only says, I do not say ye shall pray for it, that is, that in his present direction to pray for others. he did not intend such, but another sort, for whom they might pray remotely from any such suspicion: namely, that he meant *now* such praying as ought to be interchanged between christian friends, that have reason, in the main; to be well persuaded concerning one another. In the mean time intending no opposition to what is elsewhere enjoined, the praying for all men, (1 Tim. 2. 1.) without the personal exclusion of any, as also our Lord himself prayed indefinitely for his most malicious enemies, Father forgive them, they know not what they do; though he had formerly said, there was such a sin as should never be forgiven; whereof it is highly probable some of them were guilty: yet such he doth not expressly except: but his prayer being in the indefinite, not the

universal form, it is to be supposed it must mean such as were within the compass and reach of prayer, and capable of benefit by it. Nor doth the apostle here direct personally to exclude any, only that indefinitely and in the general such must be supposed not meant as had sinned the sin unto death; or must be conditionally excluded, if they had, without determining who had, or had not. To which purpose it is very observable, that a more abstract form of expression, is used in this latter clause of this verse. For whereas in the former *positive part* of the direction, he enjoins praying for him, or them that had not sinned unto death (namely concerning whom there was no ground for any such imagination or suspicion that they had;) in the *negative part*, concerning such as might have sinned it, he doth not say for him or them, but for it, (that is concerning, in reference to it,) as if he had said, the case in general only to be excepted, and if persons are to be distinguished (since every sin is some one's sin, the sin of some person or other) let God distinguish, but do not you, it is enough for you to except the sin, committed by whomsoever. And though the former part of the verse speaks of a particular person, "If a man see his brother sin a sin that is not unto death," which is as determinate to a person as the sight of our eye can be, it doth not follow the latter part must suppose a like particular determination of any person's case, that he hath sinned it. I may have great reason to be confident such and such have not, when I can only suspect that such a one hath. And it is a thing much less unlikely to be certain to oneself than another, for they that have sinned unto death, are no doubt so blinded and stupified by it, that they are not more apt or competent to observe themselves, and consider their case than others may be.

8. But though none ought to conclude that their day or season of grace is quite expired, yet they ought deeply to apprehend the danger lest it should expire, before their necessary work be done, and their peace made. For though it can be of no use to them to know the former, and therefore they have no means appointed them by which to know it, it is of great use to apprehend the latter; and they have sufficient ground for the apprehension. All the cautions and warnings wherewith the holy Scripture abounds, of the kind with those already mentioned, have that manifest design. And nothing can be more important, or apposite to this purpose, than that solemn charge of the great apostle; Phil. 2. 12. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; considered together with the subjoined ground of it, ver. 13. For it is God that worketh in you to will, and to do, of his own good pleasure. How correspondent is the one with the other; *work*, for *he works*;

there were no working at all to any purpose, or with any hope, if he did not work. And work with fear and trembling, for he works of his own good pleasure, as if he had said "It were the greatest folly imaginable to trifle with one that works at so perfect liberty, under no obligation, that may desist when he will; to impose upon so absolutely sovereign, and arbitrary an agent, that owes you nothing: and from whose former gracious operations not complied with, you can draw no argument unto any following ones, that because he doth, therefore he will. As there is no certain connection between present time, and future, but all time is made up of undepending, not strictly coherent moments, so as no man can be sure, because one now exists, another shall; there is also no more certain connection between the arbitrary acts of a free agent within such time; so that I cannot be sure, because he now darts in light upon me, is now convincing me, now awaking me, therefore he will still do so, again and again. Upon this ground then, what exhortation could be more proper than this? "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." What could be more awfully monitory, and enforcing of it, than that he works only of mere good-will and pleasure? How should I tremble to think, if I should be negligent, or undutiful, he may give out the next moment, and let the work fall, and me perish! And there is more special cause for such an apprehension, upon the concurrence of such things as these:

(1.) If the workings of God's Spirit upon the soul of a man have been more than ordinarily strong and urgent, and do now cease: if there have been more powerful convictions, deeper humiliations, more awakened fears, more formed purposes of a new life, more fervent desires, that are now all vanished and fled, and the sinner is returned to his old dead, and dull temper.

(2.) If there be no disposition to reflect and consider the difference, no sense of his loss, but he apprehends such workings of spirit in him unnecessary troubles to him, and thinks it well he is delivered and eased of them.

(3.) If in the time when he was under such workings of spirit, he had made known his case to his minister, or any godly friend, whose company he now shuns, as not willing to be put in mind, or hear any more of such matters.

(4.) If hereupon he hath more indulged sensual inclination, taken more liberty, gone against the checks of his own conscience, broken former good resolutions, involved himself in the guilt of any grosser sins,

(5.) If conscience, so baffled, be now silent; lets him alone, grows more sluggish and weaker (which it must) as his lusts grow stronger.

(6.) If the same lively powerful ministry, which before affected him much, now moves him not.

(7.) If especially, he is grown into a dislike of such preaching, if serious godliness, and what tends to it are become distasteful to him, if discourses of God, and Christ, of death and judgment, and of a holy life, are reckoned superfluous and needless, are unsavoury and disrelished; if he have learned to put disgraceful names upon things of this import, and the persons that most value them, and live accordingly: if he hath taken the seat of the scorner, and makes it his business to deride, what he had once a reverence for, or took some complacency in.

(8.) If, upon all this, God withdraw such a ministry, so that he is now warned, and admonished, exhorted and striven with as formerly, no more. O the fearful danger of that man's case! Hath he no cause to fear lest the things of his peace should be for ever hid from his eyes? Surely he hath much cause of fear, but not of despair. Fear would in this case be his great duty, and might yet prove the means of saving him; despair would be his very heinous and destroying sin. If yet he would be stirred up to consider his case, whence he is fallen, and whither he is falling, and set himself to serious seeking of God, cast down himself before him, abase himself, cry for mercy, as for life, there is yet hope in his case. God may make here an instance what he can obtain of himself to do for a perishing wretch! But

IV. If with any that have lived under the gospel, their day is quite expired, and the things of their peace now for ever hid from their eyes, this is in itself a most deplorable case, and much lamented by our Lord Jesus himself. That the case is in itself most deplorable, who sees not? A soul lost! a creature capable of God! upon its way to him! near to the kingdom of God! shipwrecked in the port! O sinner, from how high a hope art thou fallen! into what depths of misery and woe! And that it was lamented by our Lord, is in the text. He beheld the city, (very generally, we have reason to apprehend, inhabited by such wretched creatures) and wept over it. This was a very affectionate lamentation; we lament often, very heartily, many a sad case, for which we do not shed tears. But tears, such tears, falling from such eyes! the issues of the purest, and best governed passion that ever was, shewed the true greatness of the cause. Here could be no exorbitancy or unjust excess, nothing more than was proportionable to the occasion. There needs no other proof that this is a sad case, than that our Lord lamented it with tears, which that he did, we are plainly told; so that touching that, there is no place for doubt. All that is liable to question is, whether we are to conceive in him any like resentments of such cases, in his present glorified state?

Indeed we cannot think heaven, a place or state of sadness, or lamentation; and must take heed of conceiving any thing there, especially on the throne of glory, unsuitable to the most perfect nature, and the most glorious state. We are not to imagine tears there; which in that happy region are wiped away from inferior eyes; no grief, sorrow, or sighing, which are all fled away, and shall be no more: as there can be no other turbid passion of any kind. But when expressions that import anger, or grief, are used, even concerning God himself, we must sever in our conception, every thing of imperfection, and ascribe every thing of real perfection. We are not to think such expressions signify nothing, that they have no meaning, or that nothing at all is to be attributed to him under them.

Nor are we again to think they signify the same thing with what we find in ourselves, and are wont to express by those names. In the divine nature, there may be real, and yet most serene complacency, and displacency, namely, that are unaccompanied with the least commotion, and import nothing of imperfection, but perfection rather, as it is a perfection to apprehend things suitably to what in themselves they are. The holy Scriptures frequently speak of God as angry, and grieved for the sins of men, and their miseries which ensue therefrom. And a real aversion and dislike is signified thereby, and by many other expressions, which in us, would signify vehement agitations of affection, that we are sure can have no place in him. We ought therefore in our own thoughts to ascribe to him that calm aversion of will, in reference to the sins, and miseries of men in general; and, in our own apprehensions, to remove to the utmost distance from him, all such agitations of passion or affection, even though some expressions that occur, carry a great appearance thereof, should they be understood according to human measures, as they are human forms of speech. As to instance in what is said by the glorious God himself, and very near in sense to what we have in the text what can be more pathetic, than that lamenting wish, Psal. 81. 13. O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!

But we must take heed lest, under the pretence that we cannot ascribe every thing to God that such expressions seem to import, we therefore ascribe nothing. We ascribe nothing, if we do not ascribe to him a real unwillingness that men should sin on, and perish; and consequently a real willingness that they should turn to him, and live; which so many plain texts assert. And therefore it is unavoidably imposed upon us, to believe that God is truly unwilling of some things, which he doth not think fit to interpose his omnipotency to hinder, and

is truly willing of some things, which he doth not put forth his omnipotency to effect. That he most fitly makes this the ordinary course of his dispensations towards men, to govern them by laws, and promises, and threatenings (made most express to them that live under the gospel) to work upon their minds, their hope, and their fear, affording them the ordinary assistances of supernatural light and influence, with which he requires them to comply, and which, upon their refusing to do so, he may most righteously withhold, and give them the victory to their own ruin, though oftentimes, he doth, from a sovereignty of grace, put forth that greater power upon others, equally negligent and obstinate, not to enforce, but effectually to incline their wills, and gain a victory over them, to their salvation.

Nor is his will towards the rest altogether ineffectual, though it have not this effect. For whosoever thou art that livest under the gospel, though thou dost not know that God so wills thy conversion and salvation, as to effect it, whatsoever resistance thou now makest; though thou art not sure he will finally overcome all thy resistance, and pluck thee as a firebrand out of the mouth of hell; yet thou canst not say his good will towards thee hath been without any effect at all tending thereto. He hath often called upon thee in his gospel, to repent and turn to him through Christ; he hath waited on thee with long patience, and given thee time and space of repentance; he hath within that time, been often at work with thy soul. Hath he not many times let in beams of light upon thee? shewn thee the evil of thy ways? convinced thee? awakened thee? half-persuaded thee? and thou never hadst reason to doubt, but that if thou hadst set thyself with serious diligence to work out thy own salvation, he would have wrought on, so as to have brought things to a blessed issue for thy soul.

Thou mightest discern his mind towards thee to be agreeable to his word, wherein he hath testified to thee he desired not the death of sinners, that he hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, or in the death of the wicked, but that he should turn and live, exhorted thee, expostulated with thee, and others in thy condition, turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? he hath told thee expressly thy stubbornness, and contending against him, did grieve him, and vex his Spirit, that thy sin, wherein thou hast indulged thyself, hath been an abomination to him, that it was the abominable thing which his soul hated, that he was broken with the whorish heart of such as thou, and pressed therewith, as a cart that was full of sheaves.

Now such expressions as these, though they are borrowed from man, and must be understood suitably to God, though they do not signify the same thing with him as they do in us, yet

they do not signify nothing. As when hands and eyes are attributed to God, they do not signify as they do with us, yet they signify somewhat correspondent, as active and visive power : so these expressions, though they signify not, in God, such unquiet motions and passions, as they would in us, they do signify a mind and will, really though with the most perfect calmness and tranquillity, set against sin, and the horrid consequences of it, which yet, for greater reasons than we can understand, he may not see fit to do all he can to prevent. And if we know not how to reconcile such a will in God, with some of our notions concerning the divine nature ; shall we, for what we have thought of him, deny what he hath so expressly said of himself, or pretend to understand his nature better than he himself doth ? †

And when we see from such express sayings in Scripture, reduced to a sense becoming God, how God's mind stands in reference to sinners, and their self-destroying ways, we may thence apprehend what temper of mind our Lord Jesus also bears towards them in the like case, even in his glorified state. For can you think there is a disagreement between him and the Father about these things? And whereas we find our blessed Lord, in the days of his flesh, one while complaining men would not come to him that they might have life, (John. 5. 40.) elsewhere grieved at the hardness of their hearts, (Mark. 3. 5.) and here scattering tears over sinning and perishing Jerusalem ; we cannot doubt but that the (innocent) perturbation, which his earthly state did admit, being severed, his mind is still the same, in reference to cases of the same nature ; for can we think there is any disagreement between him and himself? We cannot therefore doubt but that,

1. He distinctly comprehends the truth of any such case. He beholds from the throne of his glory above, all the treaties which are held and managed with sinners in his name, and what their deportments are therein. His eyes are as a flame of fire, wherewith he searches hearts, and trieth reins. He hath seen therefore, sinner, all along, every time an offer of grace hath been made to thee, and been rejected; when thou hast slighted counsels and warnings that have been given thee, exhortations and entreaties that have been pressed upon thee, for many years together, and how thou hadst hardened thy heart against reproofs and threatenings, against promises and allurements; and beholds the tendency of all this, what is like to come of it, and that, if thou persist, it will be bitterness in the end.

2. That he hath a real dislike of the sinfulness of thy course. It is not indifferent to him whether thou obeyest, or disobeyest the gospel ; whether thou turn and repent or no : that he is

† See the Appendix.

truly displeased at thy trifling, sloth, negligence, impenitency, hardness of heart, stubborn obstinacy, and contempt of his grace, and takes real offence of them.

3. He hath real kind propensions towards thee, and is ready to receive thy returning soul, and effectually to mediate with the offended majesty of heaven for thee, as long as there is any hope in thy case.

4. When he sees there is no hope, he pities thee, while thou seest it not, and dost not pity thyself. Pity and mercy above are not names only; it is a great reality that is signified by them, and that hath place there, in far higher excellency and perfection, than it can with us poor mortals here below. Ours is but borrowed, and participated from that first fountain and original above. Thou dost not perish unlamented, even with the purest heavenly pity, though thou hast made thy case incapable of remedy. As the well tempered judge bewails the sad end of the malefactor, whom justice obliges him not to spare, or save.

And now let us consider what *Use* is to be made of all this. And though nothing can be useful to the persons themselves, whom the Redeemer thus laments as lost, yet that he doth so, may be of great use to others. This will partly concern those who do justly apprehend this is not their case; and partly such as may be in great fear that it is.

I. For such as have reason to persuade themselves it is not their case. The best ground upon which any can confidently conclude this, is that they have in this their present day, through the grace of God, already effectually known the things of their peace, such, namely, as have sincerely, with all their hearts and souls turned to God, taken him to be their God, and devoted themselves to him, to be his: entrusting and subjecting themselves to the saving mercy, and governing power of the Redeemer, according to the tenour of the gospel-covenant, from which they do not find their hearts to swerve or decline, but resolve, through divine assistance, to persevere herein all their days. Now for such as with whom things are already brought to that comfortable conclusion, I only say to them.

1. Rejoice and bless God that so it is. Christ your Redeemer rejoices with you, and over you; you may collect it from his contrary resentment of their case who are past hope; if he weep over them, he, no doubt, rejoices over you. There is joy in heaven concerning you. Angels rejoice, your glorious Redeemer presiding in the joyful concert. And should not you rejoice for yourselves? Consider what a discrimination is made in your case! To how many hath that gospel been a deadly savour, which hath proved a savour of life unto life to you! How

many have fallen on your right hand, and your left, stumbling at the stone of offence, which to you is become the head-stone of the corner, elect, and precious! Whence is this difference? Did you never slight Christ? never make light of offered mercy? was your mind never blind or vain? was your heart never hard or dead? were the terms of peace and reconciliation never rejected or disregarded by you? How should you admire victorious grace, that would never desist from striving with you till it had overcome! You are the triumph of the Redeemer's conquering love, who might have been of his wrath and justice! endeavour your spirits may taste, more and more, the sweetness of reconciliation, that you may more abound in joy and praises. Is it not pleasant to you to be at peace with God? to find that all controversies are taken up between him and you? that you can now approach him, and his terrors not make you afraid! that you can enter into the secret of his presence, and solace yourselves in his assured favour and love! How should you joy in God through Jesus Christ, by whom you have received the atonement! What have you now to fear? If, when you were enemies, you were reconciled by the death of Christ, how much more, being reconciled, shall you be saved by his life? How great a thing have you to oppose to all worldly troubles! If God be for you, who can be against you? Think how mean it is for the friends of God, the favourites of heaven, to be dismayed at the appearances of danger that threaten them from the inhabitants of the earth! what if all the world were in a posture of hostility against you, when the mighty Lord of all is your friend? Take heed of thinking meanly of his power and love! would any one diminish to himself, whom he takes for his God? All people will walk, every one in the name of his God; why should not you much more in the name of yours, glorying in him, and making your boasts of him all the day long? O the reproach which is cast upon the glorious name of the great God, by their diffidence and despondency, who visibly stand in special relation to him, but fear the impotent malice of mortal man more than they can trust in his almighty love! If indeed you are justified by faith, and have peace with God, it becomes you so to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, as also to glory in tribulation, and tell all the world that in his favour stands your life, and that you care not who is displeased with you, for the things wherewith, you have reason to apprehend, he is pleased.

2. Demean yourselves with that care, caution, and dutifulness that become a state of reconciliation. Bethink yourselves that your present peace and friendship with God is not original, and continued from thence, but hath been interrupted

and broken; that your peace is not that of constantly innocent persons. You stand not in this good and happy state because you never offended, but as being reconciled, and who therefore were once enemies. And when you were brought to know, in that your day, which you have enjoyed, the things belonging to your peace, you were made to feel the smart, and taste the bitterness of your having been alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works. When the terrors of God did beset you round, and his arrows stuck fast in you, did you not then find trouble and sorrow? were you not in a fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation to consume and burn you up as adversaries? Would you not then have given all the world for a peaceful word or look? for any glimmering hope of peace? How wary and afraid should you be of a new breach! How should you study acceptable deportments, and to walk worthy of God unto all well-pleasing! How strictly careful should you be to keep faith with him, and abide steadfast in his covenant! How concerned for his interest! and in what agonies of spirit, when you behold the eruptions of enmity against him from any others! not from any distrust, or fear of final prejudice to his interest, but from the apprehension of the unrighteousness of the thing itself, and a dutiful love to his name, throne, and government. How zealous should you be to draw in others? how fervent in your endeavours, within your own sphere, and how large in your desires, extended as far as the sphere of the universe, that every knee might bow to him, and every tongue confess to him. They ought to be more deeply concerned for his righteous cause, that remember they were once most unrighteously engaged against it. And ought besides to be filled with compassion towards the souls of men, yet in an unreconciled state, as having known by the terrors of the Lord, and remembering the experienced dismalness and horror of that state; what it was to have divine wrath and justice armed against you with almighty power! And to have heard the thunder of such a voice, "I lift my hand to heaven, and swear I live for ever, if I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on vengeance, I will recompence fury to mine adversaries, vengeance to mine enemies".—Do you not know what the case is like to be, when potsherds, that should strive but with the potsherds of the earth, venture to oppose themselves as antagonists to omnipotency? And when briars and thorns set themselves in battle array against a consuming fire, how easily it can pass through, and devour, and burn them up together? And how much more fearful is their condition that know it not! but are ready to rush like the horse into the battle! Do you owe no duty, no pity to them that have the same.

nature with you, and with whom your case was once the same? If you do indeed know the things of your peace Godward, so as to have made your peace, to have come to an agreement, and struck a covenant with him; you have now taken his side, are of his confederates: not as equals but subjects. You have sworn allegiance to him, and associated yourself with all them that have done so. There can hereupon be but one common interest to him and you. Hence therefore you are most strictly obliged to wish well to that interest, and promote it to your uttermost, in his own way, that is according to his openly avowed inclination and design, and the genuine constitution of that kingdom which he hath erected, and is intent to enlarge and extend further in the world. That you do well know, is a kingdom of grace; for his natural kingdom already confines with the universe, and can have no enlargement, without enlarging the creation. Whosoever they are that contend against him, are not merely enemies, therefore, but rebels. And you see he aims to conquer them by love and goodness; and therefore treats with them, and seeks to establish a kingdom over them, in and by a Mediator, who if he were not intent upon the same design, had never lamented the destruction of any of them, and wept over their ruin, as here you find. So therefore, should you long for the conversion of souls, and the enlargement of his kingdom this way, both out of loyalty to him, and compassion towards them.

II. For such as may be in great fear, lest this prove to be their ease. They are either such as may fear it, but do not; or such as are deeply afflicted with this actual fear.

1. For the former sort, who are in too great danger of bringing themselves into this dreadful deplorable condition, but apprehend nothing of it. All that is to be said to them apart by themselves, is only to awaken them out of their drowsy, dangerous slumber, and security; and then they will be capable of being spoken to, together with the other sort. Let me therefore.

(1.) Demand of you; do you believe there is a Lord over you, yea or no? Use your thoughts, for, about matters that concern you less, you can think. Do you not apprehend you have an invisible Owner and Ruler, that rightfully claims to himself an interest in you, and a governing power over you? How came you into being? You know you made not yourselves. And if you yet look no higher than to progenitors of your own kind, mortal men, as you are; how came they into being? You have so much understanding about you, if you would use it, as to know they could none of them make themselves more than you, and that therefore, human race must have had its beginning

from some superior Maker. And did not he that made them make you and all things else? Where are your arguments to prove it was otherwise, and that this world, and all the generations of men took beginning of themselves, without a wise and mighty Creator? produce your strong reasons, upon which you will venture your souls, and all the possibilities of your being happy, or miserable to eternity! Will your imagination make you safe? and protect you against his wrath and justice, whose authority you will not own? Can you, by it, uncreate your Creator, and nullify the eternal Being? or have you any thing else, besides your own blind imagination, to make you confident, that all things came of nothing, without any maker? But if you know not how to think this reasonable, and apprehend you must allow yourselves to owe your being to an almighty Creator, let me

(2.) Ask of you how you think your life is maintained? Doth not he that made you live, keep you alive? Whereas you have often heard that we all live, and move, and have our beings in him, doth it not seem most likely to you to be so? Have you power of your own life? Do you think you can live as long as you will? At least do you not find you need the common helps of meat and drink and air and clothing, for the support and comfort of your lives? And are not all these his creatures as well as you? And can you have them, whether he will or no?

(3.) And how can you think that he that made and maintains you, hath no right to rule you? If it were possible any one should as much depend upon you, would you not claim such power over him? Can you suppose yourself to be under no obligation to please him, who hath done so much for you? and to do his will, if you can any way know it?

(4.) And can you pretend you have no means to know it? That book that goes up and down under the name of his word, can you disprove it to be his word? If such writings should now first come into the world, so sincere, so awful, so holy, so heavenly, bearing so expressly the divine image, avowing themselves to be from God, and the most wonderful works are wrought to prove them his word, the deaf made to hear, the blind to see, the dumb to speak, the sick healed, the dead raised, by a word only commanding it to be so, would you not confess this to be sufficient evidence that this revelation came from heaven. And are you not sufficiently assured they are so confirmed? Do you find in yourselves any inclination to cheat your children, in any thing that concerns their well being? Why should you more suspect your forefathers design, to cheat you in the mere reporting falsely, a matter of fact? was not human nature the same, so many hundred years ago? Did ever

the enemies of the Christian name, in the earlier days of Christianity, when it was but a novelty in the world, and as much hated, and endeavoured to be rooted out, as ever any profession was, deny such matters of fact? Have not some of the most spiteful of them confessed it? Did not christians then willingly sacrifice their lives by multitudes, upon the assured truth of these things? Have they not been ever since most strictly careful to preserve these writings, and transmit them, as wherein the all of themselves, and their posterity was contained? And where is now your new light? where are your later discoveries, upon which, so many ages after, you are able to evict these writings of falsehood, or dare venture to disbelieve them?

(5.) But if you believe these writings to be divine, how expressly is it told you, in them, what the state of your case is Godward, and what he requires of you? You may see you have displeased him, and how you are to please him, as hath been shewn before in this discourse. You know that you have lived in the world mindless, and inobservant of him, not trusting, fearing, loving, or delighting in him, declining his acquaintance and converse; seeking your own pleasure, following your inclination, doing your own will; as if you were supreme, never minding to refer your actions to his precepts as your rule, or to his glory as your end. And from that word of his you may understand all this to be very displeasing to him. And that you can never please him by continuing this course, but by breaking it off, and returning to him as your Lord, and your God: that since your case did need a redeemer, and reconciler, and he hath provided and appointed one for you; you are to apply yourselves to him, to commit and subject your souls to him, to trust in his merits and blood, and submit to his authority and government. And

(6.) Are you not continually called hereto by the gospel, under which you have lived all this while? so that you are in actual, continual rebellion against him all the while you comply not with this call; every breath you draw is rebellious breath. There is no moment wherein this lies not upon you, by every moment's addition to your time. And that patience of his which adds by moments to your life, and should lead you to repentance, is, while you repent not, perverted by you, only to the treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of his righteous judgment.

(7.) And do you not find, as his word also plainly tells you, a great averseness and disinclination in you to any such serious solemn applying yourself to him, and your Redeemer? Try your own hearts; Do you not find them draw back and recoil?

if you urge them, do they not still fly off? How loth are you to retire! and set yourselves to consider your case! and unto serious seeking of God in Christ! both from a reluctancy, and indisposition to any such employment as this is itself; and from disaffection to that whereto it tends, the breaking off your former sinful course of life, and entering upon a better. And does not all this shew you the plain truth of what the word of God hath told you, that the Ethiopian may as soon change his skin, or the leopard his spots, as they do good, who are accustomed to do evil; (Jer. 13. 23.) that you have a heart that cannot repent, (Rom. 2. 5.) till God give you repentance to life, (Acts 11. 18.) that you cannot come to Christ till the Father draw you, John 6. 44. Do you not see your case then? that you must perish if you have not help from heaven? If God do not give you his grace, to overcome and cure the averseness and malignity of your nature? that things are likely thus to run on with you as they have from day to day, and from year to year; and you that are unwilling to take the course that is necessary for your salvation to day, are likely to be as unwilling to-morrow, and so your lives consume in vanity, till you drop into perdition? But

(8.) Dost thou not also know, sinner, (what hath been so newly shewn thee from God's word) that, by thy being under the gospel, thou hast a day of grace? not only as offers of pardon and reconciliation are made to thee in it, but also as through it, converting, heart-renewing grace is to be expected, and may be had? that what is sufficient for the turning and changing of thy heart, is usually not given all at once, but as gentler insinuations (the injection of some good thoughts and desires) are complied with, more powerful influences may be hoped to follow? that therefore thou art concerned, upon any such thought cast into thy mind, of going now to seek God for the life of thy soul, to strive, thyself, against thy own disinclination; that if thou do not, but yield to it, and still defer, it may prove mortal to thee? For is it not plain to thee in itself, and from what hath been said, that this day hath its limits, and will come to an end? Dost thou not know thou art a mortal creature, that thy breath is in thy nostrils? Dost thou know how near thou art to the end of thy life? and how few breaths there may be for thee between this present moment and eternity? Dost thou not know thy day of grace may end before thy life? that thou mayst be cast far enough out of the sound of the gospel? and if thou shouldst carry any notices of it with thee, thou who hast been so unapt to consider them, while they were daily pressed upon thee, wilt most probably be less apt when thou hearest of no such thing? that thou mayst live

still under the gospel, and the Spirit of grace retire from thee, and never attempt thee more for thy former despiting of it? For what obligation hast thou upon that blessed Spirit? Or why shouldst thou think a Deity bound to attend upon thy triflings? And

(9.) If yet all this move not: consider what it will be to die unreconciled to God! Thou hast been his enemy, he hath made thee gracious offers of peace, waited long upon thee, thou hast made light of all. The matter must at length end either in reconciliation, or vengeance! The former is not acceptable to thee: art thou prepared for the latter? canst thou sustain it? Is it not a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God? Thou wilt not do him right, he must then right himself upon thee; dost thou think he cannot do it? canst thou doubt his power? Cast thine eyes about thee, behold the greatness (as far as thou canst) of this creation of his, whereof thou art but a very little part. He who hath made that sun over thine head, and stretched out those spacious heavens, who hath furnished them with those innumerable bright stars, who governs all their motions, who hath hung this earth upon nothing, who made and sustains that great variety of creatures that inhabit it, can he not deal with thee? a worm! Can thine heart endure, or thine hands be strong if he plead with thee? if he surround thee with his terrors, and set them in battle array against thee? Hell and destruction are open before him, and without covering, how soon art thou cast in and ingulphed. Sit down, and consider whether thou be able, with *thy impotency*, to stand before him, that comes against thee with *almighty power*! Is it not better to sue in time for peace? But perhaps thou mayst say "I begin now to fear it is too late, I have so long slighted the gospel, resisted the Holy Spirit of God, abused and baffled my own light and conscience, that I am afraid God will quite abandon me, and cast me off for ever." It is well if thou do indeed begin to fear. That fear gives hope. Thou art then capable of coming into their rank who are next to be spoken to, namely,

2. Such as feel themselves afflicted with the apprehension and dread of their having out-lived their day, and that the things of their peace are now irrecoverably hid from their eyes. I desire to counsel such faithfully, according to that light and guidance which the gospel of our Lord affords us in reference to any such case.

(1.) Take heed of stifling that fear suddenly, but labour to improve it to some advantage, and then to cure and remove it by rational, evangelical means and methods. Do not as thou lovest the life of thy soul, go about suddenly, or by undue means, to smother or extinguish it. It is too possible, when any such

apprehension strikes into a man's mind, because it is a sharp or piercing thought, disturbs his quiet, gives him molestation, and some torture, to pluck out the dart too soon, and cast it away. Perhaps such a course is taken, as doth him unspeakably more mischief, than a thousand such thoughts would ever do. He diverts, it may be, to vain company, or to sensuality, talks, or drinks away his trouble; makes death his cure of pain, and to avoid the fear of hell, leaps into it. Is this indeed the wisest course? Either thy apprehension is reasonable, or unreasonable. If it should prove a reasonable apprehension, as it is a terrible one, would the neglect of it become a reasonable creature, or mend thy case? if it shall be found unreasonable, it may require time, and some debate to discover it to be so; whereby, when it is manifestly detected, with how much greater satisfaction is it laid aside! Labour then to inquire rightly concerning this matter.

(2.) In this inquiry, consider diligently what the kind of that fear is that you find yourselves afflicted with. The fear that perplexes your heart, must some way correspond to the apprehension you have in your mind, touching your case. Consider what that is, and in what form it shews itself there. Doth it appear in the form of a peremptory judgment, a definitive sentence, which you have past within yourself concerning your case; that your day is over, and you are a lost creature; or only of a mere doubt, lest it should prove so? The fear that corresponds to the former of these, makes you quite desperate, and obstinately resolute against any means for the bettering of your condition. The fear that answers to the latter apprehension, hath a mixture of hope in it, which admits of somewhat to be done for your relief, and will prompt thereunto. Labour to discern which of these is the present temper and posture of your spirit.

(3.) If you find it be the former, let no thought any longer dwell in your mind *under that form*, namely, as a definitive sentence concerning your state. You have nothing to do to pass such a judgment, the tendency of it is dismal and horrid, as you may, yourself, perceive. And your ground for it is none at all. Your conscience within you is to do the office of a judge; but only of an under-judge, that is to proceed strictly by rule, prescribed and set by the sovereign Lord, and Arbitrer of life and death: there is one Law-giver who is able to save, and to destroy. Nor is your conscience, as an under-judge, to meddle at all, but in cases within your cognizance. This about your final state is a reserved, excepted case, belonging only to the supreme tribunal, which you must take heed how you usurp. As such a judgment tends to make you desperate,

so there will be high presumption in this despair. Dare you take upon you to cancel, and nullify to yourself the obligation of the evangelical law? and whereas that makes it your duty to repent, and believe the gospel, to absolve yourself from this bond, and say, it is none of your duty, or make it impossible to you to do it? You have matter and cases enough within the cognizance of your conscience, not only the particular actions of your life, but your present state also, whether you be as yet in a state of acceptance with God, through Christ, yea or no. And here you have rules set you to judge by. But concerning your final state, or that you shall never be brought into a state of acceptance, you have no rule by which you can make such a judgment; and therefore this judgment belongs not to you, Look then upon the matter of your final condition, as an exempt case, reserved to the future judgment, and the present determination whereof, against yourself, is without your compass and line, and most unsuitable to the state of probation, wherein, you are to reckon, God continues you here, with the rest of men in this world; and therefore any such judgment you should tear and reverse, and as such, not permit to have any place with you.

(4.) Yet since, as hath been said, you are not quite to reject, or obliterate any apprehension or thought touching this subject, make it your business to correct and reduce it to that form, that is, let it only for the present remain with you, as a doubt how your case now stands, and what issue it may at length have. And see that your fear thereupon be answerable to your apprehension, so rectified. While as yet it is not evident, you have made your peace with God, upon his known terms, you are to consider God hath left your case a doubtful case, and you are to conceive of it accordingly: and are to entertain a fear concerning it, not as certainly hopeless, but as uncertain. And as yours is really a doubtful case, it is a most important one. It concerns your souls, and your eternal well-being, and is not therefore to be neglected, or trifled with. You do not know how God will deal with you: whether he will again afford you such help as he hath done, or whether ever he will effectually move your heart unto conversion and salvation. You therefore are to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, because (as was told you) he works, but of his own good pleasure. Your fear should not exceed this state of your case, so as to exclude hope. It is of unspeakable concernment to you, that hope do intermingle with your fear. That will do much to mollify and soften your hearts, that after all the abuse of mercy, and imposing upon the patience of God, your neglects and slights of a bleeding Saviour, your resisting and griev-

ing the Spirit of grace, he may yet, once for all, visit your forlorn soul with his vital influence, and save you from going down to perdition! How can your hearts but melt and break upon this apprehension! And it is not a groundless one. He that "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," will not fail to treat them well, whom he sees beginning to listen to his call, and entertaining the thoughts that most directly tend to bring them to a compliance with it. Your hope insinuating itself and mingling with your fear, is highly grateful to the God of all grace. He takes pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy. Psal. 147. 11.

(5.) But see to it also that your fear be not slight and momentary, and that it vanish not, while as yet it hath so great a work to do in you, namely, to engage you to accept God's own terms of peace and reconciliation, with all your heart and soul. It is of continual use, even not only in order to conversion, but to the converted also. Can you think those mentioned words were spoken to none such, Phil. 2. 12, 13? Or those, Heb. 4. 1. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. And do we not find a holy fear is to contribute all along to the whole of progressive sanctification? 2 Cor. 7. 1. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. And that by it he preserves his own, that they never depart from him. Jer. 32. 40. Much more do you need it in your present case, while matters are yet in treaty between God and you. And as it should not exceed the true apprehension of your case, so nor should it come short of it.

(6.) You should therefore in order hereto aggravate to yourselves the just causes of your fear. Why are you afraid your day should be over, and the things of your peace be for ever hid from your eyes? Is it not that you have sinned against much light, against many checks of your own consciences, against many very serious warnings and exhortations, many earnest importunate beseechings and intreaties you have had in the ministry of the gospel, many motions and strivings of the Spirit of God thereby? Let your thoughts dwell upon these things. Think what it is for the great God, the Lord of glory to have been slighted by a worm! Doth not this deserve as ill things at the hands of God as you can fear? It is fit you should apprehend what your desert is, though perhaps mercy may interpose, and avert the deserved dreadful event. And if he have signified his displeasure towards you hereupon, by desisting for the present, and ceasing to strive with you as he hath formerly done; if your heart be grown more cold, and dead, and hard, than

sometime it was ; if you have been left so as to fall into grosser sin, it is highly reasonable you should fear being finally forsaken of the blessed Spirit of God, and greatly fear it, but with an awful fear, that may awaken you most earnestly to endeavour his return to you, not with a despairing fear that will bind you up from any further endeavour for your soul at all.

And if upon all this (by death or otherwise) such a ministry be withdrawn from you as God did work by, in some degree, upon you, and you find not in that kind, what is so suitable to your state and case ; take heed lest you be stupid under such a stroke. Think what it imports unto you, if God have, as it were said concerning any servant of his (as Ezek. 3. 26.) I will make his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth, that he shall not be a reprovor to you any more ! Consider that God may by this, be making way that “wrath may come upon you to the uttermost,” and never let you have opportunity to know more, the things of your peace. Perhaps you may never meet with the man more, that shall speak so accommodately to your condition, that shall so closely pursue you through all the haunts and subtrefuges, and lurking holes, wherein your guilty convinced soul hath been wont to hide itself, and falsely seek to heal its own wounds. One of more value may be less apt, possibly, to profit you : as a more polished key doth not therefore alike fit every lock. And thy case may be such, that thou shalt never hear a sermon, or the voice of a preacher more.

(7.) And now in this case recollect yourselves, what sins you have been formerly convinced of, under such a ministry, and which you have persisted in notwithstanding. Were you never convinced of your neglecting God, and living as without him in the world ? of your low esteem and disregard of Christ ? of your worldliness, your minding only the things of this earth, of your carnality, pride, self-seeking, voluptuousness, your having been lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God ? of your unprofitableness in your station ? wherein you ought to have lived more conformably to Christian rules and precepts, according to the relations wherein God had set you ? were you never convinced how very faulty governors you have been, or members of families ? parents or masters, children or servants, &c. ? What will this come to at last that convictions have hitherto signified and served for nothing but increase of guilt ?

(8.) Under all this weight and load of guilt, consider what you have to do for your souls ! Bethink yourselves ; are you to sit down and yield yourselves to perish ? Consider man, it is the business of thy soul, and of thine eternal state that is now before thee. Thou hast the dreadful flaming gulf of everlasting

horror and misery in view, hast thou nothing left thee to do but to throw thyself into it? Methinks thou shouldst sooner reconcile thy thoughts to any thing than that; and that, if any thing at all be to be done for thine escape, thou shouldst rather set thyself about it, and do it. Thou art yet alive, not yet in hell, yet the patience of God spares thee, thou hast yet time to consider, thou hast the power to think yet left thee, and canst thou use it no other way than to think of perishing? Think rather how not to perish. A great point is gained, if thou art but brought to say, "What shall I do to be saved?" which doth imply thou dost both apprehend the distressedness of thy case, and art willing to do any thing that is to be done for thy relief. And if thou art brought to this, thy circumstances may perhaps be such, that thou canst only put this question to thyself, and art only thyself to answer it, without a living, present guide, which may therefore make such a help as this needful to thee. Possibly some irresistible providence may have so cast thy lot, that thou art only now to be thy own preacher; though it sometime was otherwise with thee; and things were said to thee most suitable to the condition of thy soul, which thou wouldst not then consider. It is yet pressed upon thee to consider now, with some design to direct thy thoughts, that they run not into useless and troublesome confusion only. And your subject being what course you are now to take, that you may escape eternal wrath and ruin, it is obvious to you to apprehend nothing is to be done against, or without God, but with him, and by him. Your utmost consideration can but bring the matter to this short point, that whereas you have highly offended the God that made you, incurred his wrath, and made him your enemy, either to resist, or treat and supplicate. That madness which would let you intend *the former*, is not capable of consideration at all. For, if you consider, will you contend with omnipotency, or fight with an all-devouring flame? And *as to the latter*, it is well for you, that it can be the matter of your consideration, that you have any encouragement to turn your thoughts that way. You might have enemies that being provoked, and having you in their power, would never admit of a treaty, nor regard your supplications, but fall upon you with merciless fury, and leave you nothing to think of but perishing. Here it is not so with you. The merciful God hath graciously told you, fury is not so in him, but that (though if briars and thorns will set themselves in battle against him, he will easily pass through, and burn them up together, yet) if any will take hold of his strength, that they may make peace with him, they shall make peace with him. Isa. 27. 4, 5. You are to consider there is danger in your case,

and there is hope, that your sin is not so little as to need no forgiveness, nor too great to be forgiven. Wherefore, whose case soever this is, since you may be forgiven, if you duly apply yourselves, and must be forgiven, or you are undone, my further advice to you is, and you may, as to this, advise yourself, having nothing else left you to do,

(9.) That you cast yourselves down before the mercy-seat of God, humble yourselves deeply at his footstool, turn to him with all your soul, implore his mercy through Christ, make a solemn covenant with him, taking him to be your God, and devoting yourself to him, to be his, accepting his Son as your Lord and Saviour, and resigning your soul with submission and trust entirely to him to be ruled and saved by him. That you are to do this, the case is plain and even speaks itself, how you are to do it may need to be more particularly told you.

[1.] Take heed that what you do in this be not the mere effect of your present apprehended distress, but of the altered judgment, and inclination of your mind and heart. The apprehension of your distressed, dangerous condition, may be a useful means and inducement to engage you more seriously to listen and attend to the proposals made to you in the gospel. But if upon all this, it should be the sense of your heart that you would rather live still as without God in the world, and that you would never come to any such treaty or agreement with him, if mere necessity, and the fear of perishing did not urge you to it, you are still but where you were. Therefore, though the feared danger was necessary to make you bethink yourself, and consider what God propounds to you; that consideration ought to have that further effect upon you, to convince you of the equity and desirableness of the things themselves which he propounds, summarily, of your betaking yourselves to him as your sovereign Lord, and supreme Good, to fear and love, obey and enjoy him, in Christ Jesus, and accordingly ought to incline your heart thereto.

[2.] You are to consider in your entering into this covenant with God in Christ, that it is not a transaction for the present only you are about, but for your whole life. This God is to be your God, for ever, and ever, your God, and your guide even to the death. Psal. 48 14. You are to live in his fear and love, in his service and communion all your days, and must understand this to be the meaning and tenour of the covenant which you make with him.

[3.] And hence therefore, it is plain that your whole transaction in this matter must proceed from a new nature, and a new vital principle of grace and holiness in you. What you do

herein will otherwise neither be sincere nor lasting. You can never embrace religion for itself, without this, nor continue on in a religious course. What you do only from a temporary pang of fear upon you, is but from a kind of force that is for the present upon you, and will come to nothing, as soon as the impression of that fear wears off. The religion which is true and durable, is not from a spirit of fear, but of love, power and a sound mind. 2 Tim. 1. 7. You must be a new creature, God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works—that you may walk in them. The life of the new creature stands in love to God, as its way and course afterwards is a course of walking with God. If your heart be not brought to love God, and delight in him, you are still but dead towards God, and you still remain alive unto sin, as before. Whereas, if you ever come to be a christian indeed, you must be able truly to reckon yourself dead to sin, and alive to God through Jesus Christ. Rom. 6. 11. Whereupon in your making the mentioned covenant you must yield yourself to God, as one that is alive from the dead, as it is, ver. 13. of the same chapter. A new nature and life in you, will make all that you do, in a way of duty, (whether immediately towards God or man, the whole course of godliness, righteousness and sobriety) easy and delightful to you. And because it is evident both from many plain scriptures, and your own and all men's experience, that you cannot be, yourselves, the authors of this holy, new life and nature, you must therefore further in entering into this covenant,

[4.] Most earnestly cry to God, and plead with him for his Spirit, by whom the vital unitive bond must be contracted between God in Christ and your souls. So this will be the covenant of life and peace. Lord! how generally do the christians of our age deceive themselves with a self-sprung religion! Divine indeed in the institution, but merely human, in respect of the radication and exercise; in which respects also it must be divine or nothing. What are we yet to learn that a divine power must work and form our religion in us, as well as divine authority direct and enjoin it? Do all such scriptures go for nothing that tell us, it is God that must create the new heart, and renew the right spirit in us, that he must turn us, if ever we be turned, that we can never come to Christ, except the Father draw us, &c. Nor is there any cause of discouragement in this, if you consider what hath before been said in this discourse. Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you. Your heavenly Father will give his Spirit to them that ask, more readily than parents do bread to their children, and not a stone. But what if you be put to ask

often, and wait long, this doth but the more endear the gift, and shew the high value of it. You are to remember how often you have grieved, resisted, and vexed this Spirit, and that you have made God wait long upon you. What if the absolute sovereign Lord of all expect your attendance upon him? He waits to be gracious — and blessed are they that wait for him. Renew your applications to him. Lay from time to time that covenant before you, which yourselves must be wrought up unto a full entire closure with. And if it be not done at one time, try yet if it will another, and try again and again. Remember it is for your life, for your soul, for your all. But do not satisfy yourself with only such faint motions within thee, as may only be the effects of thy own spirit, of thy dark, dull, listless, sluggish, dead, hard heart, at least not of the efficacious regenerating influence of the divine Spirit. Didst thou never hear what mighty workings there have been in others, when God hath been transforming and renewing them, and drawing them into living union with his Son, and himself through him? What an amazing penetrating light hath struck into their hearts, as 2 Cor. 4. 6. Such as when he was making the world, enlightened the chaos. Such as hath made them see things that concerned them as they truly were, and with their own proper face, God and Christ, and themselves, sin and duty, heaven and hell in their own true appearances! How effectually they have been awakened! how the terrors of the Almighty have beset and seized their souls! what agonies and pangs they have felt in themselves, when the voice of God hath said to them, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light! Eph. 5. 14. How he hath brought them down at his feet, thrown them into the dust, broken them, melted them, made them abasethemselves, loath and abhor themselves, filled them with sorrow, shame, confusion, and with indignation towards their own guilty souls, habituated them to a severity against themselves, unto the most sharp, and yet most unforeed self-accusations, self-judging and self-condemnation; so as even to make them lay claim to hell, and confess the portion of devils belonged to them, as their own most deserved portion. And if now their eyes have been directed toward a Redeemer, and any glimmering of hope hath appeared to them; if now they are taught to understand God saying to them, Sinner, art thou yet willing to be reconciled, and accept a Saviour? O the transport into which it puts them! this is life from the dead! what is there hope for such a lost wretch as I? How tasteful now is that melting invitation? how pleasant an intimation doth it carry with it, Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest, &c. If the Lord

of heaven and earth do now look down from the throne of glory, and say, "What! sinner, wilt thou despise my favour and pardon, my Son, thy mighty merciful Redeemer, my grace and Spirit still! What can be the return of the poor abashed wretch, overawed by the glory of the divine Majesty, stung with compunction, overcome with the intimation of kindness and love? I have heard of thee, O God, by the hearing of the ear, now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. So inwardly is the truth of that word now felt, that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God Ezek. 16. 63. But sinner, wilt thou make a covenant with me and my Christ? wilt thou take me for thy God, and him for thy Redeemer and Lord? And may I, Lord! yet, may I! O admirable grace! wonderful sparing mercy! that I was not thrown into hell at my first refusal! Yea Lord with all my heart and soul. I renounce the vanities of an empty cheating world, and all the pleasures of sin: in thy favour stands my life. Whom have I in heaven but thee? whom on earth do I desire besides thee? And O thou blessed Jesus, thou Prince of the kings of the earth, who hast loved me, and washed me from my sins in thy blood, and whom the eternal God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins, I fall before thee, my Lord, and my God; I here willingly tender my homage at the footstool of thy throne. I take thee for the Lord of my life. I absolutely surrender and resign myself to thee. Thy love constrains me henceforth no more to live to myself, but to thee who diedst for me, and didst rise again. And I subject and yield myself to thy blessed light and power, O Holy Spirit of grace, to be more and more illuminated, sanctified, and prepared for every good word and work in this world, and for an inheritance among them that are sanctified in the other. Sinner, never give thy soul leave to be at rest till thou find it brought to some such transaction with God (the Father, Son, and Spirit) as this; so as that thou canst truly say, and dost feel thy heart is in it. Be not weary or impatient of waiting and striving, till thou canst say, this is now the very sense of thy soul. Such things have been done in the world (but O how seldom of latter days!) so God hath wrought with men to save them from going down to the pit, having found a ransom for them. And why may he not yet be expected to do so? He hath smitten rocks ere now, and made the waters gush out; nor is his hand shortened, nor his ear heavy. Thy danger is not, sinner, that he will be inexorable, but lest thou shouldst. He will be intreated, if thou wouldst be prevailed with to intreat his favour with thy whole heart.

And that thou mayest, and not throw away thy soul, and so great a hope through mere sloth, and loathness to be at some pains for thy life; let the text, which hath been thy *directory* about the things that belong to thy peace, be also thy *motive*, as it gives thee to behold the Son of God weeping over such as would not know these things. Shall not the Redeemer's tears move thee! O hard heart! Consider what these tears import to this purpose.

First. They signify the real depth and greatness of the misery into which thou art falling. They drop from an intellectual and most comprehensive eye, that sees far, and pierces deep into things, hath a wide and large prospect; takes the compass of that forlorn state into which unreconcilable sinners are hastening, in all the horror of it. The Son of God did not weep vain and causeless tears, or for a light matter; nor did he for himself either spend his own, or desire the profusion of others tears. Weep not for me, O daughters of Jerusalem, &c. He knows the value of souls, the weight of guilt, and how low it will press and sink them; the severity of God's justice, and the power of his anger, and what the fearful effects of them will be, when they finally fall. If thou understandest not these things thyself, believe him that did, at least believe his tears.

Secondly. They signify the sincerity of his love and pity, the truth and tenderness of his compassion. Canst thou think his deceitful tears? his, who never knew guile? was this like the rest of his course? And remember that he who shed tears, did, from the same fountain of love and mercy, shed blood too! Was that also done to deceive? Thou makest thyself some very considerable thing indeed, if thou thinkest the Son of God counted it worth his while to weep, and bleed, and die, to deceive thee into a false esteem of him and his love. But if it be the greatest madness imaginable to entertain any such thought, but that his tears were sincere and inartificial, the natural genuine expressions of undissembled benignity and pity, thou art then to consider what love and compassion thou art now sinning against; what bowels thou spurnest; and that if thou perishest, it is under such guilt as the devils themselves are not liable to, who never had a Redeemer bleeding for them, nor, that we ever find, weeping over them.

Thirdly. They shew the remedilessness of thy case, if thou persist in impenitency and unbelief till the things of thy peace be quite hid from thine eyes. These tears will then be the last issues of (even defeated) love, of love that is frustrated of its kind design. Thou mayest perceive in these tears the steady unalterable laws of heaven, the inflexibleness of the divine justice, that holds thee in adamantine bonds, and hath sealed thee

up, if thou prove incurably obstinate and impenitent, unto perdition; so that even the Redeemer himself, he that is mighty to save, cannot at length save thee, but only weep over thee, drop tears into thy flame, which assuage it not; but (though they have another design, even to express true compassion) do yet unavoidably heighten, and increase the fervour of it, and will do so to all eternity. He even tells thee, sinner, "Thou hast despised my blood, thou shalt yet have my tears." That would have saved thee, these do only lament thee lost.

But the tears wept over others as lost and past hope, why should they not yet melt thee, while as yet there is hope in thy case? If thou be effectually melted in thy very soul, and looking to him whom thou hast pierced, dost truly mourn over him, thou mayest assure thyself the prospect his weeping eye had of lost souls, did not include thee. His weeping over thee would argue thy case forelorn and hopeless: thy mourning over him will make it safe and happy. That it may be so, consider further, that

Fourthly. They signify how very intent he is to save souls, and how gladly he would save thine, if yet thou wilt accept of mercy while it may be had. For if he weep over them that will not be saved, from the same love that is the spring of these tears, would saving mercies proceed to those that are become willing to receive them. And that love that wept over them that were lost, how will it glory in them that are saved? There his love is disappointed and vexed, crossed in its gracious intendment; but here having compassed it, how will he joy over thee with singing, and rest in his love! And thou also, instead of being involved in a like ruin with the unreconciled sinners of the old Jerusalem, shalt be enrolled among the glorious citizens of the new, and triumph together with them in eternal glory.

APPENDIX.

BECAUSE some things, not fit to be wholly omitted, were as little fit to come into the body of a practical discourse, it was thought requisite to subjoin here the following additions, that will severally have reference to distinct parts of the foregoing discourse.

As to what was said p. 42. of the unreasonableness, and ill consequence of admitting it—to be any man's duty to believe himself utterly rejected, and forsaken of God, inasmuch as it would make that his duty which were repugnant to his felicity.—This is to be evinced by a consideration, which also, even apart by itself, were not without its own great weight, namely, that such a belief were inconsistent with his former stated and known duty: it were therefore inconsistent with his felicity, inasmuch as it would make that duty impossible to be performed, which before, was by the constitution of the evangelical law, made necessary to it, namely, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The hope of acceptance is so necessary to both these, that the belief of a man's being finally rejected, or that he shall never be accepted, cannot but make them both impossible, equally impossible, as if he were actually in hell, as much impossible to him, as to the devils themselves. Nor is this impossibility, merely, from a moral impotency, or that obduration of heart which were confessedly vicious, and his great sin, but from the natural influence of that belief of his being for ever rejected, which (upon the mentioned supposition) were his duty. Besides, inasmuch as it is the known duty of a sinner under the gospel, to turn to God

through Christ, and it is also declared in the same gospel (sufficiently to make it the common matter of faith to christians) that none can of themselves turn to God, and believe in his Son, without the help of special efficacious grace; it must hereupon, be a man's duty also to pray for that grace which may enable him hereto. How deep in wickedness was Simon Magus, even in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, when yet Peter calls him to repentance, and puts him upon praying for forgiveness, (which must imply also his praying for the grace to repent;) but how can a man pray for that, which, at the same time, he believes shall not be given him? yea, and which is harder, and more unaccountable, how can he stand obliged in duty, to pray for that which, at the same time, he stands obliged in duty to believe he shall not obtain? How can these two contrary obligations lie upon a man at the same time? or is he to look upon the former as ceased? should he reckon the gospel as to him repealed? or his impenitency and infidelity, even when they are at the highest, no sins?

I know it is obvious to object, as to all this, the case of the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? which will be supposed to be stated and determined in the sacred Scriptures, and being so, the person that hath committed it, may equally be thought obliged, (by a mixed assent, partly of faith to what is written, partly of self-knowledge, which he ought to have of his own acts and state) to conclude himself guilty of it; whereupon all the former inconvenience and difficulty will be liable to be urged as above. But even as to this also, I see not but it may fitly enough be said, that though the general nature of that sin be stated, and sufficiently determined in *thesi*, yet that God hath not left it determinable in *hypothesi*, by any particular person, that he hath committed it. For admit that it generally lies in imputing to the devil those works of the Holy Ghost, by which the truth of Christianity was to be demonstrated, I yet see not how any man can apply this to his own particular case, so as justly, and certainly to conclude himself guilty of it. I take it for granted none will ever take the notion of blasphemy in that strictness, but that a man may possibly be guilty of this sin as well in thought, as by speech. I also doubt not but it will be acknowledged on all hands, that prejudice and malice against Christianity, must have a great ingrediency into this sin; not such malice as whereby, knowing it to be the true religion, a man hates and detests it as such (which would suppose these pharisees, whom our Saviour charges with it, or cautions against it, to have been, at that time, in their judgments and consciences, christians) but such malignity, and strong prejudice as darkens and obstructs his mind, that he judges it

not to be true, against the highest evidence of its being so. It will also be acknowledged, that some enmity and disaffection to true religion is common to all men; more especially in their unregeneracy, and unconverted state-

Now let it be supposed that some person or other, of a very unwarrantably sceptical genius, had opportunity to know certainly the matter of fact, touching the miraculous works wrought by our Saviour. and understood withall somewhat generally, of the doctrine which he taught; and that he sets himself as a philosopher, to consider the case. Suppose that, partly through prejudice against the holy design of Christianity, whereof there is some degree in all; and partly through shortness of discourse, not having thoroughly considered the matter; he thinks it possible that some demon or other, with design, under a specious pretence, to impose upon, or amuse the credulous vulgar, may have done all those strange things: suppose his judgment should for the present more incline this way: what if thinking this to be the case in the instance of Apollonius Tyanæus, he hath not yet, upon a slighter view, discerned enough to distinguish them, but thinks alike of both cases? yea and suppose he have spoken his sentiments to some or other: perhaps upon further inquiry and search, he might see cause to alter his judgment: and now, setting himself to inquire more narrowly, he perceives the unexceptionable excellent scope and tendency of our Saviour's doctrine and precepts, considers the simplicity and purity of his life, contemplates further the awful greatness of his mighty works; but amidst these his deliberations, he finds among the rest of Christian constitutions this severe one, Mat. 12. 31, 32. and begins to fear lest, supposing the truth of this excellent religion, he have precluded himself of all the advantages of it by that former judgment of his; what is he to do in this case? what were he to be advised unto? what, to pass judgment upon himself, and his case as desperate? or not rather to humble himself before the God of heaven, ask pardon for his injurious rash judgment, and supplicate for mercy, and for further illumination, in the mystery of God, of the Father, and of Christ? Which course, that it may have a blessed issue with him, who dare venture to deny or doubt? And what have we to say hereupon, but that in great wisdom and mercy, our Saviour hath only told us there is such a sin, and what the general nature of it is, or whereabouts it lies, but the judgment of particular cases wherein, or of the very pitch and degree of malignity wherewith it is committed, he hath reserved to himself; intending further to strive with persons by his Spirit. while he judges them yet within the reach of mercy, or withhold it, when he sees any to have arriv-

ed to that culminating pitch of malignity, and obstinacy, wherein he shall judge this sin specially to consist? And what inconvenience is it to suppose he hath left this matter, touching the degree, humanly undeterminable. The knowledge of it can do them who have committed it no good: and probably they have by it so blinded and stupified their own souls, as to have made themselves very little capable of apprehending that they have committed it, or of considering whether they have or no. But they are sunk into a deep abyss of darkness and death, so as that such knowledge may be as little possible, as it would be useful to them. All their faculties of intellection, consideration, and self-reflection, being (as to any such exercise) bound up in a stupifying dead sleep.

And to what purpose should they have a rule by which to determine a case, who—Can receive no benefit by the determination, and—Who are supposed when they are to use it, to have no faculty sufficiently apt to make this sad (but true) judgment of their case by it? But for them who have not committed it, and who are consequently, yet capable of benefit by what should be made known about it, there is, therefore, enough made known for their real use and benefit. It will

1. Be of real use to many such, to know their danger of running into it. And it is sufficient to that purpose, that they are plainly told wherein the general nature of it consists, or whereabouts it lies; without shewing them the very point that hath certain death in it; or letting them know just how near they may approach it, without being sure to perish, when there is danger enough in every step they take toward it. As if there were some horrid desert, into any part whereof no man hath any business to come, but in some part whereof there is a dreadful gulf, whence arises a *contagious halitus, a contagious vapour* which, if he come within the verge of it, will be certainly poisonous and mortal to him. What need is there that any man should know just how near he may come, without being sure to die for it? He is concerned to keep himself at a cautious awful distance.

2. It may be of great use to others, that are afflicted, with very torturing fears lest they have committed, it to know that they have not. And they have enough also to satisfy them in the case. For their very fear itself, with its usual concomitants in such afflicted minds, is an argument to them that they have not. While they find in themselves any value of divine favour, any dread of his wrath, any disposition to consider the state of their souls, with any thought or design of turning to God, and making their peace; they have reason to conclude God hath hitherto kept them out of that fearful gulf; and is yet in the way, and in treaty with them. For since we are

not sufficient to think any thing (that is good) of ourselves, it is much more reasonable to ascribe any such thought or agitations of spirit that have this design to him, than to ourselves, and to account that he is yet at work with us (at least in the way of common grace) though when our thoughts drive towards a conclusion against ourselves, that we have committed that sin, and towards despair thereupon, we are to apprehend a mixture of temptation in them, which we are concerned earnestly to watch and pray against. And yet even such temptation is an argument of such a one's not having committed that sin. For such as the devil may apprehend more likely to have committed it (and it is not to be thought he can be sure who have) he will be less apt to trouble with such thoughts, not knowing what the issue of that unquietness may prove, and apprehending it may occasion their escaping quite out of his snare. And I do conceive this to be a safer method, of satisfying such as are perplexed with this fear in our days, than to be positive in stating that sin so, or limiting it to such circumstances, as shall make it impossible to be committed in this age of the world. For let it be seriously considered, whether it be altogether an un-supposable thing, that, with some in our days, there may be an equivalency, in point of light and evidence of the truth of Christianity, unto what these Jews had, whom our Saviour warns of the danger of this sin, at that time when he so warned them; his warning and cautioning them about it, implies that he judged them, at least in a possibility, at that time, of incurring the guilt of it. If the text Mat. 12. do not also imply that he reckoned them, then, actually to have committed it. For it is said, ver. 25. he knew their thoughts, that is, considered the temper of their minds, and thereupon said to them that which follows concerning it. Let us consider wherein their advantage towards their being ascertained of the truth of the Christian religion, was greater than we now can have. It was, chiefly, in this respect greater, that they had a nearer, and more immediate knowledge of the matter of fact, wherein that evidence which our Saviour refers to did consist. A more immediate way of knowing it they had; the most immediate the persons whom he warns (or charges) seem not to have had: for those pharisees, it is said, heard of the cure of the demoniac, not that they saw it. They took it upon the (no doubt sufficiently credible) report of others. Now let it be further considered, what we have to balance this one single advantage. We have, to intelligent considering persons, rationally-sufficient evidence of the same matter of fact. But how great things, that have since followed, have we the sufficiently certain knowledge of besides, beyond what they had in view, at

that time. As the wonderful death of our Lord, exactly according to prediction, in many respects, together with all the unfortold amazing circumstances that attended it! His more wonderful resurrection, upon which so great a stress is laid for demonstrating the truth of the religion he taught: the destruction of Jerusalem, as he foretold, and the shattered condition, of the Jewish nation, as was also foretold, ever since: the strange success of the gospel in the first, and some following ages, by so unlikely means, against the greatest opposition imaginable, both of jews, and pagans. Not to insist on the apostacy foretold, in the Christian church, with many more things that might be mentioned. Let it be considered whether the want of a so immediate way of knowing some of these things, be not abundantly compensated by the greatness of the other things that are however sufficiently known. And if such as have wit and leisure to consider these things in our days, are often pressed to consider them, have them frequently represented, and laid before their eyes, if such, I say, have in view as great evidence, upon the whole, of the truth of Christianity, as these pharisees had; it is then further to be considered, whether it be not possible that some such may equal the jewish malice, against the holy design of our religion. To which I only say, the Lord grant that none may. But if there be really cause to apprehend such a danger, some other way should be thought of to cure the trouble of some, than by the danger, and (too probable) ruin of others. However, none should themselves make their own case incurable, by concluding that they have sinned that sin, or by believing they are, otherwise, forsaken and rejected of God; so as that he will never more assist their endeavours to repent, and turn to him through the Mediator.

If it be inquired here, since, as hath been shewn, some may be quite forsaken of God, while yet they live in the world; ought such to believe then they are not forsaken, and so believe an untruth that they may make it true, or try if they can better their condition by it? I answer, nor that neither. For that God will further assist an obstinate sinner, that hath long resisted his Spirit, and despised his mercy, is no matter of promise, to him, and so no matter of faith. When he doth conquer, at length, any such, it is of mere unpromised favour; (as was also shewn) whereof therefore, he gives others no ground to despair; and for which they are deeply concerned, with great earnestness, to supplicate. But if it be said, how can they pray for that whereof they have no promise? and can have no faith, since what is not of faith is sin, Rom. 14. 23. I answer, that passage of Scripture would, in this case, be

much misapplied. It speaks not of faith concerning the certainty of any event to be expected, but the lawfulness of a work to be done, and of doubting, not concerning the event, but my own act. Can any man in his wits doubt concerning his own act in this case? whether it be better to pray for the grace of God to save him, than slight it and perish? nor are they without very encouraging promises concerning the event, that God will be a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, Heb. 11. 6. And that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, Rom. 10. 13. which promises it is true the context of both shews, do speak of believing prayer. They are to faith, not of it, and import, that God will reward and save the believer: not that he will give faith to the obstinate, contemptuous unbeliever. If he do this, it is, (as was said) of unpromised bounty. But though they are not promises to give faith, they should induce it; and incline sinners to cast themselves down before the throne of so gracious a God, and seek grace to help them in their need, in confidence that he will never reject penitent believing prayer. They, indeed, that for their former wilful sinning, are utterly forsaken of God, will not thus apply themselves; but our question is not what they will do, but what they should. Because they would not, therefore they were forsaken, and because they yet will not, they are still, and finally forsaken. Their refusal proceeds not from any discouragement God hath given them, but from the malignity of their own hearts. God hath not repealed his gospel towards them. The connection continues firm between the preceptive and promissory parts of it. Their infidelity is not become their duty, but remains their heinous sin, and the more deeply heinous by how much their own malignity holds them more strongly in it.

Unto what also is discoursed p. 49. concerning anger and grief, (or other passions) ascribed to God, it will not be unfit here to add, that unless they be allowed to signify real aversion of will, no account is to be given what reality in him they can signify at all. For to say (what some do seem to satisfy themselves with) that they are to be understood *secundum effectum*, according to the effects, not *secundum affectum*, according to the affections, though true as to the negative part, is, as to the affirmative, very defective and short; for the effects of anger and grief, upon which those names are put, when spoken of God, are not themselves in him, but in us. But we are still at a loss what they signify in him. Such effects must have some cause. And if they be effects which he works, they must have some cause in himself that is before them, and productive of them. This account leaves us to seek what that

cause is, that is signified by these names. That it cannot be any passion, as the same names are wont to signify with us, is out of question. Nor indeed do those names primarily, and most properly signify passion in ourselves. The passion is consequently only, by reason of that inferior nature in us, which is susceptible of it. But the aversion of our mind and will is before it, and, in another subject, very separable from it, and possible to be without it. In the blessed God we cannot understand any thing less is signified than real displeacency at the things whereat he is said to be angry or grieved.

Our shallow reason indeed is apt to suggest in these matters, Why is not that prevented that is so displeasing? And it would be said with equal reason in reference to all sin permitted to be in the world, why was it not prevented? And what is to be said to this? Shall it be said that sin doth not displease God? that he hath no will against sin? it is not repugnant to his will? yes; it is to his revealed will, to his law. But is that an untrue revelation? His law is not his will itself, but the *signum*, *sign*, the discovery of his will. Now, is it an insignificant sign? a sign that signifies nothing? or to which there belongs no correspondent *significatum*? *nothing that is signified by it*? Is that which is signified (for sure no one will say it signifies nothing) his real will, yea or no? who can deny it? that will, then, (and a most calm, sedate, impassionate will it must be understood to be) sin, and consequently the consequent miseries of his creatures, are repugnant unto. And what will is that? it is not a peremptory will concerning the event, for the event falls out otherwise; which were, upon that supposition, impossible; for who hath resisted his will? as was truly intimated by the personated questionist: (Rom. 9. 19.) but impertinently, when God's will of another (not a contrary) kind, that is, concerning another object, was in the same breath referred unto, why doth he yet find fault? it is not the will of the event that is the measure of faultiness: for then there could not have been sin in the world, nor consequently misery, which only, by the Creator's pleasure, stands connected with it. For nothing could fall out against that irresistible will. The objector then destroys his own objection, so absurdly, and so manifestly, as not to deserve any other reply than that which he meets with. Nay, but who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?

And what is the other object about which the divine will is also conversant? matter of duty, and what stands in connection with it, not abstractly and separately, but as it is so connected, our felicity. This is objectively another will, as we justly distinguish divine acts, that respect the creature, by their indifferent objects. Against this will falls out all the sin and misery in the world.

All this seems plain and clear, but is not enough. For it may be further said, When God wills this or that to be my duty, doth he not will this event, namely, my doing it? otherwise wherein is his will withstood, or not fulfilled in my not doing it? He willed this to be my duty, and it is so. I do not, nor can hinder it from being so, yet I do it not, and that he willed not. If all that his will meant was that this should be my duty, but my doing it was not intended; his will is entirely accomplished, it hath its full effect, in that such things are constituted, and do remain my duty, upon his signification of this his will, my not doing it, not being within the compass of the object, of the thing willed.

If it be said, he willed my doing it, that is, that I should do it, not that I shall, the same answer will recur, namely, that his will hath still its full effect, this effect still remaining, that I should do it, but that I shall he willed not.

It may be said, I do plainly go against his will however; for his will was that I should do so, or so, and I do not what he willed I should. It is true, I go herein against his will, if he willed not only my obligation, but my action according to it. And indeed it seems altogether unreasonable, and unintelligible that he should will to oblige me to that, which he doth not will me to do.

Therefore it seems out of question, that the holy God doth constantly and perpetually, in a true sense, will the universal obedience, and the consequent felicity of all his creatures capable thereof; that is, he doth will it with simple complacency, as what were highly grateful to him, simply considered by itself. Who can doubt, but that purity, holiness, blessedness, wheresoever they were to be beheld among his creatures, would be a pleasing and delightful spectacle to him, being most agreeable to the perfect excellency, purity, and benignity of his own nature, and that their deformity and misery must be consequently displeasing? But he doth not efficaciously will every thing that he truly wills. He never willed the obedience of all his intelligent creatures so, as effectually to make them all obey, nor their happiness, so as to make them all be happy, as the event shews. Nothing can be more certain, than that he did not so will these things; for then nothing could have fallen out to the contrary, as we see much hath. Nor is it at all unworthy the love and goodness of his nature, it so to have willed, with that effective will, the universal fulness, sinlessness, and felicity of all his intelligent creatures. The divine nature must comprehend all excellencies in itself, and is not to be limited to that one only of benignity, or an aptness to acts of beneficence. For then it were not infinite, not absolutely perfect, and so not divine.

All the acts of his will must be consequently conform and agreeable to the most perfect wisdom. He doth all things according to the counsel of his will. He wills, it is true, the rectitude of our actions, and what would be consequent thereto, but he first, and more principally wills, the rectitude of his own. And not only not to do an unrighteous, but not an inept, or unfit thing. We find he did not think it fit efficaciously to provide concerning all men, that they should be made obedient and happy, as he hath concerning some. That in the general he makes a difference, is to be attributed to his wisdom, that is, his wisdom hath in the general made this determination, not to deal with all alike, and so we find it ascribed to his wisdom that he doth make a difference; and in what a transport is the holy apostle in the contemplation and celebration of it upon this account! 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! But now when in particular, he comes to make this difference between one person, and another, there being no reason in the object to determine him this way, more than that, his designing some for the objects of special favour, and waving others (as to such special favour) when all were in themselves alike; in that case wisdom hath not so proper an exercise, but it is the work of free, unobliged sovereignty here to make the choice. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. Ephes. 1. 5.

Yet in the mean time, while God doth not efficaciously will all men's obedience introductive of their happiness, doth it follow he wills it not really at all? to say he wills it efficaciously, were to contradict experience, and his word; to say he wills it not really, were equally to contradict his word. He doth will it, but not primarily, and as the more principal object of his will, so as to effect it notwithstanding whatsoever unfitness he apprehends in it, namely, that he so overpower all, as to make them obedient and happy. He really wills it, but hath greater reasons than this or that man's salvation, why he effects it not. And this argues no imperfection in the divine will, but the perfection of it, that he wills things agreeably to the reasonableness and fitness of them.

THE
CARNALITY

OF

Religious Contention,

IN TWO SERMONS,

PREACHED

At the Merchant's Lecture,

IN BROAD STREET.

THE
P R E F A C E

TO
THE READERS.

THIS title no body can think is meant to condemn all contention about matters of religion as carnal; but since there is too much which is apparently so, it only signifies it to be the design of the following discourse to shew what contention that is, and when, or in what case, though it hath religion for its object, it may not have it for its principle. but that very frequently, the lust of the flesh hides itself under that specious name. And to shew wherein, while it affects to hide, yet unawares it discovers itself in the management of affairs of that sacred kind. Thus it often really is; and then is that noble cause as ignobly served, as when (according to that father's observation) a man proves to be unfaithful even for the faith, and sacrilegious for religion. *Cypr. de Simplic. Præl.*

When in one place (*Jude 3.*) christians are exhorted to contend earnestly for the faith; and in another, (*2 Tim. 2. 24.*) we are told the servant of the Lord must not strive; it is plain there is a contention for religion, which is a duty, and there is a contention, even concerning religion too, which is a sin. And that sin the apostle, in this context, out of which our discourse arises, doth deservedly expose by the name of flesh, and of the lust, or of the works thereof; such as wrath, variance, envy, hatred, &c. Whence it is easy to collect in what sense it is said in the mentioned place, the servant of the Lord must not strive, namely, as that striving excludes the gentleness, the aptness to instruct, and the patience, which are in the same place

enjoined, where that striving is forbidden. And from thence it is equally easy to coil it too, in what sense we ought to contend for the faith earnestly, that is, with all that earnestness which will consist with these, not with such as excludes them: as earnestly as you will, but with a seditious mind, full of charity, candour, kindness and benignity towards them we strive with. We ought, we see (in the mentioned place) to be patient towards all men. Toward fellow-christians there should certainly be a more peculiar brotherly kindness. The difference is very great, and most discernable in the effects betwixt the churchs' contentions against enemies without it, and contentions within itself. The former unite it the more, increase its strength and vigour. The latter divide and enfeeble it. As to those of this latter kind, nothing is more evident, or deserves to be more considered, than that as the Christian church hath grown more carnal, it hath grown more contentious, and as more contentious, still more and more carnal. The savour hath been lost of the great things of the gospel, which have less matter in them of dispute or doubt, but which only did afford proper nutriment to the life of godliness, and it hath diverted to lesser things, (or invented such as were, otherwise, none at all) about which the contentious, disputative genius might employ, and wherewith it might entertain, feed, and satiate itself.

Thereby it hath grown strong and vigorous, and acquired the power to transform the church from a spiritual society, enlivened, acted, and governed by the Spirit of Christ, into a mere carnal thing, like the rest of the world. Carnality hath become, and long been in it a governing principle, and hath torn it into God knows how many fragments and parties; each of which will now be the church, inclose itself within its own peculiar limits, exclusive of all the rest, claim and appropriate to itself the rights and privileges which belong to the Christian church in common, yea, and even Christ himself, as if he were to be so inclosed or confined: and hence is it said, *Lo here is Christ, or there he is, till he is scarce to be found any where;* but as, through merciful indulgence, overlooking our sinful follies, he is pleased to afford some tokens of his presence both here and there. Yet also how manifest are the tokens of his displeasure and retirement! And how few will apprehend and consider the true cause! I will now adventure to offer these things to serious consideration.

1. Whether for any party of christians to make unto itself other limits of communion than Christ hath made, and hedge up itself within those limits, excluding those whom Christ would admit, and admitting those whom he would exclude, be not in itself a real sin? When I say *make to itself* this more peculiarly concerns those who form their own communions, having nothing herein imposed upon them by civil authority. Let others censure themselves as they see cause. They have a holy table among them, the symbol of their communion with one another in the Lord. I would ask, "Whose is this table? Is it the table of this or that man? or party of men? or is it the Lord's table?"

Then certainly it ought to be free to his guests, and appropriate to them. And who should dare to invite others, or forbid these ?

2. If it be a sin, is it not a heinous one? This will best be understood by considering what his limits are. Nothing seems plainer than that it was his mind, Christianity itself should measure the communion of christians, as such : visible Christianity their visible communion. It will here then be inquired, (as in all reason it should) what Christianity is. And if it be, every one will understand the inquiry concerning that, as they would concerning any thing else, what is its essence ? Or what are its essentials, or wherein doth it consist ? Not what are all the several accidents it may admit of ? as you would do, if it were inquired, What is humanity ? Now here it will be readily acknowledged that Christianity (as all things else that are of moral consideration) must be estimated more principally by its end, and that its final reference is not to this world, but to the world to come, and to a happy state there. And that, considering the miserable state wherein it finds the souls of men here, and the greater misery they are hereafter liable to, it must design their present recovery, and finally, their eternal salvation.

That in order hereto it must propound to men some things necessary to be believed, some things necessary to be done. And that both must intend the making of them good in order to the making them happy, or the saving of them from eternal misery. That both are sufficiently propounded by the kind and great Author of this constitution Christ himself, in his word or gospel. That this gospel, besides many incidental things, expressly represents some things as of absolute necessity to salvation, by which are settled the very terms of life and death, unto sinners, and as a principal, most comprehensive, and most fundamental thing to all the rest, requires men's resigning and subjecting themselves unto him ; or putting themselves by solemn covenant into his hands, or under his conduct, to be by him brought to God, and made finally happy in him.

Whatsoever therefore is of absolute necessity to this end is essential to Christianity. Christians then are a sort of men tending to God and blessedness under the conduct of Christ, to whom they have by covenant devoted themselves, and to God in him. Visible Christians are such as are in this visible tendency, with their children, yet in minority, and not capable of making an understanding profession themselves. Such as have arrived to that capacity are no longer to be considered in their parents, but a part by themselves. They that have been sufficiently instructed in the principles of the Christian religion, that have devoted themselves to God in Christ, and live in their general course conformably to his holy rules, are visibly personal covenanters. It is plainly the mind of Christ, that those be received into that plenary communion which belongs to the Christian state ; and particularly, unto that sacred rite which is the communion of his body and blood, and wherein the new testament or covenant hath its solemn obligation, and wherein as *fæderati*. or *persons in covenant*, they have more express communion with him, and one another.

They that are yet unacquainted with the most necessary things of Christian religion, are to be held as catechumens under instruction, if they be willing. They that live licentiously in the state of penitents, till they give that proof of their serious repentance, as that their profession thereof appear not to be slight and ludicrous. They that refuse to learn, or be reformed; that live in open hostility against the known laws of Christ, are not visible christians, are not visibly in the way of salvation. Visible subjection and visible rebellion are inconsistencies. If therefore any society of men, professedly christian, do make other limits of their communion; admitting those that Christ's rule excludes, excluding them whom it would admit; especially, if the alteration be, not only by the making those things necessary which he hath not revealed nor enjoined as necessary, but which he hath not revealed or enjoined at all; and so is not only to add to Christian religion taken at large, but even to its essentials; this is substantially to change the evangelical covenant, to make it another thing, to break Christ's constitution, and set up another. If they be little things only that we add, we must know there is *nihil minimum, nothing little* in religion. What, if as little as they are, many think them sinful, and are thereby thrown off from our communion! The less they are, the greater the sin to make them necessary, to hang so great things upon them, break the church's peace and unity by them, and of them to make a new gospel, new terms of life and death, a new way to heaven. And is as much as in us lies, to make things of highest necessity depend not only upon things of no necessity, but that are, in our religion, perfect nullities, not having any place there at all. And thereupon is, in effect to say, If you will not take Christianity with these additions of ours, you shall not be christians, you shall have no christian ordinances, no christian worship; we will as far as in us is, exclude you heaven itself, and all means of salvation. And upon the same ground upon which they may be excluded one communion by such arbitrary devised measures, they may be excluded another also, and be received no where. And if their measures differ, they all exclude one another; and hence, so many churches, so many christendoms. If this be sinful, it is a sin of the deepest die. Whereas the Holy Scriptures speak with such severity as we know they do, of the altering of man's landmarks, what may we think of altering God's! And the sin is still the greater, if the things of highest necessity are overlooked in the mean time as trifles, tything of mint is stood upon, but judgment, faith, mercy, and the love of God passed over, (as Mat. 23. 23. Luke 11. 42.) infidels poured in upon the church! wolves and bears under the name of sheep, and the lambs of Christ, (which he requires to be fed) thrown out into the wilderness!

3. But if we suppose it a sin, and so heinous a one, how far doth the guilt of it spread! How few among the several sorts and parties of christians are innocent, if the measures of their several communions were brought under just and severe examination! How few that lay their communions open to visible christians as such, excluding none of whatsoever denomination, nor receiving any that by Christian rational estimate cannot be judged such.

4. How few that consider this as the provoking cause of Christ's being so much a stranger to the Christian church! And how little is it to be hoped we shall ever see good days till this wasting evil be redressed! Or that our glorious Redeemer, who is head of all things to the church, should ever own it by visible favours, should protect, cherish, enlarge it, or make it spread in the world, (and how little it is naturally in any probability of doing so) or that he should treat it as his, while it is so little itself, and so little one. In the present (most deplorable) state of things, private, (that is carnal) interest is the thing every where designed, by one party, and another. And by wishing the prosperity of the church, or endeavouring it, is only meant seeking the prosperity of our own party. So that there can be no united prayers, nor joint endeavours for any truly common good; but what seems desirable to some, is dreaded and deprecated by all the rest. Thus for thirteen or fourteen hundred years hath the church been gradually growing a multiform, mangled, shattered, and most deformed thing; broken and parceled into no body knows how many several sorts of communions. The measures whereof how strangely alien have they been from those which were genuine and primitive, that is, from substantial Christianity, and the things that must concur to make up that. Instead of sound knowledge of the few, clear, and great things of religion, a great many doubtful opinions; the taking one side in a disputed point; the determination of a logical question, understanding, or saying one understands (whether we do or no) a metaphysical nicety; and sometimes professing to believe somewhat that Scripture never said, or shews itself never to have meant, and that is most manifestly contrary to all reason and common sense. Instead of reverent, decent, grave worship; affected, scenical, ludicrous formalities, uncouth gesticulations, disguised countenances, with I know not what empty shews of a forced and feigned devotion; which things also were to serve instead of orderly, unreprouable conversation, of serving God, and of doing good to other men; and to expiate the crimes of a very bad one, to make amends, and atone for the lewdest, the most licentious, and most mischievous practices.

In sum; not only are things most alien from real Christianity added to it, but substituted in the room of it, and preferred before it: Yea, and things most destructive of it, indulged and magnified in opposition to it. This is too generally the state of the carnalized Christian church. And never were there more fervent contentions among all sorts, whose notions, opinions, modes, and forms are to be preferred.

The word of God tells us that to be carnally minded is death. These contests seem therefore to express great solicitude how most neatly to adorn a carcass, or at best how with greatest art and curiosity to trim, and apparel gorgeously, a languishing man, in the feared approaches of death, instead of endeavouring to save his life. But if any endeavour to that purpose were yet to be used; what

it should be; that any man should go about to propose to the Christian church, were both presumptuous, and hopeless. We can only speak our wishes to men, and offer them in solemn supplications to God. And it were a happy omen, if good men could once agree what, in particular, to pray for; it being out of question that such men, would not be guilty of so much hypocrisy. as to their uttermost, not seriously to endeavour, what they durst adventure, and thought it necessary to make the subject of their prayers. And one would think it should not be difficult to men of sincere minds, upon serious consideration of the present sad state of things, not only in general to pray for the true spiritual welfare of the church of Christ in the world; but so far to be particular, as to pray in order thereto, that it may be more entirely one. We are told, There is one body, and one Spirit. Eph. 4. 4. That the Spirit, is but one, we are sure is true in fact: and so we are that the body animated by that Spirit, as it is such, can be but one also. But the apostle's business in that place, is not merely to assert such a union, as there already was, but also to persuade to such a one as there yet was not; that is, that it might be more entire and complete than, hitherto it was; and that such a unity might be preserved in the bond of peace: and this in order to its growth to the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ: implying plainly enough that the less it was one, the less it would grow. Which also is sufficiently evident in itself. For it is first plain in the nature of the thing, that by how much it is more divided and multiform, it will appear the less considerable in the world, and so be less apt to attract, and draw in others. Yea, and its appearance and aspect will not only be less inviting and attractive; but it will be offensive, and create prejudices in the minds of men against Christianity itself. Which appears the plain meaning of that petition of our blessed Lord, when he was leaving the world, John 17. 21. That they all might be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. Implying manifestly, that if they did not appear one, it would strongly tempt the world to infidelity. Whereupon all good men have a mighty inducement to unite in this request; for more entire visible oneness in the Christian church, not only from the example of our Lord leading them in this request, but from the reason also by which he enforces it, that otherwise the rest of the world must be confirmed and obdured in their infidelity. Who sees not therefore that the Christian interest is naturally obstructed in its extensive growth by the visible disunion of the Christian community? For it can scarce admit to be called a society in its present torn and shattered state.

And again, its divisions being (as they cannot be other, than) criminal, the effect of indulged carnality, and designed to serve the carnal interest of this or that party, in opposition to the rest; they hereby not only offend and give scandal to the world, who thereupon discern nothing of peculiar excellency in the Christian profession, when

under it they see men driving but such low designs, as they themselves (more honestly) do without any such veil; but they offend the Spirit of Christ too, who, thereupon, in great degrees, withdraws itself; not totally, which could not consist with the promise, I am with you always, unto the end of the world; but unto such degrees as shall testify displeasure. Mat. 28. 20. And hence is the growth of the church obstructed, not only naturally, but penally too. Whence it is most evident, that they cannot with judgment pray for the spiritual welfare of the church of Christ, who pray not for its union; nor with sincerity, who to their uttermost endeavour it not also. Nor can there be true seriousness, insomuch, but the consideration must ensue, what course is most likely to serve so desired an end. And since necessary things are most plain, and less liable to dispute and doubt; and it is matter of fact, obvious to every observing eye, that the disceptations and divisions in the Christian church, which are, and have been, from age to age, do for the most part arise from the addition of unnecessary things to it, which belong not to its constitution; and which while some think lawful only, and at best, but an ornament to it, others think sinful and a deformity; it cannot hence but appear a thing much to be desired, and endeavoured, that these occasions of offence and division might cease, and be removed. Which even they that think such additions, to be, for the matter of them lawful, might yet see reason enough to desire and to endeavour should be taken away; yea, though they apprehend them of some use; it being so manifest that the hurt which accrues by them is unspeakably more. And besides, one would think it should not be unapprehensible to any man that allows himself the free use of his thoughts, that though he should continue of the judgment, that such additions were in the matter of them lawful, yet the making them additional terms of Christian communion must be highly sinful, as being the introduction of a new Christianity. Christian communion being of christians as such.

But this amputation is, according to the present posture of men's minds all the Christian world over, a thing equally to be desired and despaired of: as a general union therefore is, in the mean time. We cannot unite with them who insist upon terms of union that we judge unlawful in those things. For those that insist upon terms that we think not simply unlawful, while yet they are different, in several Christian societies; we cannot, therein, unite with any; but we must, for ought we know, divide from as many. That only which the present state of things admits of, is, that we keep ourselves united in mind and spirit with all serious christians, in the plain and necessary things wherein they all agree: that we preserve in our own spirits a resolved unaddictedness to any party, in the things wherein they differ. That for actual and local communion (which we cannot have with all the christians in the world, and can have comparatively but with a few) we join with them that come nearest us, that is, that we judge come nearest to our common rule: that (as some means hereto)

we especially labour to centre in some such scheme of doctrinals, as for which all these profess to have a common reverence; that while our union cannot as yet be so extensive as it ought, it may be as extensive as we can; that the gospel be not hindered, and that our ministry may be the more successful and profitable to the promoting of the common salvation, among those that attend upon it. Such schemes or collections of doctrines, reduced into an order (as gold formed into a vessel, whereas truth, as it lies in the Holy Scriptures is as gold in the mass) may be of use (as they have always been used in the church in all ages) more distinctly to inform others concerning our sentiments (though the use is less, that after thorough search and inquiry they can be of to oneself) provided, they be avowed to be looked upon, but as a *mensura mensurata*, *measured rule*, reserving unto the Scriptures the honour of being the only *mensura mensurans*; *measuring rule*, and so that we only own them as agreeable to the Scriptures. And again, that we declare we take them to be agreeable thereto in the main, or for substance, without attributing a sacredness to the very words of a mere human composition: which indeed we cannot attribute to the words used in the translation of the Bible itself. And that for the things we believe them with a degree of assent proportionable to their greater or less evidence. This through the blessing of God, such as have used a sincere and ingenuous freedom one with another, have found an effectual expedient to deliver their minds from mutual doubt, concerning each other, that because of some different modes of expressing their sentiments, they held very different opinions, which they have found to be a mistake on one hand and the other; and have given and received satisfaction, they intended nothing that ought to be reckoned into the account of socinian, pelagian, popish, arminian or antinomian errors. That fraudulent and unjust way of making the estimate, being justly exploded, that whosoever shall in some things that touch not the main points of difference, say as some other of these do, must therefore be of their minds throughout. Which rule of judging would make any christian be taken for a jew, a mahometan, or a pagan: there being no intelligent Christian, but must say many things that they do.

But it is to be hoped this engine of the devil's is by the mercy of God broken, so as that the people shall be no more frightened from attending to the ministry of such (be their denomination what it will) as use apt and proper methods to awaken, convince and save souls by being told they are antinomians or arminians &c. It being upon inquiry found, that persons so and so charged, by the rash folly of some that understand nothing of the difference, besides the different sound of those odious names, do really detest the doctrines imputed to them. And that furthermore, while we look upon an agreement therein as a sufficient character of one sound in the faith, we do not profess to reckon every one of the things therein contained (without distinguishing their importance) necessary to that pur-

pose. And do never intend our communion shall be limited by other bounds than only an agreement in those things for doctrinals, which we take to be of such importance and necessity, as without the belief whereof a man cannot be a sincere christian. Which certainly cannot but be a very few, less disputed things, among them that profess to believe the divine authority of the Scriptures, and that will allow them to be interpreted according to the ordinary ways of interpreting other writings. That for matters of practice in the worship of God, we be satisfied, not to be obliged to do things, which we think unlawful ourselves, without entertaining the least surmise, but that many good men may judge some things lawful that we do not, and may practise accordingly. That we always keep ourselves in a prepared temper of spirit to receive further information about doubtful things. That we cherish in our souls a universal sincere love to christians as such; and to men as men. That we studiously endeavour in our several stations the doing the most general good we can. And that our whole design do terminate upon what, so far as we can succeed in it, must be acknowledged by all good men to be a real service to the church of Christ, by gathering into it as many as we can, considering it as made up of persons that with judgment, and in practice own the very substance of Christian religion. With such dispositions of mind as these, we shall, in this divided state of the Christian church, be innocent of the sinful evil of its divisions, and keep as much as in us is, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And do we yet entertain in our minds any hope that the Christian religion shall spread, and be more generally propagated through the world? Or do we desire it should? Or do we dread that it should not, through our default? Let us then look back to the years of ancient time, and consider what it was when it grew and increased mightily; when without other advantages than its own self-recommending excellency, it every where made its own way, subdued nations, proselyted enemies, defied the most fervent oppositions and persecutions; when the professors and preachers of it triumphed over martyrdoms, the fierceness and fury of wild beasts and flames, overcame by the blood of Jesus, and the word of his testimony, not loving their lives unto the death. When as Pliny (Plin Epist.) writing to Trajan in favour of the christians, intimates to him, they were every where so increased both in cities and countries, that the pagan temples had lain almost quite desolate, and that there had scarce been any to buy off their sacrifices. When (about a hundred years after) Tertullian representing in apology for them, their peaceableness, and how easy it were, otherwise, to them to relieve themselves of their sufferings, says they were become so numerous in the empire, (Apol. contra Gent.) that if it were possible for them to withdraw themselves into some remote, obscure place, they who were left would even tremble at their own solitude. Christianity was then all life and spirit. The Christian church in those days flourished in purity, power, and vigour. But when for the space of about three hundred years together it had enjoyed the

protection and benignity of Christian emperors; and was hereby become wanton, lost in carnality, not content with itself, and its own native comeliness, but affected to shine in a borrowed lustre and ornament, when (as harlots are wont) it began to paint, to be fond of gay attire, and devise things for deckings to itself most alien from its original state and constitution, and which afterwards became the matter of bloody contentions, and cruelties, when it grew ambitious of secular pomp, splendor, grandeur, and power, then was it so forsaken of God, and his Spirit, that within a very few years after Boniface the third had obtained of the emperor Phocas the title of universal bishop, whereby popish tyranny and superstition became more fully *regnant* in the church, (that is within less than twenty years) began the senseless delusion of mahometanism to spring up without the church; and assisted by the incredible accession of force and arms, came at length to prevail against it (now gradually sinking more and more into vice and ignorance) unto that degree, that in process of time, what Christianity had gained from paganism, it lost in a great measure, unto mahometanism; † so that in several parts of Christendom, where were reckoned thirty christians for one pagan, there came to be thirty mahometans for one christian. And how next to unchristian the Christian world is, in the nearer countries (very generally protestant as well as popish) too well known: and in the remoter, divers writers inform us Ludolphus's *Aethiop: hist.* and divers others.

Let it now therefore be considered for how many sad centuries of years Christianity hath been at an amazing stand! got no ground upon the whole, but rather lost much. Is this the religion which so early, by its own native light and power conquered so many nations, and which we expect to be the religion of the world? Who that understands this, would not with deepest concern, and anxiety of spirit, inquire into the cause! And what cause can be so obvious to our inquiry, as a luxurious, and a contentious carnality; which both go together, and which have enfeebled, dispirited, and lost its self-diffusing life and strength? What we cannot remedy, let us at least see, and lament!

And let us supplicate more earnestly for the effusions of that Holy Spirit, which alone can give remedy to our distempers, and overcome the lusts of the flesh, of whatsoever kind, and restore Christian religion to itself, and make the Christian name great in the world. For can it content us that Christianity should appear, and be counted a mean, a weak, and even a ludicrous thing? that the Son of God should have descended, and come down into our world! have put on man! have died upon a cross! have ascended that he might fill all things! diffuse spirit, light and life through the world! have appointed prophets, apostles, pastors and teachers for the publishing his everlasting gospel; and at length leave men, even where the Christian name and profession doth obtain, no better men generally than he found them! distinguished only from the rest of the world, by certain peculiar notions, and by some different rites of worship; otherwise as flagitious, as sensual, as impious towards God, as full of wrath, hatred, malice and mischievous design towards one another, as any pagans or infidels ever were! and yet that they should expect

† See in Brentwood's inquiries.

to be saved, only because they are called christian! What a representation of Christian religion is this!

And thus it will be reckoned of, till it come to be understood more generally, and more openly avowed, that Christianity is not only a system of doctrines (and tho' e reducible within a little compass) but of precepts also, not concerning the modes of worship only, but men's ordinary practice, and that not only respect their external actions, but which are designed to regulate and reform their minds and spirits, and do lay their first obligation there, must subdue their inordinate appetites and passions, render them holy and harmless, the sons of God, shining as lights, holding forth the word of life, &c. Phil. 2. 15. 16. The whole frame of the Christian institution being animated by the divine Spirit, into whose name we are baptized (as well as into that of the Father and the Son) and which will be given where he is sought for, and not affronted.

Let this be taken for Christianity and avowed to be so, and seriously endeavoured to be propagated as such, and it will not always be put to vie (but as upon equal terms) with mahometism, judaism, paganism, mere deism, or whatsoever else shall exalt itself into a competition with it. And let whatsoever comes not within this compass or is not truly and primitively christian, be resected and cut off from it, and so it will appear an entire self-agreeable thing; and the Christian church be but one. While it is not so, it will be the business and design of the most, only to promote the interest of this or that party. And if their sense were put into plain words, this it would be, "I am for my church or the church whereof I am, whatever becomes of the church of Christ." And so will a zealous endeavour for so narrow an interest, as that of a divided party engage and engross all the intention of their minds, and their religion be summed up in contention, and such only as hath its root in that division which (on the one side at least, and in great part too probably on both sides) chiefly proceeds from mere carnality. And what is it but religious contention, for the most part, that hath filled the Christian world with blood and ruins for many by past ages? Carnal contention, under this most specious pretence, as being conversant about spiritual or religious concernments, is the thing animadverted on (though in gentler instances, as later occasions did require) in the following sermons. It was little imagined when they were delivered from the pulpit, they should ever have been made more public. I have in this publication of them partly yielded to the opinion of divers, who judged they might possibly be useful to more than those who heard them, and to them farther upon review. But have more complied with a sort of necessity laid upon me, by being told if they were not published by me, the thing would be done (as it could) from broken, mistaken notes, without me. My own memorials and preparations were indeed imperfect enough, as it cannot but be in the case of one, so often in the week, engaged in such work. I have, as I could, by my own recollection, and by such help as I have otherwise had, endeavoured a full account of what was spoken, and as very confident nothing material is omitted. (Some ingeminations or

varied expressions of the same thing, that are pardonable, if not useful to a hearer, but not so grateful, and less needful to a reader, I reckon not such.) But divers passages (though not distinct heads) that were intended, but through want of time omitted, I have inserted in the places to which they did belong. Wherein none can think there is any wrong done. I am sensible the introductive part should have been in some respects, otherwise methodized. But I am content to let it go as it is, though I find, by the notes that were brought me, that some things were somewhat transposed (otherwise than was intended) in the delivery, from a memory, not the most faithful.

If it do any good, it must be from the supply of the good Spirit of God, which I admonish all you that read seriously to seek, and ask from him, who hath promised, thereupon it shall be given. The very expectation whereof will prevent reading with a vain mind, or ill design, and the consequent danger of receiving hurt by what you read.

Yours in our common Lord,

J. H.

THE CARNALITY
OF
RELIGIOUS CONTENTION.

Gal. v. xvi,

*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil
the lust of the flesh.*

THE last time I spake to you from these words, having largely opened before the import of *walking in the Spirit*, I undertook to shew you how *the flesh* here is to be understood, against the lusts whereof such walking in the Spirit is the prescribed remedy. In the general you have been told, that flesh is here to be taken morally, and in that latitude, as to signify all sorts of moral evil, or the general depravedness of our corrupt nature : for though sometimes in the moral acceptation the sense is limited (as hath formerly been shewed) to grosser sins, in contradistinction to more refined, as 2. Cor. 7. 1. and 1 John 2. 16. yet sometimes also it is so far extended, as to signify all sins, as Col. 2. 11. compared with Rom. 6. 6. And in this context it is plain the apostle comprehends sins of both these sorts under this one expression.

But what particular evils he more especially intended here to censure and caution these Galatian christians against, under this one name, cannot better be understood than by consulting this context itself ; in which, though we cannot say we have a full enumeration ; we have yet very many instances, of the carnalities against which this remedy is directed. Some of them more gross, (as we have told you they might be distinguished) adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, murder, drunkenness, revellings ; and some

other that may seem more refined, not as having less, but only a more subtle malignity in them; such as hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, &c. It may here be thought strange, that such sins as these should be animadverted upon in Christian churches, (as this epistle is inscribed to such, the churches of Galatia, chap. 1. 2.) so soon after the gospel was come among them, the apostle himself thought it strange; for you find him wondering at it, chap. 1. 6. I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, to another gospel. Yea, and after that, with the gospel, they had received the Spirit too. For it is said, chap. 3. 2, 3. This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? And are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, do you think to be made perfect by the flesh?

We are therefore to consider what sort of persons and doctrines they were that corrupted and depraved those churches; and whereby it will be the more apprehensible by what kind of insinuations they so far prevailed: and we may collect, in very great part, what they were, from divers passages of this epistle itself; and indeed, from this very context. Some would have us think the persons were of that sect called gnostics, from their pretended and highly boasted knowledge. We have no evidence that this sect was so early known by this name; but it is very likely they were that sort of men that were afterwards so called. The characters here given them in this and the other apostolical epistles do much agree with what divers of the more ancient Christian writers, and one pagan one. (Plotinus) says of that sect. Which pagan, an interpreter, and great admirer of his (Marsil. Ficinus.) would fain have pass for a christian, because living in a time when the controversy between Christianity and paganism was at the height, he says nothing against Christianity itself, but speaks very much against these Pseudo-Christians, whom though that author mentions not by that name. this his interpreter often doth it for him, inserting "The gnostics" even when he is but translating, into the body of the work itself.

But this less concerns us. It is however, out of question, that this sort of men very anciently called gnostics, did highly vaunt their great knowledge. A very tempting specious pretence! Though their sublimer notions, (about the Æons, &c.) were imaginations only: fancy and not knowledge. or *γνωσις ψευδωροσύνη*. *knowledge misnamed*, or falsely so called. (as we may borrow the apostle's expressions, 1 Tim. 6. 20. though those inventions were later) and could only serve to fill the minds of their proselytes with wind and vanity.

But their doctrines upon which the apostle animadverts in this epistle, we may collect from the manifest scope and design of it; and that was to assert *justification by faith without the works of the law*, which they greatly perverted; and *sanctification by the Spirit of Christ*, or the doctrine of the *new creature*, which they even quite subverted. With which false doctrines they conjoined a most impurely vicious life and practice; falling in much with the jews in their corrupt doctrines, and with the pagans in their licentious practice. Which must be equally tempting to carnal minds.

And this may make it appear less strange, that all these sorts of carnality, that are here mentioned in this context from ver. 15. to the 21st. should, in reference to the same sort of men, be so put together. For it is evident they were partly a judaizing, and partly a paganizing sort of christians; as (for ends of their own) they affected to call themselves. They held it lawful for christians to join with pagans in their solemnities of worship, which they were wont to celebrate in the temples of their idols. It is notorious how gross impurities and immoralities were in those days incorporated into the paganish worship; such as made it sufficiently reasonable that idolatry should have in conjunction with it, fornication and adultery, uncleanness and lasciviousness. And for the addition of witchcraft, it was not unaccountable, there being sorceries, magical rites and diabolical incantations observed to have been intermingled with the *sacra* of the pagans. And for which these (misnamed) christians might have the greater kindness also, for the sake of Simon Magnus, the father of their sect, by whom the affectation thereof was transmitted to some of his noted followers, that thought it a glorious thing to vie with their predecessor in this sort of excellency.

Nor is it alien from this purpose to take notice, that those diabolical rites are said to have obtained among the paganish idolaters of drinking the warm blood of their sacrifices, and of eating things strangled with the blood in them, upon the imagination that in their so doing, they did partake of the very spirit of their gods whom they worshipped; and it is not altogether un-supposeable that the devil might, in some unusual manner, enter into them at those times, more violently agitating their blood and other humours; in the higher ferments whereof, if by the directer influence of the great enemy of mankind, quarrels and murders (as was not unlikely) should also sometimes ensue, it could not but heighten the sport and triumphs of hell.

And that the decree of the apostles and elders, Acts 15. might have such a reference, prohibiting these things conjunctly, idolatry and fornication, and things strangled, and blood;

that they should by no means mingle with the pagans in these horrid rites, a learned modern writer of our own hath rendered very probable. * And hereto those vehement dehortations of the apostle must answerably be understood to refer, 1 Cor. 10. 7—11. remonstrating to them, that they could not have fellowship with the Lord's table, and the table of devils. And I would not, says he, that you should have fellowship with devils. For though he did not judge it unlawful to eat of the *idolothyta*, that is, things offered to idols, being sold in the shambles, he yet most earnestly protests against their presuming to mingle and partake in the horrid diabolical rites, and impure practices that were wont to be used at their festivals in the idol's temples.

All thoughts of being by their Christianity obliged and enabled unto strict purity and holiness of heart and life, were out of doors with these seducers, and endeavoured to be extinguishing in such as they could work to a compliance with them: whereof the apostle seemed deeply apprehensive, when he so earnestly inculcates, that in Christ Jesus (or in the Christian state) neither circumcision nor uncircumcision were of any avail, but a new creature, and faith working by love.

But it must seem of all things the most unaccountable and incongruous, that men of so profligate sentiments and practices, should be for introducing a justification by the works of the law, in opposition to that by the faith of Christ. It is manifest they hated the holy design of Christian religion, which they professed; and professed it, that they might have better opportunity to undermine it. Hereupon (not opening at once all the arcana of their way) they carry answerably to persons and occasions as they occurred; and as the apostle was all things to all, that he might save some, so were they, that they might pervert and destroy. To the Christian jews one thing, to the Christian gentiles another. In this their doctrine they did most plausibly judaize. in their impure practices they verged more to paganism. Pretending to Christian converts from among them, that Christ never intended to tie them to strict severities, or hold them under an uneasy bondage; whereto the apostle seems to refer, chap. 5. 13. Ye have been called (he grants) to liberty, but use not (saith he) your liberty for an occasion to the flesh.

Thus we must suppose that they differently applied themselves to such as they designed to make their proselytes, endeavouring to accommodate themselves in one of these to one sort of men, and to another sort in the other. In dealing with the jewish christians they not only denied the doctrine of justi-

* Dr. Spencer de Ritibus Hebraeorum.

fication by faith, (opposing thereto that of justification by the works of the law) but calumniated it too, as if it tended to infer a liberty to sin, and make Christianity subservient to wickedness, whereof they knew their own to be more guilty. A piece of monstrous impudence (but usual with men of such foreheads) to endeavour the averting that charge from themselves, to which they were most manifestly liable, by first charging it on the innocent.

Hereto the apostle hath a manifest reference, when having first asserted against them justification by faith only. Gal. 2. 16. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. He then vindicates the assertion against their imputation, that it made Christ a patron to men's sins; If (saith he) while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, Is Christ therefore the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things that I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor: For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ, and am in and with him dead unto all sin, so as not to be under the dominion of any; and death never more had dominion over him, when he had once died. And whereas they thus objecting against the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, that it ministered unto sin, or made Christ a minister thereunto, were liable to have the objection retorted upon them, being a sort of men themselves so very infamously wicked; for this they had a double *salvo*, both of which the apostle doth industriously refute. That is, from the two parts of the law given by Moses, and the two sorts of the works of the law enjoined thereby, that is, the moral and the ritual or ceremonial part. In reference to the former, they fall in with those jewish conceits of the merit of their good works, done from the principle of free will: and that in order to their justification, this merit was to be measured by the preponderation of their good works to their bad,* and that it was possible that one good work in some cases might turn the scale: that is, if they were equal before. Now this the apostle occurs to, by shewing that they that were under the law were under a curse: for that if they continued not in all things written in the law to do them, all they did was nothing, as you may see, chap. 3. of this epistle, ver. 10.

* See at large to this purpose Smith's select discourses upon this subject.

And then as to the ritual or ceremonial part, because their sacrifices were in great part expiatory of sin, and divers of their other performances carried a great shew of sanctity and piety in them: which their expiatory sacrifices could only be, as they were representative of the one propitiation, and their other observances were nothing to their sanctity, if the thing they were designed to signify, did not accompany the sign. They imagined they were not to signify its presence, but to supply its absence. This notion did obtain even with the stricter sort of them, the pharisees themselves, who thereupon made very light of the weightier matters of the law, reckoning that though they were guilty of many immoralities in practice, their exact observances of the rites and ceremonies enjoined by Moses, would go far to make an amends; and that their paying tythe of mint, annis and cummin, would serve instead of judgment, faith, mercy, and the love of God, which they are said to pass over as very light and small matters. See *Matth. 23. 23.* compared with *Luke 11. 42.* And herein the apostle contests with these Galatian christians, not only with vehemency, but with some kind of wonder, that when gospel light had come among them, and that having known God, or rather been known of him, as *chap. 4. 9.* they should attribute any thing to so beggarly rudiments as these were; that is, being circumcised, and keeping days, and months, and years, &c. the things whercon they laid so great stress. And because they did so, he tells them in that 4th chapter, that he was afraid that he had bestowed labour in vain among them.

In sum therefore, he makes it his business to evidence to them, that both their justification and their sanctification must be conjoined and arise together out of one and the same root, Christ himself, and by faith in him (without the works of the law) as that which must vitally unite them with him, and that thereby they should become actually interested in all his fulness; that fulness of righteousness which was to be found only in him, and no where but in him; and withal, in that fulness of Spirit and life, and holy influence, which also was only in him; so as that the soul being united by this faith with Christ, must presently die to sin and live to God, *chap. 2. 19. 20.* And at the same time when he delivered a man from the law as dead to it, he became to him a continual living spring of all the duty, which God did by his holy rule require and call for, and render the whole life of such a man a life of devotedness to God.

And it is here by the way worth the while to observe how the apostle himself expounds that phrase of being dead to the law by being delivered from it, *Rom. 7. 1, ——— 6.* And no

man can be said to be delivered from any thing, as it is a good, or an advantage to him, but as it is an evil, and doth him hurt. And the law hurts no man as a rule of life. But as to one stated under the full power of it, it is a bar against that great blessing of the Spirit, (chap. 3. 13, 14.) which by its yet abiding curse it keeps off from him, hereby occasioning his continuance in sin, and then condemning him for it. Whereupon how clear is the current of the discourse in these words, namely, By the law I am dead to the law, that I might live to God; I am crucified with Christ, yet I live. As though he had said, The law itself hath slain me, and killed all my hopes and expectations from it: the same law that slew Christ, hath slain me. I am crucified with him; which supposes his being in him by that faith by which he was to live ever after. In this faith stood his marriage to Christ, who succeeds into the room of the law, as the case is stated, Rom. 7. 1,—3. &c. They that were settled, in reference to each other, in the conjugal state, as the law and the sinner were; upon the death of the one (which soever it be) the relation ceases, and so the obligation which depended upon that relation. And thereupon, says he, the law itself having given me my death's wound, and killed me as to it, in the article of dying, I join myself to Christ, and yield to be crucified with him, but therein acquire with him a new life. Nevertheless I live; And how? Not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I live in the flesh, is by faith in the Son of God, who hath loved me, and given himself for me. And this life I now thus live, is a life of pure and absolute devotedness to God; terminated upon his interest and glory as the *end* of it, governed by his declared will, as the *rule* of it. That is, in sum, it is a holy life, or (as before) it is a living to God. Whereupon he so copiously distinguishes, chap. 3. between Jews and Jews, those that were born after the flesh, and those born of the Spirit, the sons of the bond-woman, and of the free, (as he allegorically speaks,) signifying the latter only born into this new state of life. By all which he shews the connection to be most necessary and inviolable, between being justified by faith in Christ, and a life of holiness; so little opposite were these to one another, that one and the same faith was to infer both.

But now that the large extent of this holiness of life, might more fully appear, the apostle signifies, that it must not only exclude those grosser lusts and works of the flesh, but also such, as because they might seem somewhat more refined, might be reckoned by some less criminal, he therefore inserts divers of this other kind also: and the state of the case did equally require it. For it appears (as it might well be supposed

ed) that so far as any were tainted with the false notions, and with inclinations to the impure practices before mentioned, they were filled with animosities, with wrath, envyings and hatred towards them that had not received the taint; and they might have too much place with these back again towards them. Whereupon there could not but be very great and high ferments in these churches. Nothing therefore could be more requisite, or seasonable, than that several instances of this sort of carnality, should be put into this catalogue, namely, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, &c. For they were not to be thought (as was said) more refined, as having less; but a more subtle energy, or penetrative power of malignity in them. Nor indeed hath Christianity, and the Christian church suffered more by any sort of evils, than by those of this sort. Others destroy particular persons: these, besides their doing so, do more directly hurt the community, and tend to waste and destroy the church.

Now as to those grosser carnalities mentioned in this context, I did formerly say somewhat briefly, and so I did as to that which seems the central one among those of this latter sort, namely, that of heresy: which I considered according to what it doth import in itself, and did design also to consider it in this its concomitancy, namely, of the things here mentioned in so near conjunction, and that are of nearer affinity with it, hatred, envyings, and the like. I have indeed been since in some suspence whether I should pursue that intention or no; but upon serious consideration, and solemn looking up to heaven for direction, I have determined not to let this sort of carnality pass without just animadversion. For I consider that I speak to a Christian assembly, who must be understood all to profess equal, and impartial reverence to the word of God, as to a revelation come down from heaven, for our direction and conduct thither. And therefore none dare, upon serious thoughts, allow in themselves any kind of regret or disgust, as to so material and important a part of this holy word. We are assured the words of God will do good to them that walk uprightly, that is, to upright-hearted ones; who it must therefore be supposed will walk or deal uprightly in their attendance thereunto. And I cannot but hope that God will graciously help us to speak, and hear with that uprightness and integrity of heart that this word of his may do good to some, without doing hurt to any.

In speaking therefore to this sort of carnality, (for we must mention it by such a term as the Holy Ghost hath thought fit to be put upon it) I shall *First* note to you some previous things more generally, and then shall, *Secondly*, let you see

what appearances there may be of it in such a case as the apostle's present discourse hath reference unto.

First. It will be of use to us, more generally, to note these few things :

1. That the several expressions of it which we find in this context, in closer connection with heresy, as it were guarding it before and behind, namely, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings, do all note but one radical evil, and do all agree in one root. Whereupon it will be the less needful to insist upon them severally, or to give you the criticism of each word by itself; which it were a great deal more easy to do, than it will be useful, or of any avail to us. What I shall say therefore will be more general; but will however give you the occasion of casting your eye upon the particulars, whereby you will have the more distinct account of that carnality, which is here referred to by the apostle.

2. This is needful to be noted too, that this precept of the apostle considered as a prescription against fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, has more immediate and direct reference to this sort of carnality. This is plain, if you will but again peruse the words as they lie in their closest connexion. For when he had said in the 14th verse, That all the law is fulfilled in this one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, (most of all, no doubt, one's Christian neighbour) he adds, But if you bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not devoured one of another. Then immediately come in the words of the text, this I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. As though he had said, The lust of the flesh will be working this way, putting you upon biting and devouring one another. According as sentiments begin to differ, and minds are divided, inclinations will carry one this way, and another that; and then you will be too prone to be at biting, and be ready to fall to devouring one another. Now I have no better remedy to prescribe you against both than this, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. I should have been a very unfaithful interpreter of this context to you, if I had not taken notice of this so immediate connexion.

3. This is further to be noted, that this sort of carnality that lies in strifes, in emulations, in envyings, in hatred, &c. may come to have its occasion of being exercised, of working, lusting, and exerting itself about the doctrines of the gospel: than which nothing is more evident, in that you find that these things are put in connexion with heresies, which must be understood to be a corruption of gospel-doctrine. Very true indeed it is, that the word heresy, among the more ancient philoso-

phers, was used in a more gentle, and no way infamous sense, signifying only this or that sect of philosophers. But the word coming to be borrowed and transferred by sacred writers into the holy Scriptures, there it is mostly taken in a very ill sense, (though not always) as signifying error or corruption in doctrine, of a very high and destructive nature, as Tit. 3. 10, 11. 2 Pet. 2. 1. For though all heresy be error, or carries error in it; yet all error is not heresy; that must be such error as strikes at the root, and is conjunct with heart disaffection and malignity, (as was noted the last time) standing in opposition to faith, which is not a merely mental thing, but lies very principally in the heart. Doctrinal matters are however here referred unto, even in the very notion of heresy, and therefore about those matters these carnalities may have place. For when the several passions here mentioned are raised, and do tumultuate in the breasts of this and that particular person, they soon and easily spread and propagate themselves to others, so as to infect the community. And then it comes to the forming of it into parties, or dividing it into two sides, as the word $\delta\iota\chi\omega\sigma\sigma\iota\varsigma$ (which we translate *seditions*,) signifies; the one stated and posited as in an hostile posture against the other, till at length the matter arrive to that height and pitch of contumacious and fixed obstinacy, as in matters so important as the apostle's discourse reflects upon, will complete the notion of heresies, namely, on one side, at least; not, perhaps, without great faultiness on the other, which comes next to be noted.

4. As such carnality may have place and exercise about gospel-doctrine, so it is very possible it may shew itself on both sides, even on their part who have the *truth* with them, as well as on theirs who oppose it, and make it their business to propagate the contrary error or false doctrine. The very defence of truth itself may be accompanied with such carnalities, such strife, wrath, malice, envy, as divides the guilt between the divided parties, and leaves neither side innocent.

I am, you know, by mere providence, in the series and tract of a discourse long continued upon this context, led to say what I now do; and I have therefore the more hope, that through the blessing of God, it may be of some use to us. But this comes most directly under our notice; and let it be noted, that whereas in such contests both sides are wont to be confident they are in the right; neither the one nor the other may be over-confident or careless of not being in the wrong, in what may be of equal or greater importance than the matters themselves, disputed among them that agree in the substantial of religion, or that hold the head, can be. Let us I say, deep-

ly consider it, that such sinful carnality may have place, and exercise not only about religious concerns, but even on that side, where the truth lies; which is from hence evident, that the apostle immediately before the text, as I have noted, says, If you bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not bitten and consumed one of another. A great aptitude he therefore observed there was, to be biting on both sides, even where the truth lay, and where it lay not.

For we are here further to observe, that whereas our apostle sadly considered that many among these christians of Galatia were lapsed, and fallen from the purity and sincerity of religion; he apprehended too, that they who were not so fallen, took not the best course for the recovery of them that were. Which that admonition of his must mean, chap. 6. 1, 2. Brethren, if a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. It seems he reckoned that the sounder part among them, and that ought (and it is like thought themselves) to be more spiritual, while they shewed not more of a spirit of meekness towards the lapsed, were not so spiritual as they should be, and discovered more carnality than became them, more wrath and bitterness of spirit than could comport with the law of Christ. They will be little awed by this, and be apt for all this to indulge their own furious passions, that think he hath no law. But though one were never so sure he hath the truth on his side, it is in itself a dreadful thing, to whomsoever shall allow himself the liberty seriously to think of it. For what must we conceive of such truth, that is to be defended in some cases, I say, that in some cases ought to be so? We must surely conceive of it as a divine, a sacred thing, a heaven-born thing, a thing of heavenly descent, part of a revelation immediately come forth from the very bosom of God; so is the whole gospel-revelation to be looked upon. Now here is carnality that lusts; such a kind of carnality as the context speaks of, wrath, strife, hatred, &c. Here is such carnality, lusting, actually lusting, seeking prey, ravening for food. And what doth it feed upon? No meaner thing than divine truth! evangelical doctrines! Monstrous thought! Consider, I beseech you, my friends, what this comes to? The feeding an impure lust upon sacred things, or upon that which is divine! I must have my lust satisfied. says the proud, contentious spirit: wrath burns, anger boils; sacred things are not spared, but fallen upon, as the prepared food of lust. It will be fed, they are not forborn. All reverence of God is forgotten, heaven is ravaged, the most sacred mysteries of God's

own kingdom are violated, and torn this way, and that (O horrid thing!) by harpies, vultures, by most fierce and furious lusts. And if a man would know, recognize, take knowledge of the most deeply inward sensations and intention of his own heart, thus it is, I must now apply my thoughts, bend my mind, to consider a revelation come from heaven; And for what? For the end for which it was given, to enlighten, purify, quicken my soul towards God, renew and form it for God, to serve and enjoy him? No, But on purpose to feed, to gratify a lust! . We can (too often) make neither better nor worse of it, but just so it is.

These things being premised, I would now go on a little more particularly to shew you,

Secondly. Wherein carnality may appear exerting itself, even about such things, or what will be manifest indications of such a carnality, as is here referred unto, acting about, or in reference to the things of God, the most sacred and important truths and doctrines of his gospel.

I. When in comparison of some less things, wherein we find occasion or pretence to differ, little account is made of the incomparably greater things, wherein all serious christians are agreed, and wherein they really cannot but be agreed. Let it but be considered whether pains be not taken to devise some matter or other to contend about: (that shews a great disposition,) and then having found out some minuter things about which to differ, our differences, as little as they are, quite swallow up our agreements. The whole gospel signifies nothing, (though full of the most glorious wonders) in comparison of some punitios, either that we have invented, or that it may be doubted whether there be any thing in them or nothing. Here is some mystery in all this! A lust is to be gratified; an appetite to contend. This winds and wriths, this way and that, loath to appear but under some specious disguise of zeal for truth, indignation against false doctrine, or the like; but it betrays itself, and unawares, shews its ugly serpentine head. For if the thing chosen out to be the matter of contest be thought worth so much, when it is manifestly either in comparison, little, or nothing but a figment, why are not the things on all hands most confessedly great, and most evident, more highly esteemed, loved, relished, and with gust and delight fed upon? Why do not the greater things signify more to unite us in love and communion with all that agree with us in them, than the lesser things to divide us, about which we disagree? Indeed the disagreements were in themselves vastly great between the untainted christians of these Galatian churches, and that horrid sect that the apostle's discourse has manifest reference unto. Blessed be God there are not such disagreements amongst us.

But while there is less taint of error in our minds, (as to these things) are we not concerned to take heed there be not as great a taint of this vicious carnality in our hearts? It speaks too much of it; when having devised a difference, we are prone to overlook and make little account of the great things whereina we are entirely and most professedly agreed.

If we consider the things which the doctrinal part of this epistle doth more expressly refer to, as I have noted already, how great things in reference hereto are we fully agreed in? We are all agreed, that a sinner, an apostate lapsed creature, can never be saved and brought to a blessed state, but he must be justified, and he must be sanctified. He must be justified, to make his state safe; he must be sanctified, to make the temper of his spirit good, capable of communion with God in this world, and of final eternal blessedness with him in the other. We are agreed, that such justification and such sanctification are both the effects of most absolutely free and sovereign grace, that none could be ever justified, but by freest grace; that none can ever be sanctified but by freest grace, most absolutely and most sovereignly free. We are agreed, that the highest perfection of sanctification that can ever possibly be attained unto, signifies nothing at all to deserve, to procure by merit our justification. We are agreed, that both, as they are from the most free and sovereign grace, so they do come through the mediation of Jesus Christ, the alone Mediator between God and man: that the righteousness is entirely and only Christ's, by which we are justified: that the Spirit is most entirely and only Christ's, by which we are sanctified; according to that in 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10, 11. Such as are mentioned there were before the grossest and vilest of sinners, fornicators, adulterers, idolaters &c. And such (saith the apostle) were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified; but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

You cannot but be in all these agreed. We are agreed, that whoever does sincerely, evangelically believe in God through Christ, receiver Christ, is united with him, or is in him; who doth by serious repentance turn to God, whose heart is won to love him in truth as his highest and best good, who is conformed to the image of his Son; and who having been made willing in the day of his power, doth now render a sincere obedience to him; every such one is in a safe state, accepted with God, has found grace in his eyes.

For no words of Scripture can be plainer, than that they that believe on Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life, John 3. 16. Yea, that they have it, ver. 36. that life is begun with them, which is never to end, or which is in the sure

way to be continued till it become everlasting. That they that repent, and turn from all their transgressions, their iniquities shall not be their ruin, Ezek. 18. 30. That God hath prepared the things which eye hath not seen—for them that love him, and will give them the crown of life according to his own promise, (1 Cor. 2. 9. Jam. 1. 12.) that Christ doth become the Author of eternal salvation to them that obey him, (Heb. 5. 9.) that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, (Rom. 8. 1.) that it must turn wholly to the praise of the glory of his grace, that God makes them accepted in the beloved. Eph. 1. 6. We do all agree, that they that do never believe, they that never repent, they that never love God, they that are never brought to obey him, that live in enmity and rebellion against him to the last breath, must needs be in a lost state, are never justified, never accepted with God, are liable unto coming, and abiding wrath, and remain under condemnation, John 3. 16, 36. Luke 13. 3. Col. 3. 6. We agree, that such faith, such repentance, such love to God, such obedience, even in the most entire sincerity, are not to be considered at all, as any cause of such a person's acceptance with God: they do characterize the accepted person, but they cause it not, they deserve nothing; nay, they could not, if they were perfect. No internal work of the Holy Ghost, though in this our present state, it were most absolutely perfect, so as to exclude every thing of sin, could be any part of that righteousness that must justify us before God. To suppose that it could, would be manifestly to confound the offices of the Redeemer, and of the Holy Ghost. It was Christ that was to merit for us; the Holy Ghost was never to merit for us. It was not the Holy Ghost that died for us, nor can his operations or productions in us have any causative influence to the meriting the justified and accepted state of any person before God. They were never meant for that purpose, nor have any aptitude or accommodateness thereunto. They cannot make us never to have sinned; nor can atone for our having done so. We cannot but be agreed in this, for it is plain, and carries its own evidence in itself: that is, suppose we a person, as soon as he is converted, made perfectly free from sin, that very moment, by some extraordinary powerful work of the Holy Ghost on his soul, how shall that expiate for his having been a sinner? Now where there are so great things wherein we agree, and we make little of them; things that should raise up our souls, and awaken all our powers unto the highest acts of love, gratitude and praise to God and our Redeemer, and fill us with wonder and pleasure as often as we think of them; an indisposition of mind to take notice of, and con-

sider such things, so as to improve and use them to the great purposes of the Christian life, as incentives to the love of God, an entire devoting of ourselves to him, vigorous and diligent serving of him, and walking holily and comfortably with him in our daily course; through a greater disposition to contend about we well know not what besides, too plainly shews much of that carnal disaffection, which the apostle doth here animadvert upon. There are other things belonging to this same purpose that I find I cannot reach to at this time.

SERMON II.

Gal. v. xvi.

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

I HAVE begun to shew you by what indications much carnality may appear, and show itself in and about spiritual matters. As, (for instance) in the controverting, yea, even in the defending the truths of the gospel, and intend now to proceed. You have heard it does so,

1. When christians, who are very far agreed in the most important things, make little of the things wherein they are agreed though never so great; in comparison of the much less things wherein they differ. As all serious christians must be understood to agree in far greater things than it is possible for them to differ in. I lately mentioned to you sundry great agreements that I cannot doubt to be very common with serious and intelligent christians, which I shall not now stay to repeat, but add,

2. Such carnality shows itself, when there is too much aptness to lay greater stress than is needful upon some unscriptural words in delivering Scripture doctrine. Here we may take carnality as the apostle doth, 1 Cor. 3. 3. While there are divisions among you, are you not carnal, and walk (or act) as men?

There is more of the man in it than of the christian; when we can make a shift to divide about a word, and that (in the present use of it) devised only by man; when words that are merely of human stamp, and used in no such sense, or to no such purpose in Scripture; however they may be significant, yet too great a stress and weight is laid upon them. either by too stiffly adhering to them on the one hand, or too vehemently decrying them on the other hand; while (perhaps, and it is a certain and a known case) the meaning may be the same on both sides, and would be so, or would appear to be so, if such and such words were waved, and others more understood, were chosen, and used in the room of them. It is true, we are not to think (and no man of sense can) that we are obliged never to use other words in such matters, but such as the translators of the Bible have hit on in their version of it, as if that must consecrate those words, and leave all other under a profane character. But if it appear that any word of a doubtful signification, is misunderstood by many, creates offence, and through some fixed, immovable prejudice, or prepossession that some other notion of it hath obtained in the minds of many, it will always be otherwise understood by them than we intend, let it rather go for a *nehusktan*, than that the peace of the church should be broken, and men's minds be disturbed and disquieted by it. This is the case, when any such words that might be arbitrarily used or laid aside, are made so necessary, or so destructive, as if all religion were saved or lost by them: when one so cries up such a word, as if he would say, "The heavens must fall if I have not my word." And another decries it as much, as if he said, "They must fall if it be admitted, or if I have not mine." Sure there must be in this case that forbidden *λογομαχίαις*, of which the apostle speaks in that 1 Tim. 6. 4. which they are usually most apt to be guilty of, that are also guilty of what is put in conjunction therewith, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds; with these falls in this strife of words: whether that be to be understood objectively, or instrumentally, strife about words, or wordy strifes, I shall not here determine. But that whole context is worth our considering, ver. 3, 4, 5. If any man teach otherwise, do *επιπροδιδοσκαλει*, teach other, or *alien* things, or after another or *alien* manner, and consent not to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness: (4.) he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions, and strife of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings: (5.) perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness; from such withdraw thyself. And therewith agrees what we find also mentioned, with the charge of avoiding

them, 2 Tim. 2. 23. Foolish and unlearned questions that gender strifes. Some may fancy they make themselves considerable for learning by such altercations: but the apostle slurs that conceit, calling them unlearned. So I remember Seneca (*De Brev. Vita.*) says of the greeks, (calling it their disease) that they made much ado with certain idle questions, (as, how many rowers belonged to the vessel that carried Ulysses? and such like, that he there mentions) whereby, says he, they did not appear more learned, but only more troublesome.

3. when we consider with too little indulgence one another's mistakes and misapplications, in the use even of Scripture words, placing them as some may do, upon things to which they do not properly belong, when yet they agree about the things themselves. There are words in the Scripture-revelation, that it may be the one or the other of disagreeing persons may apply to one thing, when the other (perhaps truly) thinks they belong more properly to another. There is an inconvenience in this: the case is much; as if one should have an idea of all the streets of London in his mind as they lie, but he mistakes the names, and transposes them. As for instance, calls cheap-side cornhill, or cornhill cheap-side. He does not speak so intelligibly to another, but at the same time may have the same idea in his mind of London that another has. And this however, when it occurs in religious disceptations, ought to be considered (though there be an inconvenience in it) with indulgence, as knowing we are all liable to mistakes in greater matters. And as it is possible there may be somewhat of carnality, some perverseness, some cloud arising from infirm flesh that darkens the mind, and occasions it so to mistake; so it is much greater, not to be able to bear in another such a mistake.

4. When there is an agreement about the main and principal things that the Scripture-revelation contains and carries in it; but there is not that agreement about their mutual respects and references unto one another. This is a matter indeed of greater importance; there can be no true scheme given of gospel truths and doctrines, if such their references and respects to one another be not rightly understood. But an entire true scheme of Christian doctrines will not enter into all minds; and for the most part they are particular passages, or particular truths, that strike hearts, and that God makes use of to do souls good by. And if so entire a scheme will not enter into the minds of many, whether through their darkness or ignorance, or whether through any thing of prejudice, that was as it were forelaid in their minds: nothing remains but to be patient of it, and to do them what good we can, even upon their

own terms, and in the way wherein they are capable of it. There was such an obstruction in minds among these Corinthians, even upon this very account of their carnality, as we see in that 3d. of the 1st. epistle, that the apostle tells them, I could not speak to you as spiritual. (it must be understood comparatively) but as unto carnal; and therefore as a wise instructor, thought it needful to keep back, to with-hold some things from them that he reckoned might be meat to them, solid meat, strong meat, because they had been hitherto unable to bear it, nor were yet able. It is in that case needful rather somewhat to *επιεχειν*, to with-hold some things, or suspend, than by a continued and too urgent inculcation to frustrate one's own design; and while we would have all enter into less capable minds, to have nothing enter. It may sometimes be, that when too much is endeavoured at once to be borne in upon them against an invincible obstruction, we only engage them to fortify the more strongly, and shut out all; and so we defeat ourselves. They gain nothing, and our whole design is frustrated and lost. In all our applications to the souls of men, there must be patient waiting, and very gradual endeavours used, without force and furious striving; yea, in our having to do with such as are yet the very vassals and captives of the devil. So the apostle speaks, 2 Tim. 2. 24. The servant of the Lord should not strive but be patient towards (even all) men, and wait (even in reference to them that are hitherto altogether impenitent) when God will give them repentance, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, that are led captive by him at his will. Much more are such methods to be used towards them, who call on the name of our Lord out of a pure heart, as he speaks a little above in the same context, ver. 22. And consider the extent and endearingness of this character. It is to be deplored that it extends not further: but so far as it doth extend, God forbid it should not have a most persuasive efficacy and power upon our spirits, to make us follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, even with all them that bear that character, that is, that call on the Lord with a pure heart. Their Lord (as it is elsewhere) as well as ours; be they of what party, or denomination, soever.

5. Much of this carnality appears about such matters, when we are over intent to mould and square gospel truths and doctrines by human measures and models, and too earnestly strive to make them correspond; that is, when we aim, beyond what things can admit, to stretch (or rather to shrink and contract) God's transactions with men, unto the scheme and model of our own abstract notions and definitions, or of merely human, civil, or political economies, administrations and transactions; such

I mean as obtain among men towards one another : and so labour to have the same measures take place throughout in reference to divine things, as do in human. Whereby more than is needful, useful, (or indeed so much as possible to agree and quadrate) of logic, metaphysics ; and of civil and other law is introduced into theology. Illustrations indeed may be taken thence, but not strict measures. It is impossible sometimes they should be so. Divers things are taken among men in such notions, as, in delivering the doctrine of the gospel cannot have a full and adequate place : they often will not exactly agree or correspond. As if in speaking of God's pardoning and justifying a sinner, we should take our measures of pardon and justification strictly from what obtains amongst men, we shall find a great difference and disagreement. For plain it is, that, according to human measures, the same person cannot be both pardoned and justified. He that is pardoned cannot be justified, and he that is justified, cannot be pardoned. But according to divine and gospel-measures both are truly said of the same person. In the one case there is an inconsistency, in the other a fair agreement of the same things. He that is at a human bar a justified person, needs no pardon, his case admits of none : if he were justified, pardon were absurdly talked of : and so if he were pardoned, that does plainly imply that he was not justified. It is quite otherwise if you bring these things to the gospel, and God's dealing with sinners. I cannot now spend time in shewing you distinctly how these things do lie, and are very capable of being accommodated in the sinners case ; some resemblance will appear, not an exact or entire correspondency. The instance however serves our present purpose, to shew that God's procedure and methods in his dispensations towards men, will not in all things square with human measures.

Again, If we speak of the doctrine of God's covenant in Jesus Christ, we cannot take our measures from human covenants that pass between man and man, especially one private man and another ? for there the persons are under no obligation before their mutual consent. It is not so between God and man, God's covenants are laws as well as covenants ; and so a man is, before he consents, obliged to consent. Therefore here again it appears gospel-doctrines are not to be exactly measured by human models. Nor should this be too earnestly endeavoured, we should not too much set our minds upon it ; it is to offer at a thing in its own nature not practicable, and there is too much of man in it.

6. When there is a discernable proneness to oppose the great things of the gospel to one another, and to exalt or magnify one, above or against another. It is too plain this may more com-

monly come under observation, than it doth under that reprehension which it deserves. For instance, those two great things that I mentioned at first, justification and sanctification, both very great things, of most apparent and confessed necessity to the salvation and blessedness of the souls of men; justification, that a man's state may be good; sanctification, that the temper of his soul may become so. But is it not too common to magnify one of these above or against the other? to contend and dispute with great fervour concerning the higher value and excellency, the dignity or precedency of this or that, and to which the preference belongs; to be so much taken up about the one, as seldom to think of the other; and it may be not well to savour and relish the mention of it? Some are so taken up about the business of justification, (that admirable vouchsafement of grace to sinners!) that they care not to hear of sanctification; and so all their religion is foreign to them, or lies in somewhat without them, or in a mere relative thing, that alters not their spirits. A strange religion! that makes a man nothing the better man: or notwithstanding which, he is in the habitual frame of his soul, as bad as ever, vain, terrene, worldly-minded, proud, passionate, wrathful, malicious, vindictive, false, deceitful, perhaps (for that is not worse than the rest) very impurely sensual. But, no man can tell why, nor to be sure he himself, he takes himself to be a justified person: and perhaps his imagination of it raises in him a sort of rapturous, unaccountable joy, without ground or root, and which will not only wither, but turn (without a seasonable and merciful change) into endless horror, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth! A fearful and most surprising issue and disappointment of a high and unmisgiving confidence, and expectation to be saved! With others, whose temper, circumstances or temptations have less inclined them to rejoicing, their religion is made up of tormenting anxieties and fears, and consists in the daily revolving of perpetual endless doubts, whether they are justified or no; without any direct, formed design of being or doing good; by which they might in due time, come to have more truly comfortable apprehensions of the goodness of their state. They more care to be pardoned for being bad, than to become good!

Again, on the other hand, there may be some so wholly taken up about what they are in themselves to be and do, and in the earnest, but too abstract, or less evangelical (and therefore less fruitful) endeavour after higher pitches of sanctity, without due reference to the grace, Spirit, and blood of a Redeemer, that they neglect, and look not after their justification, and acceptance with God in him; nor do relish and savour as they ought, the doctrine of the gospel herein. Do more incline to a philo-

sophical (and scarcely christian) christianity; forgetting Christ to be their Redeemer, their Lord, and vital Head, and that they are (or ought to be) under his conduct, and through his mediation, daily tending to God and blessedness.

But now upon the whole, when there appears an aptness or disposition to separate these two, justification and sanctification from one another, or either of them from abiding in Christ, or to oppose them to one another, or contend about the priority of the one or the other (when no doubt they go together) and about the preference or excellency of the one above the other, which is the more considerable thing: herein appears much carnality of mind, an unsound, injudicious distempered spirit. And it is a like case, as if a malefactor at the same time is under sentence by which he is condemned to die, and under a most dangerous disease, that appears very probably mortal to him: he has a compassionate prince, willing to save his life, and he at once vouchsafes him his pardon, and provides a very skilful and able physician for the curing of his disease: the wretched creature hearing of this, falls a disputing which of these is the greatest favour, to have my disease cured, or, to have my crime pardoned; and in the heat of the dispute he neglects both, looks after neither. This is indeed less supposable, in the instanced case; but how great a distemper doth it shew, that it should be so, in this, which is of unexpressibly greater importance!

And now further it is agreed on all hands, that faith in a Redeemer is necessary to salvation, with those that are adult, and capable of attending to the gospel revelation; but here, What disputes are there raised? with what fervour are they managed, concerning the place of it, or the kind of that necessity which this faith is of, in order to the safe state of a sinner? A like case again, as if such a condemned malefactor is told of his prince's professed, gracious intendments towards him, but he doubts the sincerity of his professions. He gives him all desirable assurances, and tells him, Do but trust me, and all shall be well. But he presently falls a disputing, yea, But how am I to consider this trust? (we suppose it only such a trust as may be fitly enough placed upon a man) which way is it to contribute towards my safety or welfare? Is it to be an instrument or a condition? How absurd an abuse were this of the clemency of a propitious prince? If there were a public proclamation of pardon to many offenders at once concerned together, and they all agree only to disagree, to vie with one another their skill in criticizing upon the words, or in disputing the method, contending about the order and coherence of parts, and make it their business not thankfully to accept, but cavil at, to tear and mangle and pluck in pieces the proclamation, and defeat the kind

design and gracious tender of their prince? What clemency would not this provoke to the highest resentment and indignation? And what now can be stranger, or more perverse, than that a revelation from heaven of so much good-will to men, in the substance so plain, and that so directly concerns the salvation of souls, should be so torn and mangled? considered for no purpose less than that for which it was vouchsafed, and that the very end itself should be in so great part eluded, that was so kindly designed in it? though yet the endeavour of salving difficulties that occur, by earnest prayer, diligent study, and by amicable and placid collation among brethren, or comparing of sentiments, sincerely designed for a clearer understanding the frame of the gospel-truth, or how it may be with most advantage represented to men for the promoting of the common salvation, can be liable to no just reprehension, being managed with that reverence that so sacred things challenge, and with a due sense of our own ignorance and imperfection. That only which is blamable in this case, and whereof I reckon no account can be given, or defence made, is that when, for the substance, the gospel propounds and lays before us so plain a way wherein men are to endeavour the saving of their souls, as wherein the wayfaring man, though a fool, needs not err, that is, there must be repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, a renewed heart, a holy life. One comes and pretends to shew that order of these things one way, so as to compose a scheme of them that is represented as most necessary to be observed and held to. No saith another, I will give you a righter scheme of salvation, another way, and mightily presses the necessity of that, and the dangerous mistakes of the other. And thus they cover a plain way with thorns and briars, do not instruct, but perplex and distract whom they should direct, create distinctions and oppositions of scheme to scheme, not only without necessity, but almost without a difference, and yet insist with vehemency, and lay men's salvation upon their understanding the matter so or so, when it is hoped thousands have been saved, that never heard of the one scheme or the other, as they are distinguished and opposed to each other. Who can justify this? Again in the

7. Place: When any do with great zeal contend for this or that opinion or notion, as very sacred and highly spiritual, (as they account) with no other design, than that under that pretence they may indulge their own carnal inclination with the greater liberty. It was the very genius of this sort of men against whom this epistle was meant, whether they were then called gnostics it matters not. The name well agreed to them and they were known by it afterwards. They were men of much

pretence to knowledge and sublime notions, as they counted them. And herein lay their religion; and under this pretence they indulged themselves in all manner of licentiousness. When any do take up with mere notions, which they are zealous for, accounting them very highly spiritual; and under pretext of these, they indulge the carnality of their hearts, if not of their lives and practices too: and their fine notion, (as they account it) which they (more uncertainly) father upon the Spirit of truth must be substituted in the room of all that love, meekness, humility, heavenliness, self-denial, which are the most certain and undoubted fruits of this blessed Spirit: when under the pretence of being notional men, and of knowing a great deal more than most others do, any neglect their own spirits, and suffer pride, avarice, ambition, vindictiveness and falsehood, to shelter themselves under the thin cobweb of a few fine spun notions; and they can now hereupon live at random, with more ease to their own minds, and they think, with better reputation as to other men.

Here is a glittering shew only of an airy, imagined, pretended spirituality, drawn over (but which doth not hide) corrupt, rotten, putrid flesh. Have you never known such a case, when it might be said there goes a proud, ambitious man, a covetous man, a false man, a malicious man; but he is a man of rare and singular notions, knows a great deal more than most others do; and this must atone for all his crimes with God and man, and both quiet his conscience, and salve his credit together! And who can doubt but this man must be very fond of his own opinions, and zealously contend and dispute for them upon any occasion (though he never so ineptly make it) when they are to do him so great service, and to stand him in so much stead, that is to supply the room for him of all real religion and morality. And if he have happened upon such notions as are really true, and revealed by God himself, by how much the more certainly divine they be, so much the greater is the wickedness, so basely to prostitute sacred things, truths that are the very offspring of heaven, unto so vile purposes. It were fault enough to make them serve different or other purposes than they are capable of, that is, to supply the room of religion and real goodness. What an indignity is that to religion, to suppose an empty spiritless opinion can fill up its place! A thing that does a man no good, for which his mind and spirit is nothing the better! much more, that shelters what is so very bad? Can this serve for religion? That religion that consists with being proud, with being deceitful, with being malicious, with being revengeful! Learn to despise such a religion! Much

more that is taken up to veil over these, and exclude all real goodness! Again,

8. When, in the maintaining any doctrine of the gospel in opposition to others, we industriously set ourselves to pervert their meaning, and impute things to them that they never say. Or again if we charge their opinions whom we oppose with consequences which they disclaim, professing, it may be, rather to disclaim their former opinion, and change their judgment, than admit such consequences, if they could discern any connection between the one and the other. This surely argues a mighty disposition to contend, when we will quarrel with one that is really of our own mind: for herein he appears to be virtually already in the same mind in a greater matter, at least, than he differs with us about; because no man charges another's opinion with a consequence, designing thereby to oblige him to change his opinion; but as supposing it to be an agreed thing between them both, that the consequence is worse than the opinion. When therefore the consequence I charge is disclaimed by him whom I oppose, either it is justly charged, or it is not. If it be not, his opinion may be true, notwithstanding what I herein say to the contrary, and I am certainly so far in an error. But if it be justly charged, being yet disclaimed, we are formally agreed concerning the consequence, and are virtually agreed concerning the disputed point too, because he professedly disavows it upon supposition such a consequence would follow, which yet perhaps he sees not; and so the agreement must be much greater than the difference. And yet commonly this signifies nothing in order to peace: that is, it is not enough, that I see the samethings that you do, unless I also see them too with your eyes.

9. When such disputes do arise at length to wrath, to angry strife, yea, and even to fixed enmity. What dreadful carnality is here! Most deservedly so called, if you only consider flesh or carnality as an unreasonable, a brutal thing. For what can be more unreasonable or unaccountable than to fall out with another man, because he thinks not as I do, or receives not my sentiments, as I also do not receive his. As it not to be considered, that he no further differs from me than I do from him? If there be cause of anger, upon this account, on one side, there is the same cause on the other too; and then whether shall this grow? And how little can this avail upon a rational estimate? Can any good come of it? doth it tend to the clearing of truth? Shall we see the better through the clouds and dust we raised? Is a good cause served by it? or do we think it possible the wrath of man should ever work the righteousness of God? And when such carnalities as these do exert themselves, and the hot steams and fumes arise, which the apostle

here calls the lusts of the flesh, the flesh lusting to envy, lusting to wrath: what is the product (or even the productive cause) but that of fire which is without light? And you know what fire that resembles! And if a man once find any fervour of this kind stir, or kindle in his breast, if he aright consider, he would no more cherish it, than one would do a brand thrown into his bosom from the infernal fire. One would think in this case, What have I stirring within me? something a-kin to hell! Can this conduce to the service of divine and heavenly truth? And let it be sadly considered; our being, upon such accounts angry with one another, is a dismal token of God's being angry with us all, and a provoking cause of it too. Methinks that should be a qualmy thought! and strike our souls with a strange damp! Shall I indulge that in myself, that is a mark upon me of divine displeasure; and upon all in whom it is found? To have this Holy Spirit retire, that blessed Spirit of love, and of a sound mind, and to leave us under the power of rebellious lusting flesh! Can this be grateful, or not be a dismaying, frightful thing? And whereas a right scheme of gospel-doctrine is the thing pretended to be striven for, I beseech you consider: The more entirely, and the more deeply, the true scheme of gospel-doctrine is inlaid in a man's soul, the more certainly it must form it all into meekness, humility, gentleness, love, kindness and benignity towards fellow-christians of whatsoever denomination; not confined, not limited, (as that of the pharisees) unto their own party; but diffusing and spreading itself to all that bear the character and cognizance of Christ. The Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ is a Spirit of greater amplitude; extends and diffuses itself through the whole body of Christ.

Nor can any man more effectually disgrace his own cause, or make sure to worst himself in it, than by defending it wrathfully. For admit that he err whom I oppose, a thousand to one but that my wrath is worse than his errors probably a thousand times worse. I go about therefore to take away a mote from his eye, having a beam in my own; or am more concerned for a misplaced hair upon his head, than I am for a fiery ulcer in my own breast. We are not, it is true, to be so stoical to condemn the natural passion of anger, as such for sinful. But if it exceeds its cause, and sets not with the sun, it becomes strange, unhallowed fire. But again in the

10. Place: There is still a further appearance of great carnality in such cases, when any do adventure to judge of the consciences and states of them whom they oppose, or from whom they differ: when they ascend the tribunal, usurp the throne, pass sentence upon them, as men of no conscience, or of no sincerity, or uprightness of heart with God. As if theirs were to

be the universal conscience, the measure of all consciences; and he that cannot be governed by their conscience must have none at all: or he be stark blind towards truth, towards God, and towards himself, that sees not every thing they see, or fancy themselves to see.

This is a most high usurpation upon divine prerogative; and how can any insensibly slide into such an evil as this, in the face of so plain and so awful a text of Scripture, that so severely animadverts upon it? that 1th. to the Romans, in sundry verses of it. With what reverence and dread should it strike a man's soul in such a case! When we have the rights of the Redeemer asserted in those whom he hath bought with his blood? And are told that for this end Christ both died and rose, and revived that he might be Lord both of the dead and living, ver. 9. And it is thereupon further said to us, Who art thou that judgest another's servant, as ver. 10. Why dost thou judge thy brother, or set at nought thy brother? We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We are all of us his, he both died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord of all, as Acts 10. 36. And here of dead and living, that is, that he might be owner of all, which is the first notion of *Dominus* or *Lord*, and in both worlds, the visible and the invisible, that into which many are dead, and deceased from hence, and so to us become invisible; and many that, yet surviving, are still visible to us. So ample is his dominion! And because the *jus imperii*, the right of government, of which judgment is the last, conclusive act, hath for its foundation the *jus domini*, right of dominion; it is therefore asserted to him as the *coronis* and complement. the very *summity* of his acquired rights, that he is to finish all things by the last judgment, which must pass upon both the already dead, and the yet living. Thus is ground of the expostulation laid. Who art thou who presumest to juggle him out of this his supreme and most sacred right? Perhaps the matter disputed about may be doubtful, but there is no doubt concerning this incommunicable authority of our Lord Christ, or concerning his law against such judging. Matt. 7. 1. And to run into certain sin, in a furious chasing of uncertain error! What consideration, what tenderness of offending, of affronting him, and of hazarding our own souls is there in all this?

To judge other men's consciences, is of so near affinity with governing them, that they that can allow themselves to do the former, want only power, not will or inclination, to offer at the other too. Which puts the matter out of doubt, that when men of this temper complain of such usurpation, it is not that they think it an offence in itself, but against them only; and that no

consciences ought to be free, but their own. The proof of an honest and equal mind herein is, when we judge this to be evil not being hurt by it; or abhor to hurt others in this kind, when we have power to do it. Upon which account that passage is memorable of the emperor Maximilian II. to a certain prelate, that there was no sin, no tyranny more grievous than to affect dominion over men's consciences; and that they who do so, go about to invade the tower of heaven. A considerable saying from so great a prince, that lived and died in the roman communion. What shall be thought of any such protestants, that without any colour or shadow of a ground, besides differing from them in some very disputable and unimportant opinions, shall presume to judge of other men's consciences, (and consequently of their states God-ward) which such a one as he thought it so presumptuous wickedness to attempt to over-rule or govern?

11. When we over-magnify our own understandings, and assume too much to ourselves. That is, do expect that our minds be taken for standards to all minds: as if *we*, of all mankind, were exempt from error, or the possibility of being mistaken. A certain sort of φιλαυδία or αυδοσαδεια, an excess of love and admiration of ourselves, or over-pleas'dness with ourselves, too much self complacency, is the true (though very deep and most hidden) root of our common mischief in such cases. We wrap up ourselves within ourselves, and then we are all the world. Do only compare ourselves with ourselves, never letting it enter into our minds, that others have their sentiments too, perhaps wiser than ours; but abound in our own sense; and while (as the apostle in that case says) we are not wise, and perhaps are the only persons that think ourselves so, we yet take upon us, as if we were fit to dictate to the world, to all christians, and to all mankind; or as if we only were the men, and wisdom must die with us.

This is a sort of evil, than which there is none more common and none less observed; none wherewith the guilty are so little apt to charge themselves, or admit conviction of it. For, I pray, do but consider; all the several differing parties amongst us do with one voice pretend to be for peace; but how, and upon what terms? Why, that all the rest are presently to be of their mind; and that is all the peace that most are for. For where (scarcely any where) is the man to be found? Or how great a rarity is he, that entertains the thought "That there may, for ought I know, be much to be redressed and corrected in my apprehensions of things, to make me capable of falling in with that truth which ought to be common to all." There is an expectation with many, of a good time and state of things, be-

fore this world end, when all shall be of one mind and judgment: but the most think it must be by all men's becoming of their mind and judgment. And of this self-conceit it is usually a harder thing to fasten conviction upon men, than of most other evils. We have more hope in speaking against drunkenness, murder, or any the grossest kind of wickedness: for there the conscience of the guilty falls in, and takes part with the reprover. But we can more easily, and more frequently do, (though not frequently enough) observe the faults of the inferior faculties or of our external actions, than of the faculty itself which should observe. Our mind, which is naturally like our eye, is, in this, too like, that is, that it can see every thing but itself. It doth not, by using it, preserve its peculiar, self-reflecting power; is blind towards itself, beyond what naturally belongs to it. An object may be too near our bodily eye to be seen. Our mind is herein too bodily, too much carnalized, sunk too deep into flesh. It is the next thing to itself; and here, not by its primitive nature, (by which as an intellectual sun it could revert its beams, and turn them inward upon itself) but by depravation, it for the most part sees nothing; or doth worse, thinks itself to see what is not to be seen, certain imaginary excellencies, which make the man his own idol; an object of a sort of adoration to himself; and of scorn and derision (most probably) to every one else. In this case every man is, however, most commonly innocent in his own eyes, or still thinks he is in the right: amidst the so vast a variety of apprehensions and sentiments no one suspects himself to be in the wrong. All are for the truth, and they are all for peace and union. By which some indeed, more gently, mean, they hope all will quit their former mistaken opinions and ways (as in great kindness to themselves they take for granted all men's are but their own) and come wholly over to them. Others that have not breasts capable of even so much charity as this, not only are as much lovers and admirers of themselves, but so vehement haters of all that presume to differ from them, that they think them not fit to live in the world that durst not adventure to do so. The meaning therefore of their being for peace, is, that they would have all destroyed that are not of their minds: and then (as the roman historian speaks) *Quando solitudinem fecere appellant pacem: when they have made a desolation, so that they themselves are left alone in the world, that, they will call peace.*

But you will say, What is to be done? or what would I persuade in this case of differing apprehensions and ways still remaining among christians? I answer, Not presently to unbelieve all that ever a man hath believed before; or to abandon on the sudden his former sentiments, or to find fault with himself for

having thought them right. For it is a contradiction to be of any opinion, and not then to think it right. Nor, therefore, is it scepticism, by any means, that I would advise to; as if there were nothing to be thought certain, but this: that whereas the greatest and most necessary things in religion are most plain, that is, either most plain in themselves, or most expressly revealed in the word of God. Here let us be stedfast ourselves, without being severe towards other men. Other things, that are more matter of doubt and dispute, by how much the less plain they are, we should count so much the less necessary. In reference therefore to these less momentous things, about which there is with us most of jangling, there ought always to be great modesty, and distrust of our own understandings, and a continued readiness to receive information, with constant looking up to the Father of lights for further illumination, and a resolution, wherein we, with others, have attained, to walk by the same rule, minding the same (agreed) things, hoping God will reveal his mind to the otherwise minded in his own time, as the apostle in Phil. 3 16, 17. But to hasten to a close, I further add in the

Last place, Such carnality greatly shews itself in an affectation and desire of having such disputes still kept a foot, and the contents continued without either limit or rational design. This shews a deep tincture, and is a plain indication of a mind to a very great degree carnalized, when a mighty pleasure is taken to see the saw drawn, and the ball kept up. And if the question be asked, Pray how long? So little of reasonable answer can be given, that it might as well be said in plain terms, Till all words be spent, till speech or language fail, till Elias come, or doomsday come. So that if there were never so much reason to commend the having said somewhat in defence of this or that disputed point, we might yet say as Seneca did of Cicero's so much overpraising his own consulship, "I blame him not for praising it without cause, but for doing it without end;" or that he could never give over, or tell when he had said enough. Upon the same terms upon which it is now so much desired such disputes should be continued, when what is truly enough is already said, they might as well wish they alway should. Which signifies that when we say, we would have men contend for truth, we wish it not so much for truth's sake, as for the contention's sake. By all means, say they, strive for the truth: not that they care so much for truth, as for the strife. For in some circumstances there is not an end in view, that is rationally to be designed or served by it on this side the end of all things. Nor consequently any good principle that is to be exercised or gratified thereby. What is needful to be said in the

matters already referred to, for the informing and satisfying of tractable minds, sincerely willing to understand the truth, lies within a little compass. And when, in controversy that is once said which truly belongs to the very point in question, the rest is commonly trifling and reflexion, or the perplexing of the matter more, and darkening counsel by words without knowledge. If love to truth be alleged for the principle that prompts men to covet so continual altercations about it, I would say this shews more want of love to it. For hereby they are diverted from that which renders it most of all amiable, and for which it ought chiefly to be loved. As it is the truth according to godliness, and by which we are to be sanctified, and begotten more and more (as of an immortal seed) into the divine likeness. Experience shews how little, disputes better men's spirits. If we love divine truth, why do we not feed and live upon it, and enjoy its pleasant relishes? but relish gravel more, or chaff and bran? For thither the agitation of continued controversies about it doth soon sift it, the grain of flour (the kidney of the wheat) being passed away, and gone from us. Can none remember when the disputative humour had even eaten out the power and spirit of practical religion and godliness? Thither things are again tending, if either by severity or mercy, (one may say rather than not otherwise, by merciful severity) God do not prevent and repress that tendency. As yet I fear the humour is violent, when the fervour of men's spirits is such, as to carry them over all Scripture-directions, and animadversions, that they signify nothing with them: only make it their business each one to animate the more vogue'd champions of their own party into the highest ferments, and cry, Dispute, dispute, write, write; preach, preach one against another; let not the business go over so, do not keep silence. Thus are many, as the apostle speaks, puffed up for one against another, 1 Cor. 4. 6. And what, has such a text of Scripture as that no edge? no point? by which to lance, to pierce such a tumour? No, when the humour is once up, and has inwrapt men's hearts; is settled there, and hath obdured them to a brawny hardness; such texts of Scripture, though so mighty pat and apposite, are esteemed by them but as leviathan esteems spears and swords, like straw and rotten wood, they do not enter into men's hearts. A strange kind of obduration!

And how supposable is it, that they who are so puffed up for others, may also, through the known corruption of nature even in the best, do herein not a little to the puffing up of them too. The apostle's concluding of this chapter with those cautions, Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another, immediately upon his renewing of the

precept, (ver. 25.) of walking in the Spirit : and immediately before those words, (chap. 6. 1.) If a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, shews how he understood the case to be with these Galatian christians, that as to doctrinals were yet sound and unfallen : that there was yet such carnality working in their continued contests, (though for the truth) such pride, such affectation of vain-glory, such wrathfulness, as shewed it was not mere love to truth that kept up the contest, but some such worse principles. Nothing is plainer than that principles and ends measure one another. And when that is done, or coveted to be done, that serves no good end; or is so done, as not to serve but destroy, or hinder any end that is truly good; the principle must be very bad, that moves the wheel. Disorderly eccentric motions betray their principle and end together. When the carriage and conduct of an affair that carries with it the appearance of serving the truth, is impetuous, eager, precipitant; when there is no good end in view of the present so modified endeavour; when enough is agreed already to serve the most important ends, unity among brethren, the salvation of souls, and yet things are further insisted on, unnecessary to either, yea, prejudicial to both, and upon which the weight and stress of either of these cannot be laid without sin; it too plainly appears vain-glory to oneself, or the slurring of a (designed) adversary is the end; and then the principle is proportionable. Yet even in the light, and when matters are thus open and in view, oppositions are pushed on, and men's spirits rise to that pitch, as to bear down whatever is proposed, only with design to make their career a little slower: yea, and they are apt, rather than hearken, to put opprobrious names and characters upon them that are not altogether so furious as themselves.

Nor have they themselves the patience to consider consequences, and whether these things tend; that is, that God is provoked, that the souls of men are endangered, greatly endangered. I have found in my own conversation, that some even in distress, in agonies, have said, "Lord, be merciful to us, I know not which way to go; one preaches one thing, another preaches the quite contrary." I know they mistake; we do generally in substance preach the same gospel. Thanks be to God his gospel is not confined to a few men, or to this or that party of men. But in the mean time, it is a thing of very ill consequence to lay stumbling-blocks before the blind, bars and obstructions in the way of the weak and the lame, whereby they may be turned out of the way, who should rather be strengthened.

It is not considered, that where the danger is less of an utter ruin to the souls of men, there is however occasioned a great languor and enfeeblement. They should be considered, and treated, not only as being weak, but lest they should be made so. When they are diverted from the proper means of improvement and growth, and their minds are alienated from those means being otherwise engaged, an ill habit is contracted; and when the distemper hath seized some, it spreads, and soon infects more. Nutriment is dispensed, from the head through the body, by the co-operation of the several parts, as those texts, Eph. 4. 16. Col. 2. 19. do with great emphasis and elegance speak. Understand it so, that how far soever there is, or ought to be actual communion, every limb and joint contributes something to the strength and vigour of the rest. So is nourishment ministered, and spreads itself in the body to its edifying itself in love: which love if it fail, a universal languor cannot but ensue, the free circulation of vital spirits being obstructed and stopped. And those that are most sensible, if they be not so much otherwise dammified, cannot, when they observe it, but be grieved, and take it bitterly to heart; when the tokens appear to their view of a general decay. The living members of any body are pained, when the body is wasted and rent; dead or stupified and benumbed members feel it not, are unapprehensive. But above all, it ought to be considered, (but how little is it?) that the Holy Spirit is grieved, and doth (as we may fear it will more) sensibly retire: the gospel in which it is wont to breathe is trifled with: the glorious gospel, the gospel of the grace of God, (can men find nothing else to play with) by which that blessed Spirit hath begotten many a soul to God, and nourished them unto life eternal. That precious thing designed for so great, and sacred purposes, (as pampered, wanton children do with their food) they dally with, or quarrel about it, or squander and throw it away. How can this but offend? The self-procured distempers which did precede, and those that ensue, increase the offence. When it is said, Eph. 4. 30. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God—and presently subjoined, ver. 31. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away; Is it not left to us to collect, that these things do more peculiarly grieve the Spirit? that Spirit of grace, of all love, goodness, sweetness and benignity. There is but one body, and one Spirit, a Spirit that spreads vital influence in the body. What can you think of that Spirit that feels every where? that is in the body a universal sentient? How can that Spirit but be grieved! Passion it is not capable of, but just and sedate displeasency, that matters should be so. How should any of us

like it, to have our living body torn limb from limb, and part from part! Though with him real commotion, and disturbance can have no place, intellectual resentment is infinitely greater and deeper than we can either feel or conceive.

But where this angry, tumified, proud flesh is the governing thing, none of these tremendous consequences or considerations, while it is so, take any place. The litigious quarrelsome genius will throw off all, will find no leisure or room for a calm thought: but though the course in which we are engaged should be ready to set on fire the whole course of nature, will be still for casting abroad firebrands, and arrows, and death; and make us think this fine sport! If indeed there were room for any cooler thoughts, one would think such as these should not lie remote. How little any of us know, or are capable of knowing in this our present state! that they that think they know most, or are most conceited of their own knowledge, know nothing as they ought to know; that they that are most apt to contend, do most of all fight in the dark; that it is too possible there may be much knowledge without love; how little such knowledge is worth! that it profits nothing; that it hurts, puffs up, when love edifies; that the devils know more than any of us, while their want of love, or their hellish malignity makes them devils; that as by pride comes contention, so humility would contribute more to peace, (and to the discerning of truth too) than the most fervent disceptation; that there is no hope of proselyting the world to my opinion or way; that if I cannot be quiet till I have made such and such of my mind, I shall still be unquiet while others are not of it, that is, always: that if some one's judgment must be a standard to the world, there are thousands fitter for it than mine; that they that in their angry contests think to shame their adversary, do commonly most of all shame themselves.

But to close all, I pray let us consider, we are, professedly, going to heaven, that region of light, and life, and purity, and love. It well indeed becomes them that are upon the way thither, modestly to inquire after truth. Humble, serious, diligent endeavours to increase in divine knowledge, are very suitable to our present state of darkness and imperfection. The product of such inquiries we shall carry to heaven with us, with whatsoever is most akin thereto, (besides their usefulness in the way thither.) We shall carry truth, and the knowledge of God to heaven with us; we shall carry purity thither, devotedness of soul to God and our Redeemer, divine love and joy, if we have their beginnings here, with whatsoever else of real permanent excellency, that hath a settled, fixed seat and place

in our souls now : and shall there have them in perfection. But do we think we shall carry strife to heaven? Shall we carry anger to heaven? envying, heart-burnings, animosities, enmities, hatred of our brethren and fellow-christians, shall we carry these to heaven with us?

Let us labour to divest ourselves, and strike off from our spirits, every thing that shall not go with us to heaven, or is equally unsuitable to our end and way, that there may be nothing to obstruct and hinder our abundant entrance at length into the everlasting kingdom.

A

SERMON

CONCERNING

UNION AMONG PROTESTANTS;

BEING

A DISCOURSE

ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTION.

“WHAT MAY MOST HOPEFULLY BE ATTEMPTED TO ALLAY ANI-
MOSITIES AMONG PROTESTANTS, THAT OUR DIVISIONS
MAY NOT BE OUR RUIN?”

A

S E R M O N

CONCERNING

UNION AMONG PROTESTANTS,

Coloss. III. 2.

That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.

THIS question is propounded to me; “What may most hopefully be attempted to allay animosities among protestants, that our divisions may not be our ruin?” I must here, in the first place, tell you how I understand this question. First as to the *end*, the preventing of our ruin; I take the meaning chiefly to be, not the ruin of our estates, trade, houses, families; not *our* ruin, in these respects, who are christians, but our ruin as we are christians, that is, the ruin of our Christianity itself, or of the truly Christian interest among us. Secondly as for the *means* inquired after, I understand not the question to intend, what is to be done or attempted by laws, and

public constitutions, as if our business were to teach our absent rulers, or prescribe to them what they should do, to whom we have no present call, or opportunity, to apply ourselves. Nor again can it be thought our business, to discuss the several questions that are controverted among us, and shew, in each, what is the truth and right, wherewith every man's conscience ought to be satisfied, and in which we should all meet and unite: as if we had the vanity to think of performing, by an hour's discourse, what the voluminous writings of some ages have not performed. Much less are we to attempt the persuading of any to go against an already formed judgment in these points of difference, for the sake of union; and to seek the peace of the church, by breaking their peace with God, and their own consciences.

But I take the question only to intend, what serious christians may, and ought, to endeavour, in their private capacities, and agreeably with their own principles, towards the proposed end. And so I conceive the words read to you, contain the materials of a direct and full answer to the question. Which I reckon will appear,—by opening the case the apostle's words have reference to; that will be found a case like our own; and—by opening the words, whereby their suitableness to *that case* will be seen, and consequently to *our case* also.

First. The Case which these words have reference to (as indeed the general aspect of the epistle, and in great part of the other apostolical letters, looks much the same way) was in short this: That a numerous sect was already sprung up, that began (so early) to corrupt the simplicity and purity of the Christian religion, and very much to disturb the peace of the Christian church. A sort they were of partly judaizing, partly paganizing christians, the disciples, as they are reputed, of Simon Magus, who joined with the name christian the rites and ceremonies of the jews, with the impurities (even in worship) of the gentiles, denying the more principal doctrines, and hating the holy design of Christianity itself, while they seemed to have assumed, or to retain the name, as it were on purpose the more effectually to wound and injure the Christian cause and interest. Men of high pretence to knowledge (whence they had the title of gnostics) filched partly from the jewish cabbalism, partly from the pythagorean. By which pretence they insinuated the more plausibly with such as affected the knowledge of more hidden mysteries. Whereto the apostle seems to have reference: where he adds immediately after the text, that in Christ were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, ver. 3. And says, he did purposely add it, lest any man should beguile them with enticing words; intimating,

there was no need to follow those vain pretenders, out of an affectation of sublimer knowledge, and forsake Christ in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were hid.

Of the progress and genius of this sect, not only some of the fathers of the church give an account,* but even a noted philosopher† among the heathens, who writes professedly against them (though not a word against christians as such) both making it his business to refute their absurd doctrines (that the world was in its nature evil, and not made by God, but by some evil angel, &c.) and representing them as men of most immoral principles and practices; worse, both in respect of their notions and morals, than Epicurus himself. It appears this sort of men did, in the apostles' days, not only set themselves, with great art and industry, to pervert as many professors of Christianity as they could, but found means (as they might by their compliances with the jews, who were then much spread, and numerous seated in sundry principal cities under the Roman power, and who were every where the bitterest enemies to Christianity) to raise persecution against those whom they could not pervert, which some passages seem to intimate in the epistle to the Galatians (who, as that whole epistle shews, were much leavened by this sect, insomuch that the apostle is put to travel as in birth again, to have Christ formed in them, and to reduce them back to sincere Christianity.) namely, that some leaders of this sect, so set the people's minds even against the apostle himself, that he began to be reputed by them as an enemy, (chap. 4. 16.) and was persecuted under that notion, because he would not comply with them in the matter of circumcision (urged as an engagement to the whole law of Moses,) chap. 5. 11. If I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. And that they were as mischievous as they could be, to fellow-christians, on the same account, biting and devouring them that received not their corrupting additions to Christianity, as the circumstances of the text shew, ver. 15.

How like a case this is to ours, with our popish enemies, I need not tell you. And now in this case; when the faith of many was overthrown, so much hurt was already done, and the danger of greater was so manifest, partly by the most insinuating methods of seduction, partly by the terror of persecution, the great care was to secure the uncorrupted residue, and preserve unextinct the true Christian interest.

The urgency of this case puts the solicitous, concerned spi-

* Clemens Alexandr. Irenæus Epiphanius, &c.

† Plotinus, Ennead, 2. l. 9.

rit of this great apostle, into an inexpressible agony, as his words do intimate: I would you knew what conflict I have, and not for these Colossians only, but for them of Laodicea (which was not very remote from Colosse) and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh: for it was a common case, and upon him lay the care of all the churches. So that hence his musing, meditative mind, could not but be revolving many thoughts, and casting about for expedients, how the threatening danger might be obviated and averted. And these in the text, which he fastens upon, and wherein his thoughts centre, how apt and proper they were to that case (and consequently to ours which so little differs) will be seen,

Secondly. By our opening and viewing the import of the text itself: Wherein he

1. Proposes to himself *the end* which he apprehended was most desirable, and above all things to be coveted for them; That their hearts might be comforted. A word of much larger signification than in vulgar acceptance it is understood to be. Παρακαλεω signifies (with profane as well as the sacred writers) not only to administer consolation to a grieved mind, but to exhort, quicken, excite, and animate, to plead and strive with dull and stupid, wavering and unresolved minds. It was thought indeed comprehensive enough to express all the operations of the divine Spirit upon the souls of men, when not only the Christian church, but the world, yet to be christianized, was to be the subject of them, as we see John 16. 8. In respect whereof that Holy Spirit hath its name of office, *the paraclete*, from this word. And it being the passive that is here used, it signifies not only the endeavours themselves, which are used to the purpose here intended, but the effect of them wherein they all terminate, a lively, vigorous, confirmed state and habit of souls: and that not indefinite, but determined to one thing, the Christian faith and profession, which the apostle's drift and scope plainly shew. It is not to be thought, he so earnestly coveted and strove, that they might be jocund, cheerful, abounding with joy and courage, in any course, right or wrong: but that they might be encouraged, established, confirmed in their Christianity. And if the word he here uses were large enough to signify (as was noted above) all that was necessary to make men christians, it may as well, all that is necessary to continue them such.

In short, the end which the apostle aims at, *αρχησις* intended to these christians, was their establishment and confirmed state in their Christianity, as the effect of all apostolical or ministerial exhortations, persuasions, encouragements, or any whatsoever endeavours; made efficacious to that purpose by

the powerful influence, and operation, of the Holy Ghost. And that it was no lower thing than this, we have sufficient evidence, by comparing the close of the foregoing chapter with the beginning of this. Where we find, chap. 1. 28. the avowed design of his preaching, warning, and teaching in all wisdom, was that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. That whereas there were various arts and endeavours used, to adulterate the Christian religion, and pervert men from the simplicity of it, he might lose none, but to his very uttermost keep all in a possibility of being presented perfect in Christ Jesus at last, that is, that they might be all entire, complete and persevering christians to the end. And for this he adds, ver. 29. he did labour, striving according to his working, which wrought in him mightily. All his labour, and the strivings of his soul, acted by divine power, and by a Spirit greater than his own, did aim at this end. And now hereupon he intimates how fervid these his strivings were, chap. 2. 1. I would you did but know (what it is not for me to say) *κλικον αγωνα*, what an *agony* I endure! how great this my conflict is for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh! And for what? That their hearts might be comforted (as we read) meaning manifestly the same thing he had expressed before; that notwithstanding all endeavours of others to the contrary they might be complete and confirmed christians to the last.

2. We have next to consider in the text the means or what expedients the apostle conceives would be most effectually conducing to this blessed purpose. They are two,—Mutual love to one another;—and a clear, certain, efficacious faith of the gospel. The former is shortly and plainly expressed the other by a copious and most emphatical *periphrasis*, or circumlocution. He most earnestly covets to have them knit together by both *συμβιβασθεντων compacted*, as the word imports, in the one *εν αγπη*, and unto or into the other, as that particle signifies *εν παλι*, &c.

(1.) Mutual love to one another: as though he had said, The thing were done, or much were done towards it, if they were knit together in love, compacted; made all of a piece, if by love they did firmly cohere, and cleave to one another: for then it would be one and all: and it is scarce ever supposable they should all agree to quit their religion at once. But if that were to be supposed, he adds another thing that would put all out of doubt.

(2.) A clear, certain, efficacious faith of the gospel. For the several expressions that follow are but a description of such a faith. Where we are to note,—what he would have them apprehend:—and the apprehensive principle.

[1.] What he would have them apprehend : namely, the sum and substance of the Christian doctrine, which he calls a mystery, both because it was so in itself, and it is often spoken of under that name, by our Lord himself, Mat. 13. 11. and familiarly by this apostle, Rom. 16. 25. Ephes. 3. 3, 9. Col. 1. 26. and elsewhere : and because of the high pretence of the gnostics to the knowledge of mysteries, which sometimes he slights : especially being unaccompanied with love, as, with them, it most eminently was. Though I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have no charity, I am nothing, 1 Cor. 13. 2. Knowledge puffeth up, love edifies, chap. 8. 1. Sometimes, as here, he makes the sincere doctrine of the gospel to outvie theirs herein, intimating that such as made profession of it could have no temptation to go over to them for the knowledge of mysteries (unless a mystery of iniquity were more pleasing to them) whose very religion was that great mystery of godliness. 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.

Now this mystery he, first, more generally characterizes, by calling it the mystery of God, a divine mystery, not made one, by merely human fiction ; and then he very distinctly specifies it in the following words, and of the Father and of Christ. Where the former *and*, needs not be thought copulative, but exegetical and might be read *even*, or *to wit*, or it may be read, both, as it is usual with the Greeks as well as Latins when the copulative is to be repeated, so to read the former. As if it were said, By the mystery of God I mean, not of God alone, and abstractly considered ; as if it were enough to you to be mere deists : and that the whole superadded revelation concerning the Mediator, might be looked upon with indifferency or neglect (as by the gnostics it was known then to be, and afterwards by some of their great leaders, in the substance of it, with downright hatred and opposition) but that which I so earnestly covet for you and wherein I would have you unite, and be all one, is the acknowledgment of the whole mystery of God ; that is, both of Father and of Christ.

[2.] The apprehensive principle : which we may, by a general name, call faith, and accommodately enough to the name here given us of its object, a mystery which is elsewhere called the mystery of faith, (1 Tim. 3. 9.) or a mystery to be believed : faith being the known principle of receiving the gospel revelation. But he here expresses it by words that signify knowledge *γνωσις* and *επιστημις*, thereby intimating that the faith of christians is not to be a blind and unintelligent principle, but that though there were contained in the gospel, mysteries never

to be understood, if God had not afforded a special revelation of them on purpose; yet being revealed, we ought to have a clear and distinct, as well as lively and practical perception of them. By these two words, and the other expressions he joins in with the former, he seems to intimate two sorts of properties which belong to that faith of the gospel which he wishes to them. First, The rectitude, clearness and certainty of notion.

Secondly, The efficacy, impressiveness, and immediate aptitude to have influence upon practice, which he would have it carry with it. The latter properties supposing, and depending on the former, he there highly exaggerates the matter, and heaps together expressions that might with most lively emphasis set forth the kind of that knowledge which he conceives would be of so great use to them. He wishes them a *συνεσις* a clear, perspicacious knowledge, and an assurance, even to a *plerophory*, a *fulness of assurance*, in their knowledge of the truth of the gospel. Yea he wishes them the *riches*, *πλεστον*, yea and *all riches*, *παντα πλεστον της πληροφοριας*, of that full assurance, or *plerophory* of understanding, and knowledge of that truth; apprehending that this would certainly fix them in their faith and profession, so as they would never recede from it. As when in Christ's own days many went back and walked no more with him, John. 6. 66. That which retained others so that when Christ asks, "Will ye also go away?" (ver. 67.) they presently answer, "Lord to whom shall we go?" could entertain no such thought, was, that, besides what they believed of him was of greatest importance to them. Thou hast the words of eternal life, ver. 68. So their belief was with that assurance as to exclude all suspicion or doubt in the case, and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God, ver. 69. And therefore neither canst want power to confer eternal life, as all thy words do import thy design and promise to do, nor truth to make good thy own plain words. And then he also knew that such a *συνεσις* or *knowledge* would produce, what he further wishes them an *επιγνωσις*, an *acknowledgment*, an inward, vital owning, a cordial embrace, a lively perception of the same blessed truths, which must needs further most abundantly contribute, to this their so much desired joint and unanimous stability.

And now these are the two expedients by which he reckons they would be so closely compacted together as that no subtilty or violence could endanger them; mutual love and a clear, certain, operative faith of the gospel; if, by the one they did cohere with each other; and by the other, adhere to God in Christ; if the one might have with them the place, power and

bindingness of a cement, the other of a continual inclination, yieldingness, and compliance to the magnetism of the centre, they would never so fall asunder; as to give any enemies opportunity to be the successful authors, or the gratified spectators of their ruin. Thus therefore I would sum up, the sense of this scripture, and the answer to the question proposed.—“That the maintaining of sincere love among christians, and the improving of their faith to greater measures of clearness, certainty, and efficacy in reference to the substantials of Christianity, are to be endeavoured as the best means to unite, establish and preserve them, against such as design the ruin of the truly Christian interest.”—The case was at that time urging and important. A great and numerous party was formed, of such as did nauseate the simplicity of the Christian religion, and hate the true design of it. All the care was what course was most proper and suitable to preserve the rest. And you see what was then thought most proper. Counsel was not taken to this effect (and therefore christians in a private capacity should not covet to have it so) “Let us bind them by certain devised preter-evangelical canons to things never thought fit to be enjoined by Christ himself, severely urge the strict and uniform observance of them, make the terms of Christian communion straiter than he ever made them, add new rituals of our own to his institutions, and cut off from us all that (never so conscientiously) scruple them.” No, this was the practice of their common enemies, and it was to narrow and weaken the too much already diminished Christian interest. The order mentioned ver. 5. might be comely enough, without things, that were both unnecessary and offensive.

Nor was it consulted and resolved to agitate the controversy about this power and practice, in perpetual, endless disputations, and stigmatize them that should not be enlightened and satisfied in these matters, as schismatical and wilful; though they never so sincerely adhered to the doctrine, and observed the laws of Christ, that is, it was neither thought fit to urge the unsatisfied upon doubtful things, against their consciences; nor to take order that continual endeavours should be used from age to age to satisfy them, or that the church should be always vexed with vain controversies about needless things; that, if they were never so lawful, might as well be let alone, without detriment to the Christian cause, and perhaps to its greater advantage. Yea the attempt of imposing any thing upon the disciples but what was necessary, is judged a tempting of God, (Acts 15. 10.) a bringing the matter to a trial of skill with him, whether he could keep the church quiet, when they took so direct a course to distemper and trouble it. But it was thought

necessary, and sufficient, that all did unite, and were knit together in the mutual love of one another, and in a joint adherence to the great mysteries of faith and salvation.

In the same case, when there were so many antichrists abroad, and (it is likely) Ebron with his partakers made it their business to pervert the Christian doctrine, the same course is taken by the blessed apostle St. John, only to endeavour the strengthening of these two vital principles, faith in Christ and love to fellow-christians, as may be seen at large in his epistles. These he presses, as the great commandments, upon the observation whereof he seems to account, the safety and peace of the sincere did entirely depend. This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment, 1 Epistle, 3. 23. He puts upon Christians no other distinguishing test, but Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: and Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him: (chap. 5. 1.) is only solicitous that they did practise the commandment they had from the beginning, that is that they loved one another, (2 Epist. 5.) and that they did abide in the doctrine of Christ, ver. 9.

The prudence and piety of those unerring guides of the church, (themselves under the certain guidance of the Spirit of truth) directed them to bring the things wherein they would have christians unite, within as narrow a compass as was possible, neither multiplying articles of faith, nor rites of worship. These two principles (as they were thought to answer the apostles) would fully answer our design and present inquiry. And we may adventure to say of them that they are both sufficient, and necessary, the apt and the only means to heal and save us; such as would effect our cure, and without which nothing will.

Nor shall I give other answer to the proposed question, than what may be deduced from these two, considered according to what they are in themselves, and what they naturally lead and tend unto. I shall consider them in the order wherein the apostle here mentions them, who you see reserves the more important of them to the latter place.

First. The sincere love of christians to one another, would be a happy means of preserving the truly Christian interest among us. That this may be understood, we must rightly apprehend what kind of love it is that is here meant. It is specified by what we find in conjunction with it, the understanding, and acknowledgment of the mystery of Christianity. Therefore it must be the love of christians to one another as such.

Whence we collect, lest we too much extend the object of it on the one hand, or contract it on the other,

1. That it is not the love only which we owe to one another as men, or human creatures merely, that is intended here. That were too much to enlarge it, as to our present consideration of it. For under that common notion, we should be as much obliged to love the enemies we are to unite against, as the friends of religion we are to unite with, since all partake equally in human nature. It must be a more special love that shall have the desired influence in the present case. We cannot be peculiarly endeared and united to some more than to others, upon a reason that is common to them with others. We are to love them that are born of God, and are his children, otherwise than the children of men, or such of whom it may be said they are of their father the devil; them that appear to have been partakers of a divine nature at another rate, than them who have received a mere human, or also the diabolical nature, 1 John. 5. 1. Yet this peculiar love is not to be exclusive of the other which is common, but must suppose it, and be superadded to it, as the reason of it is superadded. For Christianity supposes humanity; and divine grace, human nature.

2. Nor is it a love to christians of this or that party or denomination only. That were as much unduly to straiten and confine it. The love that is owing to christians as such, as it belongs to them only, so it belongs to all them who, in profession and practice, do own sincere and incorrupt Christianity. To limit our Christian love to a party of christians, truly so called, is so far from serving the purpose now to be aimed at, that it resists and defeats it; and instead of a preservative union, infers most destructive divisions. It scatters what it should collect and gather. It is to love factiously; and with an unjust love, that refuses to give indifferently to every one his due: (for is there no love due to a disciple of Christ in the name of a disciple?) it is founded in falsehood, and a lie, denies them to be of the Christian community who really are so. It presumes to remove the ancient land-marks, not civil but sacred, and draws on, not the people's curse only, but that of God himself. It is true (and who doubts it?) that I may and ought upon special reasons to love some more than others; as relation, acquaintance, obligation by favours received from them, more eminent degrees of true worth, and real goodness; but that signifies nothing to the withholding of that love which is due to a christian as such, as that also ought not to prejudice the love I owe to a man, as he is a man.

Nor am I so promiscuously to distribute this holy love, as to place it at random, upon every one that thinks it convenient for him to call himself a christian, though I ought to love the

very profession, while I know not who sincerely makes it, and do plainly see that jews and pagans were never worse enemies to Christ and his religion, than a great part of the Christian world. But let my apprehensions be once set right concerning the true essentials of Christianity, (whether consisting in doctrinal or vital principles,) then will my love be duly carried to all in whom they are found under one common notion, which I come actually to apply to this or that person, as particular occasions do occur. And so shall always be in a preparation of mind, actually to unite in Christian love with every such person, whensoever such occasions do invite me to it. And do we now need to be told what such an impartial truly Christian love, would do to our common preservation, and to prevent the ruin of the Christian interest?

(1.) How greatly would it contribute to the vigour of the Christian life? For so we should all equally "hold the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment, ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God:" as afterwards in this chapter, ver. 19. Thus (as it is in that other parallel text of Scripture) speaking the truth in love, we shall grow up into him in all things, which is the head even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love, Eph. 4. 15, 16. Obstructions that hinder the free circulation of blood and spirits, do not more certainly infer languishings in the natural body, than the want of such a diffusive love, shuts up, and shrivels the destitute parts, and hinders the diffusion of a nutritive vital influence, in the body of Christ.

(2.) It would inspire christians generally with a sacred courage and fortitude, when they should know, and even feel themselves knit together in love. How doth the revolt of any considerable part of an army, discourage the rest! or if they be not entire, and of a piece! Mutual love animates them, as nothing more, when they are prepared to live and die together, and love hath before joined, whom now, their common danger also joins. They otherwise signify but as so many single persons, each one but caring and contriving how to shift for himself. Love makes them significant to one another. So as that every one understands himself to be the common care of all the rest. It makes christians the more resolute in their adherence to truth and goodness, when (from their not-doubted love) they are sure of the help, the counsels and prayers of the Christian community, and apprehend, by their declining, they shall grieve those whom they love, and who they know love

them. If any imagine themselves intended to be given up, as sacrifices, to the rage of the common enemy, their hearts are the apter to sink, they are most exposed to temptations to prevaricate, and the rest will be apt to expect the like usage from them, if themselves be reduced to the like exigency, and be liable to the same temptations.

(3.) It would certainly in our present case, extinguish or abate the so contrary unhallowed fire of our anger and wrath towards one another, as the celestial beams do the baser culinary fire, which burns more fervently when the sun hath less power. Then would debates, if there must be any, be managed without intemperate heat. We should be remote from being angry that we cannot convey our own sentiments into another's mind; which, when we are, our business is the more remote; we make ourselves less capable of reasoning aptly to convince, and (because anger begets anger, as love doth love) render the other less susceptible of conviction. Why are we yet to learn that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God? What is gained by it? So little doth angry contention about small matters avail, that even they that happen to have the better cause lose by it, and their advantage cannot recompence the damage and hurt that ensues to the church and to themselves. Our famous Davenant (Sent. ad Dur.) speaking of the noted controversy between Stephen bishop of Rome, who, he says, as much as in him lay, did with a schismatical spirit tear the church, and Cyprian who with great lenity and Christian charity professes that he would not break the Lord's peace for diversity of opinion, nor remove any from the right of communion, concludes that erring Cyprian deserved better of the church of Christ than orthodox Stephen. He thought him the schismatic, whom he thought in the right, and that his orthodoxy (as it was accompanied) was more mischievous to the church, than the other's error. Nor can a man do that hurt to others, without suffering it more principally. The distemper of his own spirit, what can recompence! and how apt is it to grow in him; and, while it grows in himself, to propagate itself among others! Whereupon, if the want of love hinders the nourishment of the body, much more do the things, which, when it is wanting, are wont to fill up its place. For as naturally as love begets love, so do wrath, envy, malice, calumny, beget one another, and spread a poison and virulency through the body, which necessarily wastes and tends to destroy it. How soon did the Christian church cease to be itself! and the early vigour of primitive Christianity degeuerate into insipid, spiritless formality, when once it became contentious! It broke into

parties, sects multiplied, animosities grew high, and the grieved Spirit of love retired from it! which is grieved by nothing more than by bitterness, wrath, anger, &c. as the connexion of these two verses intimates, Eph. 4. 30, 31. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And to the same purpose is that, 1 Pet. 2. 1, 2. Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. By this means religion, once dispirited, loses its majesty and awfulness, and even tempts and invites the assaults and insultation of enemies.

(1.) It would oblige us to all acts of mutual kindness and friendship. If such a love did govern in us, we should be always ready to serve one another in love, to bear each other's burdens, to afford our mutual counsel and help to one another, even in our private affairs if called thereto: especially in that which is our common concern, the preserving and promoting the interest of religion; and to our uttermost strengthen each other's hands herein. It would engage us to a free, amicable conversation with one another, upon this account; would not let us do so absurd a thing as to confine our friendship to those of our own party, which we might as reasonably, to men of our own stature, or to those whose voice and air, and look, and mien, were likest our own. It would make us not be ashamed to be seen in each other's company, or be shy of owning one another. We should not be to one another as Jews and Samaritans that had no dealing with one another, or as the poet notes they were to other nations; *Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti, not so much as to shew the way to one not of their religion.* There would be no partition-wall through which love would not easily open a way of friendly commerce, by which we should insensibly slide, more and more, into one another's hearts. Whence also,

(5.) Prejudices would cease, and jealousies concerning each other. A mutual confidence would be begotten. We should no more suspect one another of ill designs upon each other, than lest our right hand should wait an opportunity of cutting off the left. We should believe one another in our mutual professions, of whatsoever sort, both of kindness to one another, and that we really doubt and scruple the things which we say we do.

(6.) This would hence make us earnestly covet an entire union in all the things wherein we differ, and contribute greatly

to it. We are too prone many times to dislike things, for the disliked persons' sake who practise them. And a prevailing disaffection makes us unapt to understand one another; precludes our entrance into one another's mind and sense: which, if love did once open, and inclined us more to consider the matters of difference themselves, than to imagine some reserved meaning and design of the persons that differ from us: it is likely we might find ourselves much nearer to one another, than we did apprehend we were; and that it were a much easier step for the one side to go quite over to the other. But if that cannot be,

(7.) It would make us much more apt to yield to one another, and abate all that ever we can, in order to as full an accommodation as is any way possible, that if we cannot agree upon either extreme, we might at least meet in the middle. It would cause an emulation who should be larger in their grants to this purpose: as it was professed by Luther when so much was done at Marpurg towards an agreement between him and the Helvetians, that he would not allow that praise to the other party that they should be more desirous of peace and concord than he. Of which amicable conference, and of that afterwards at Wittenburg, and several other negotiations to that purpose, account is given by divers: and insisted on by some of our own great divines as precedential to the concord they endeavoured between the Saxon and the Helvetian churches of later time, as bishop Moreton, bishop Hall, bishop Davenant, in their several sentences or judgments written to Mr. Dury upon that subject.

And indeed when I have read the pacific writings of those eminent worthies, for the composing of those differences abroad, I could not but wonder that the same peaceable spirit did not endeavour with more effect the composing of our own much lesser differences at home. But the things of our peace were (as they still are) hid from our eyes, with the more visibly just severity, by how much they have been nearer us, and more obvious to the easy view of any but an averse eye. It is not for us to prescribe (as was said) to persons that are now in so eminent stations as these were at that time. But may we not hope to find with such (and where should we rather expect to find it?) that compassion and mercifulness in imitation of the blessed Jesus, their Lord and ours, as to consider and study the necessities of souls in these respects, and at least, wil-

* Hospinian. Histor. Sacramentar. Thuanus, &c. Though by Scultetus's account, that pretence was too little answered.

ingly to connive at, and very heartily approve some indulgences and abatements in the administrations of the inferior clergy, as they may not think fit themselves positively to order and enjoin? Otherwise I believe it could not but give some trouble to a conscientious conforming minister, if a sober pious person, sound in the faith, and of a regular life, should tell him he is willing to use his ministry, in some of the ordinances of Christ, if only he would abate or dispense with some annexed ceremony which in conscience he dare not use or admit of. I believe it would trouble such a minister to deal with a person of this character as a pagan because of his scruple, and put him upon considering whether he ought not rather to dispense with man's rule, than with God's. I know what the same bishop Davenant hath expressly said, that "He that believes the things contained in the apostle's creed, and endeavours to live a life agreeable to the precepts of Christ, ought not to be expunged from the roll of christians, nor be driven from communion with the other members of any church whatsoever." (Ibid) However, truly Christian love would do herein, all that it can, supplying the rest by grief that it can do no more.

(8.) It would certainly make us abstain from mutual censures of one another as insincere for our remaining differences. Charity that thinks no evil, would make us not need the reproof, Rom. 14. 4. Who art thou that judgest another's servant? The common aptness hereunto among us shews how little that divine principle rules in our hearts, that in defiance of our rule and the authority of the great God and our blessed Redeemer, to whom all judgment is committed, and who hath so expressly forbidden us, to judge lest we be judged, (Mat. 7. 1.) we give ourselves so vast a liberty! and set no other bounds to our usurped licence of judging, than nature hath set to our power of thinking, that is, think all the mischievous thoughts of them that differ from us that we know how to devise or invent, as if we would say "Our thoughts (and then by an easy advance, our tongues) are our own, who is Lord over us?" I animadvert not on this as the fault of one party, but wheresoever it lies, as God knows how diffused a poison this is, among them that are satisfied with the public constitutions towards them that dissent from them, and with these back again towards them, and with the several parties of both these towards one another. This uniting, knitting love would make us refrain, not merely from the restraint of God's laws in this case, but from a benign disposition, as that which the temper of our spirits would abhor from. So that such as are well content with the public forms and rites of worship, would have no inclination to judge them that apprehend not things with their understandings,

nor relish with their taste, as persons that therefore have cut themselves off from Christ, and the body of Christ. They might learn from the Cassandrian moderation, and from the avowed sentiments of that man* (whose temper is better to be liked than his terms of union) who speaking of such as being formerly rejected (meaning the protestants) for finding fault with abuses in the church, had by the urgency of their conscience altered somewhat in the way of their teaching, and the form of their service, and are therefore said to have fallen off from the church, and are numbered among heretics and schismatics. It is, saith he, to be inquired how rightly and justly this is determined of them. For there is to be considered, as to the church, the head and the body. From the head there is no departure but by doctrine disagreeable to Christ the head; from the body there is no departure by diversity of rites and opinions, but only by the defect of charity. So that this learned romanist neither thinks them heretics that hold the head, nor schismatics, for such differences as ours are, from the rest of the body, if love and charity towards them remain. And again, where this love remains, and bears rule, it can as little be, that they who are unsatisfied with the way of worship that more generally obtains, should censure them that are satisfied as insincere, merely because of this difference. It cannot permit that we should think all the black thoughts we can invent of them, as if because they have not our consciences they had none, or because they see not with our eyes, they were therefore both utterly, and wilfully blind. To be here more particular, the most, you know, are for the public way of worship; and of these, some are for it as tolerable only, others as the best way, and think all other ways of worshipping God in assemblies (being forbidden as they think by a just law) sinful. Others, dissenting, are of several sorts. Some think the conformity required of ministers sinful, because of previous terms required of them which they judge to be so, but not that which is required of the people. Of which sort, some that think it not simply unlawful, find it however less edifying to them, and though they can therefore partake in it at some times, think themselves more ordinarily bound to attend such other means as they find more conducing to their spiritual profit and advantage, judging they have an undoubted right from Christ, anciently allowed from age to age in the best times of the Christian church, and never justly taken from them, of choosing the pastors to whose ordinary care and conduct, they shall

* Cassander de officio pii ac publicæ Tranquillitatis vere amantis viri. Cassander on the offices of a pious man and one who truly loves the public peace.

commit their souls. Others judge the public way simply unlawful, and therefore judge themselves bound to decline it wholly; and are the more averse to any participation in it, as apprehending it to have no suitableness or aptitude to profit their souls: wherein they are the more confirmed that they believe not God will ever bless the means which he hath not appointed. Now how apt all these are unto very severe censures of one another, he knows not the age, who is ignorant. One sort censuring the other as humoursome, factious, schismatical; the others them back again, as formal, popishly affected, destitute of any savour of spiritual things, having nothing of God in them, or of the life and power of godliness.

Now is this suitable to the love that should rule among christians? or to the reverence we ought to have for that authority that forbids such judging? It ought to be considered both that all have not the same understanding, nor the same gust and relish of things.

[1.] Not the same understanding. And therefore where conscience hath the same rule, it cannot have, with every one the same actual latitude, that rule, being so very diversely understood, which different estimate of consciences, the apostle hath express reference to, in that large and most healing discourse of his, Rom. 14. One (saith he, ver. 2.) believeth that he may eat all things, another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Nor doth he, in reference to such doubted things; determine what all should do, or not do, by particular rules, concerning every such case, that was then depending, which it seems he reckoned was not necessary, or that might afterwards fall out, which was little to be expected. But he lays down one general rule; against judging one another, which he presses with that authority, and such awful reasons as might make a Christian heart tremble to be guilty of it.

And in reference to the mentioned differences among ourselves (as well as others no nearer to the substantials and vitals of our religion) there is somewhat else to be done than to conclude against a man's sincerity because of such differing sentiments and practices, and which certainly would be done, if truly Christian love, or even justice itself, did take place as they ought; that is, it would be considered what these several differing parties have to say for themselves, what reasons they may alledge, and whether though they be not sufficient to justify their several opinions and practices (as all cannot be in the right) they be not such as by which a conscientious man, a sincere fearer of God, may be swayed, so as to take the way which he is found in by the ducture of an upright (though misguided) conscience, and not as being under the government of

depraved vicious inclination. As those that can, and do, yield the conformity that is required of ministers, though perhaps they wish some things altered, why may it not be supposed they sincerely think (though it should be mistakingly) that the things more liable to exception are capable of a sense wherein they are not unlawful: and not being so, they think themselves bound to take the opportunity which they this way obtain of doing good to the souls of men? others also apprehending it lawful, how possible is it to them from a certain reverence they have for antiquity, and for our own first reformers, to think it best and fittest to be continued! Nor is it unsupposable that many of the laity may upon the same grounds have the same apprehensions.

Again, divers in the ministry judging the terms unlawful upon which only they can have liberty for the public exercise of it; is it not possible they may, with a sincere conscience, think themselves not therefore obliged wholly to renounce their calling and office, to which they were duly set apart, and had by their own solemn vow given up themselves; but to do so much of the work of it as they can have opportunity for? And whereas the people, some may think the public forms and ways of worship not simply unlawful, but find them less edifying to them than other means which the providence of God affords them: and therefore do more ordinarily attend those, though sometimes also the other. Why should it be thought on the one hand, or the other, that it is so little possible they should be guided by reasonable and conscientious considerations herein, that nothing but corrupt inclination must be understood to govern them? Is it not supposable, that accounting the public worship substantially agreeable to divine institution, though in some accidentals too disagreeable, they may think there is more to incline them at some times to attend it, than totally to disown it? For what worship is there on earth that is in all things incorrupt? And they may apprehend it fit to testify their union with the sincere christians, that may be statedly under that form, and especially in a time when the contest is so high in the world, between them that profess the substance of reformed Christianity, and them that have so much deformed it; and may conceive it becoming them, at some times, to express their own unconfinedness to a party, and to use that liberty which, they think, should not be judged by another man's conscience, which yet they would have regard to, where there are not greater reasons to preponderate. They are indeed under a disadvantage (with them that are apt to use a greater liberty in their censures, than they do in their practice in these matters) when it falls out that their partial compliance is the means of their security from penalties;

and their disadvantage is greater, whose judgment to this purpose hath not been formerly declared and made known. But they for shame ought to be silent whose total compliance gains them not only immunity, but great emoluments. And that perhaps yielded, not according to a former, but (at that time when the opportunity occurred) a new and altered judgment. They may however know themselves to be moved by greater ends than secular interest: and so may these we now speak of, and yet may think the preservation of their earthly portion, wherewith they are to glorify God in this world, not too little an end to be designed and endeavoured by lawful means. It were a very uncouth and sinful thing to do a spiritual action for a carnal end, but if the thing sincerely and supremely designed, be the glory of God, that is the most spiritual end: if it be not, that ought to be changed which is wrong, not that which is right: the unlawful end, not the lawful action, if it be lawful. If it be not, their good end will not justify their action, but it will their sincerity; which is all that this discourse intends.

And then for such as decline the public worship totally, as judging it simply unlawful; is it not possible they may be led to that practice by somewhat else than humour and factious inclination? Have they not that to say, which may at least seem solid and strong to a conscientious man? How jealous God did heretofore show himself in all the affairs of his worship! How particular in the appointment even of the smallest things he would have appertain to it! How unsuitable multiplied ceremonies are to the mature state of the church! and how sensibly burdensome they were to the disciples of the first age as a yoke not to be borne; and that therefore God himself, when the season of maturity, and the fulness of time came, thought fit to abrogate those of his own former appointment, with no (probable) design to allow men the liberty of substituting others in their room. Why is it not to be thought that the fear of the great God withholds them from doing what they judge would offend him? And that, if they err, it is for fear of erring? Why can nothing be thought on wheret to impute their practice, but peevish humour? Especially if that be considered (which is common to these two last mentioned sorts of men) that they sensibly find other means more edifying to them, or expect them only to be so, if the other be thought unlawful. If they be thought merely lawful, and such as may therefore be used upon weighty reasons at some times, but are found less edifying, who can doubt but I ought to use for my soul (at least in an ordinary course) the aptest means that I can ordinarily have for the promoting its edification and salvation? Do we not reckon ourselves to owe so

much even to our bodies? And what is another man's opinion to signify against my sense and constant experience? Is there not such a thing as a mental *idiosyncrasy* (or peculiarity of temper) as well as a bodily? and whereto what is most agreeable, any man that is not destitute of ordinary understanding is the fittest judge himself: as every one, that is not a mere fool is so much a physician as to know what diet suits him best.

And if it be said against the former of these two sorts, Are they not at all times obliged to use the means which are most edifying? They may say, At all times when they have nothing to outweigh their own present edification. But it is not impossible that a conscientious judgment may esteem all the fore-mentioned considerations concurring, to be of more weight than the greater advantage hoped to be gained in that one hour. Nor need any man be ashamed professedly to avow that which may seem the least of them, the saving of himself from temporal ruin. For he is to be accountable to God for what portion he hath intrusted him with of the good things of this life, and is not to throw it away without sufficient cause. Who sees not that more is allowed and ordinarily done without scruple or censure upon the like account? As to omit the hearing of a sermon, if at that time one's house be on fire, yea or if it be to save my neighbour's, or the plucking of an ox or sheep out of a ditch on the Lord's-day, when I might have been employed at that time in the solemn worship of God to my spiritual advantage. A mere commutation unto less advantage upon an equally or more urgent necessity is less than omission. And they that shall have learned, as our Saviour directs, "What that means, I will have mercy and not sacrifice," will not condemn the guiltless.

Only such are concerned first to search well and be satisfied concerning the lawfulness of their action in itself, that they do it not with a self-condemning conscience, nor with a groundlessly self-justifying one. And then especially to see to it that their end be right: God's interest, not their own, otherwise than in a due, entire subordination to his. We can never act innocently or comfortably in any thing, till he be in every thing more absolutely our all in all; and have much more reason to be scrupulous, and (if others knew our hearts) were much more liable to censure, that, in our common affairs, he is so much forgotten, that we live not more entirely to him; which we little animadvert upon, and are very officious to cast motes out of our brother's eye, when this beam is in our own.

The design of mentioning these hints of reasons for so different judgments and practices, is not to shew which are strongest, and ought to prevail, which cannot be the business of so

short a discourse as this, and so much of another nature; but, to shew that while there is any thing colourable to be alledged for this or that way, true Christian love, compassion of common human frailty, and a duly humble sense of a man's own, would oblige him to think that conscience towards God may have a greater hand (though with some misguided itself) in guiding men the different ways they take, than is commonly thought. And to consider though such and such reasons seem not weighty to me, they may to some others, who are as much afraid of sinning against God as I; and perhaps their understandings as good in other matters as mine. It would be considered how really difficult the controversy is about the ceremonies, and some other parts of conformity. Perhaps few metaphysical questions are disputed with more subtilty than that controversy is managed with, by Arch-bishop Whitgift, bishop Morton, doctor Burgesse, doctor Ames, Cartwright, Calverwood, and others. And how very easily possible and pardonable is it to unlearned persons, or of weaker intellectuals, being obliged in order to their practice to give a judgment in reference to these things one way or other, to judge amiss! Why should we expect every sincerely pious man to be able to hit the very point of truth, and right, in matters that belong, as bishop Davenant once said in another case *non ad fidem fundamentalem, sed ad peritiam Theologicam, & fortasse ne ad hanc quidem, sed aliquando ad curiositatem Theologorum, not to the foundation of our faith, but to the skill of divines, and perhaps not to this neither, but sometimes only to their curiosity.* What were to be done in reference to so nicely disputable things made part of the terms of Christian communion, is more the matter of our wish than hope, till by a gracious influence God better men's minds, or by a more deeply felt necessity bring us to understand what is to be done. Our case is ill when only *vevatio dat intellectum*, when *nothing but sorrow and suffering will make us wise*, which is very likely from the righteous hand of God to be our common lot.

In the mean time it is hard to think that he cannot be a sincerely pious man whose understanding is not capable of so difficult things, as to make a certainly right judgment about them. *In absoluto & facili stat eternitas, to make things perfect and distinct is the property of eternity.* And why should not the communion of persons going into a blessed eternity have the same measure?

And besides the different size, and capacity of men's understandings, and consequently of their conscientious determinations.

[2.] There are also as differing relishes of these things, which Christian love would oblige a man to consider with equanimi-

ty, so as thereupon to refrain hard censures. All good men have not the same relish of the various forms and modes of dispensing the truths and ordinances of Christ. Some of our suffering brethren in Q. Mary's days are said to have found great spiritual refreshing by the common prayer. And, in our own days, some may profess to have their hearts warmed, their affections raised and elevated by it. They are no rule to us; but it would less become us, hereupon to suspect their sincerity, than our own. Others again cannot relish such modes of worship, when in the ministry of such as use them not, they find a very sensible delight and savour.

And this, by the way, shews the great difference between such things as have their evidence and goodness from God himself, and those that borrow their recommendableness only from human device. All good men, in all the times and ages of the Christian church, have a constant value and love for the great substantials of religion, which have in them that inward evidence and excellency, as command and captivate a rectified mind and heart, whereas the mere external forms of it, the outward dress and garb, are variously esteemed and despised, liked and disliked by the same sort of men, that is, by very sincere lovers of God, not only in divers times and ages, but even in the same time. How different hath the esteem been of the liturgic forms with them who bear the same mind, full of reverence and love towards religion itself! as that habit is thought decent at one time, which in another is despicably ridiculous; whereas a person in himself comely and graceful, is always accounted so, by all, and at all times.

Now this various gust and relish cannot but have influence, more remotely, upon the conscientious determination of our choice, concerning our usual way of worshipping God. For how should I edify by what is disgustful to me? Though it be true that our spiritual edification lies more in the informing of our judgments, and confirming our resolutions, than in the gusts and relishes of affection, yet who sees not that these are of great use even to the other? and that it is necessary that at least there be not a disgust or antipathy? What is constantly less grateful, will certainly be less nutritive. That is usually necessary to nourishment; though, alone, it be not sufficient, as it is in the matter of bodily repasts. Who can without great prejudice be bound to eat always of a food that he disrelishes though he may without much inconvenience, for a valuable reason, do it at some time.

And they that think all this alleged difference is but fancy, shew they understand little of human nature, and less of religion: though they may have that in themselves too which they

do not so distinctly reflect upon, even that peculiar gust and relish, which they make so little account of. For, have they not as great a disgust of the others, way, as they have of theirs? Would they not as much regret to be tied to theirs? Have they not as great a liking of their own? And doth not common experience shew that there are as different mental relishes as bodily? How comes one man in the matters of literature to savour metaphysics? another mathematics, another history, and the like? and no man's genius can be forced in these things. Why may there not be the like difference in the matters of religion? And I would fain know what that religion is worth that is without a gust and savour, that is insipid and unpleasant, much more that would, being used in a constant course, this or that way, be nauseous and offensive?

If indeed men nauseate that which is necessary for them, the gospel, for instance, or religion itself, that is certainly such a distemper, as if the grace of God overcome it not, will be mortal to them, and we are not to think of relieving them, by withdrawing the offending object, which itself must be the means of their cure. But is there any parity between the substance of religion, which is of God's appointing, and the superadded modes of it, that are of our own?

Upon the whole, nothing is more agreeable, either to this divine principle of love, nothing (within our compass) more conducive to our end, the ceasing of our differences (which are most likely to die and vanish by neglect) or their ceasing to be inconvenient to us, than to bear calm and placid minds towards one another under them, to banish all hard thoughts because of them. If I can contribute no way else to union, from this holy dictate and law of the spirit of love, I can at least abstain from censuring my fellow christians. It is the easiest thing in the world one would think not to do, especially not to do a thing of itself ungrateful to a well tempered mind; and a great privilege not to be obliged to judge another man's conscience and practice, when it is so easy to misjudge and do wrong. Most of all when the matter wherein I presume to sit in judgment upon another is of so high a nature, as the posture of his heart God-ward: a matter peculiarly belonging to another tribunal, of divine cognizance, and which we all confess to be only known to God himself. And if I would take upon me to conclude a man insincere, and a hypocrite, only because he is not of my mind in these smaller things that are controverted among us, how would I form my argument? No one can, with sincerity, differ from that man whose understanding is so good and clear, as to apprehend all things with absolute certainty, just as they are: and then go

on to assume (and a strange assuming it must be) But my understanding is so good and clear as, &c. It is hard to say whether the uncharitableness of the one assertion, or the arrogance of the other is greater; and whether both be more immoral, or absurd. But the impiety is worst of all, for how insolently doth such a man take upon him to make a new gospel! and other terms of salvation than God hath made! when his sentiments and determinations of things which God hath never made necessary, must be the measure and rule of life and death to men! How is the throne and judicial power of the Redeemer usurped which he hath founded in his blood. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Rom. 14. 4. Yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand, (ver. 9.) For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. ver. 10. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, ver. 11. For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. One would think they that lay no restraint upon themselves in this matter of judging their brethren, upon every light occasion, reckon this chapter came by chance into the Bible. And that our Lord spake himself, at random, words that had no meaning, when he said, Mat. 7. 1. Judge not that you be not judged, &c. What man that fears God would not dread to be the framer of a new gospel, and of new terms of salvation? It is a great solace indeed to a sincere mind, but implies a severe rebuke, in the mean time, to such a self-assuming censorious spirit, that it may, in such a case, be so truly said, it is a much easier thing to please God than man.

They that find this measure will have the better of it, if they can abstain from retaliating, when as the reason of it is the same on both sides. For they may say, You are to remember I differ no more from you in this matter, than you do from me, and if I judge not you about it, what greater reason have you to judge me? And they have little reason to value such a man's judgment concerning their duty in a doubtful matter, who cannot see his own in so plain a case. The matter for which they judge me may be very doubtful, but nothing can be plainer than that they ought not so to judge.

(9.) A due Christian love would oblige us, after competent endeavours of mutual satisfaction about the matters wherein we differ, to forbear further urging of one another concerning them. Which urging may be two ways: either by application to our affections, or to our reason and judgment.

Some perhaps find it more suitable to their own temper and measure of understanding and conscience, to go the former way; and only vehemently persuade to do the thing, wherein the other shall comply with them, and in some sort justify the course which they have taken, without regard to the other's conscience, press them right or wrong to fall in with them. Sometimes labouring to work upon their kindness, by flattery, sometimes upon their fear, by threats and menaces. Sincere love would certainly abhor to do thus. Would it let me violate another's conscience any way? The love I bear to a fellow-christian, if it be true, having for its measure that wherewith I love myself, would no more let me do it than hurt the apple of mine own eye. An inspirited waking conscience is as tender a thing, and capable of a worse sort of hurt. If some have more latitude than I, and think what they may do, in present circumstances so far as they may, they must, would it not be the dictate of love patiently to admit it, especially when it comes to suffering. For let me put my own soul in his soul's stead, and would I be willing to suffer upon another man's conscience, and not upon my own? and forfeit the consolations which in a suffering condition belong to them who for conscience towards God endure grief, would I, if I loved them, be content they had the grief, and did want the consolation? There will be still found in a state of suffering, somewhat that will prove a common cause to good men wherein they will most entirely agree, whatsoever smaller things they may differ in. As the pious bishops Ridley and Hooper well agreed upon a martyrdom at the stake, in the same important cause, who before, had differed (somewhat angrily) about some ceremonies. Concerning which difference how pathetical is the letter * of the former of these to the other, when both were prisoners (the one at Oxford the other at London) on the same account. But now, my dear brother (saith he) forasmuch as we thoroughly agree and wholly consent together in those things which are the grounds, and substantial points of our religion; against the which the world so furiously rageth in these our days, howsoever, in time past, by certain by-matters and circumstances of religion, your wisdom, and my simplicity (I grant) have a little jarred; each of us following the abundance of his own sense and judgment. Now, I say, be you assured, that even with my whole heart, God is my witness, in the bowels of Christ, I love you in the truth, and for the truth's sake, which abideth in us, and as I am persuaded shall, by the grace of God, abide in us for evermore.

* Fox Martyr.

Again, if others have less latitude ; it would be far from us to add to the affliction they are liable to, upon that very account, by a vexatious urging and importuning them. Especially to do it with insulting threats, and menaces, and labour to overawe their brethren, against their consciences, into the embracing of their sentiments and way. Is it possible a christian should not understand how necessary it is to every one's duty and peace that he exactly follow that direction of the apostle's, and esteem it most sacred, Rom. 14. 5. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind? and that we firmly resolve never to do any thing with regret or a misgiving heart, at least. Not against a prevailing doubt, for in very doubtful cases to be rid of all *formido oppositi or suspicion* that the matter may be otherwise, is perhaps impossible to me, but to do any thing against the preponderating inclination of my judgment and conscience, were great wickedness, and such as, if it were known, would make me unfit for any communion whatsoever. And I do here appeal to you who most severely blame any of us for our dissent from you, whether if we should thus declare to you, "That it is truly against our consciences to communicate with you upon your terms, we believe we should greatly offend God in it, and draw upon us his displeasure, but yet to please you, and prevent our temporal inconvenience, or ruin, we will do it:" I appeal to you. I say, whether we should not hereby make ourselves uncapable of any Christian communion with you or any others? This is then the plain state of the case, and you do even put these words into our mouths: "If we follow the dictate of our consciences we must decline you; if we go against it, you must decline us; supposing we declare it, if we declare it not, we have nothing to qualify us for your communion but hypocrisy and dissimulation! and what do you gain by such an accession to the church? you have gained, in any such case, not half the man, the outside, the carcass only, or the shadow of the man, that is, when you have debauched our consciences, when you have spoiled us, and made us worth nothing, then we are yours, wherein you shew nothing of love, either to us, or to yourselves!"

Others again that are, themselves, men of more reason and conscience, take the somewhat more manly and Christian course; and bend themselves by argument to convince the reason, and satisfy the consciences of such as differ from them. But herein also there may be an excess, that is unprofitable and grievous to those they would work upon by this course: and from which therefore Christian love, studying the peace and quiet of their brethren would restrain them. I say from the ingrateful excess of such an endeavour, for I would fain know, can there not herein be an excess? Is it not supposable that they who differ

from me, in such lesser things, may be sometime arrived to a settlement and fixedness of judgment in them, as well as I? Is it not possible they have weighed the moments of things as much as I have done? Is such a cause infinite? Is it not possible that all may have been said in it which is to be said, and the matter have been sifted to the very bran? So that all my further arguings may serve but to argue my vain self-confidence, or aboundings in my own sense, as if all wisdom were to die with me. Or what if they serve at length, but to shew the incapacity of the subject to be wrought upon, and the different complexion of his mind I am treating with. All cannot receive all things: we cannot make our sentiments enter with every one. Perhaps they shew the weakness of his understanding, and then hath that direction of the apostle no authority with us? Him that is weak in the faith receive, but not to doubtful disputations. Rom. 14. 1. He whom we account our weaker brother, and of slower understanding, must be received, (not cast out of communion) and because God himself hath received him, as ver. 3. (as though he had said, Is he thought fit for God's communion, notwithstanding his unsatisfied scruple, and is he unfit for yours?) and he is not to be vexed and importuned with continual disputation, if that apostolical precept be of any value with us. Sometime at least, we should think, we have tried in such a case as far as is fit, and driven the nail as far as it will go. Is it not possible such a matter may be agitated beyond the value of it, and that more time and pains may be spent upon it than it is worth? The obscurity, and perplexity of the controversy shews the less necessity. Things most necessary are most plain. Must we always in matters of confessedly little moment, be inculcating the same thing, rolling endlessly the returning stone, and obtruding our offensive cramble? Perhaps as no good is done, we do much hurt. When is the saw of disputation long drawn, about one thing, without ill effects? reason having at length spent its strength grows (as weak people are) peevish and froward; degenerates into anger and clamour. In greater differences than our present ones, between the protestant churches abroad: some of more prudent and peaceable minds have earnestly pressed the laying aside of disputes, and putting a period by consent to their theological wars. *Solitarum disputationum labyrinthos ne ingredi quidem conentur, they did not wish even to enter into the labyrinths of these unprofitable disputations*, said a great divine, † in his days, in reference to those controversies that he would have had composed by an amicable brotherly conference. And that king of Navarre, who, at that time, seemed highly concerned for the

† Davenant Sent. ad Dureum.

peace and welfare of the reformed churches (afterwards Henry the 4th of France) in his negotiations with divers princes to that purpose, gave special instructions to his ambassador much to insist upon this, *Ut acerbis illis contentionibus, quibus, et verbis rixati sunt inter se Theologi, et scriptis: et ejusmodi disputationibus silentio tandem finis imponatur, ut Christiana charitas, et animorum fraterna conjunctio revocetur.* (*Mandat. Hen. Reg. Navar. Jacobo Siguriæ Legato suo, &c. Apud Goldastum.*)—that, till other remedies could be used, we end might be put to bitter contentions and disputations, that Christian love and a brotherly union might be restored. And who sees not how much this would conduce to peace and union in our case too? who sees it not that is a hearty lover of peace? and that is not intent upon continuing and keeping a-foot a controversy, not so much as a means to that, but as an end, contending for contention's sake, and as a thing which he loves and delights in for itself? I am sure love to our brethren would not let us continually molest and importune them to no purpose. And it is fit they that urge to us, these are little things, which they importune us about, should know we have great things to mind, of eternal concernment to us. And that we cannot be always at leisure to mind little things, beyond the proportion of our little time on earth, and the little value of the things themselves.

(16.) Sincere love restored and exercised more among us, would certainly make us forbear reviling, and exposing one another, and the industrious seeking one another's, ruin. For such as can allow themselves to do any thing that bath this tendency; not to preserve public order, but to gratify their private ill-will, not in a sudden heat and passion, but deliberately, and so as to pursue a formed design to this purpose; if such men were capable of being reasoned with (though it were to as good purpose, to talk to a storm, or reason with a whirlwind, or a flame of fire) I would ask them "What are you altogether un-atonable? will nothing divert you from this pursuit? If any thing, what will? What more gentle thing than our destruction do you seek, or will content you? Is it our communion? And do you so recommend yourselves? Do you not know Cain is said to have been of that wicked one who slew his brother? 1 John 3. 10. And that whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him? Is it not said, John 8. 44. That such are of their father the devil, and the lusts of their father they will do, who was a murderer from the beginning? And in the forementioned, 1 John 3. 10. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God. neither he that loveth not his brother? If all

were like you, under what notion were we to unite with them?" The apostle tells us, 1 Cor. 10. 20. 21. I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils, ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. And in good earnest, incarnate devils (though that text do not directly speak of such) have too much of devil in them, to be participants in a communion, that can seem desirable, or is likely to be grateful to serious christians. I must avow it to all the world, it is not this or that external form I so much consider in the matter of Christian union and communion, as what spirit reigns in them with whom I would associate myself. How can I endure to approach those holy mysteries, wherein all are to drink into one spirit, and declare their union with the God of love, with the Immanuel, God most nearly approaching us, God with us, collecting and gathering us in unto him as our common centre, whence the blessed spirit of holy love is to diffuse itself through the whole body, all enlivened by that spirit, and formed by it unto all kindness, benignity, goodness and sweetness! With what significancy can I do so (though I were never so well satisfied with the external forms and modes myself) if it be apparent (I say if apparent) I must eat in my lot and join myself with them (were they generally such) whose souls are under the dominion of the quite contrary spirit, that fills them with malignity, with mischievous dispositions, and purposes, towards many a sincere lover of God, that cannot be satisfied with those forms and modes, and who decline them only from a sense of duty to God, and a fear of offending against the high authority of their blessed, glorious Redeemer!

I know many are apt to justify themselves in their animosity, and bitterness of spirit towards others, upon a pretence that they bear the same disaffected mind towards them. But besides that it is the most manifest, and indefensible injustice; if they charge the innocent, or such as they are not sure are guilty, if their own wrath and enmity be so potent in them as to enable their tainted vicious imagination to create its object, or so to disguise and falsely clothe it, as to render it such to themselves, as whereupon they may more plausibly pour out their fury. I say besides that, how contrary is this vindictive spirit to the rules and spirit, of the Christian religion! Is this to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and despitefully use us, &c.? How unlike the example of our blessed Lord when, even in dying agonies, he breathed forth these words and his soul almost at once, Father forgive them, &c: or of the holy martyr Stephen, Lord lay not this sin to their charge?

How unlike is that aptness to the retaliating of injuries, to the Christian temper which the renowned Calvin discovers in an epistle to Bullenger, speaking of Luther's severity towards him. If Luther a thousand times (saith he) call me devil, I will acknowledge him for a famous servant of God; which passage both bishop Moreton and bishop Davenant, magnify him for, and the former saith, he herein spake so calmly, so placidly, so indulgently, as if it were not a man, but humanity itself that uttered the words.

Yea, and such retaliation is what paganism itself hath declaimed against. (*Maxim. Tyr. Dissert. 2.*) A noted philosopher urges that against it, that, one would think, should not need to be suggested to christians, somewhat so prudential as might not only work upon the principle of love to others, but even that of self-love, that then the evil must perpetually circulate, and so must again and again return upon ourselves. As indeed if that must be the measure to revile them that revile us, (1 Pet. 2. 23 chap. 3. 9.) and render evil for evil, railing for railing, we should never have done. It were a course which once begun, could by that rule, never find an end.

This then is the first part of the answer to the proposed question. What may be most hopefully done, &c. The endeavour of having our hearts knit together in love would surely do much towards it. And this is agreeable to any the most private capacity. No man can pretend his sphere is too narrow (if his soul be not) for the exercise of love towards fellow-christians. And I hope it is agreeable to all our principles. Sure no man will say it is against his conscience to love his brother. And the same must be said of,

Secondly. That other expedient, the endeavour to have our souls possessed with a more clear, efficacious, practical faith of the gospel, which was to make the other part of the answer to our question. And though this is the more important part, it is also so very evident, that we do not need to make this discourse swell to a bulk too unproportionable to the rest it is to be joined with by speaking largely to it.

Although we have not the name of faith in this text, we have the thing. It is not named, but it is described, so as that it may easily be understood, both what it is, and how necessary to our purpose.

1. What it is, or what measure and degree of it, that would be of so great use in such a case. We are told with great emphasis, The riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. Such as whereby,

(1.) Our understandings are duly enlightened so as mentally

to entertain aright the doctrines of the gospel, that is, first distinctly to apprehend the meaning and design of this mysterious revelation of God in Christ. And secondly to be fully assured of the truth of it.

(2.) Such again, as whereby our hearts are overcome, so as practically and vitally to receive it, that is, to acknowledge, receive, resign, entrust and subject ourselves unto God in Christ revealed in it.

(3.) And of how vast importance this is towards our establishment, the confirming, fortifying and uniting of our hearts, and our joint preservation in our Christian state (the main thing we are to design, and be solicitous for) we may see in these particulars.

[1.] Hereby we should apprehend the things to be truly great wherein we are to unite. That union is not like to be firm and lasting, the centre whereof is a trifle. It must be somewhat that is of itself apt to attract and hold our hearts strongly to it. To attempt with excessive earnestness a union in external formalities that have not a value and goodness in themselves; when the labour and difficulty is so great, and the advantage so little, how hopeless and insignificant would it be! The mystery of God, even of the Father, and of Christ, how potently and constantly attractive would it be, if aright understood and acknowledged! Here we should understand is our life and our all.

[2.] Hereby we should, in comparison apprehend all things else to be little. And so our differences about little things would languish and vanish. We should not only know, but consider and feelingly apprehend, that we agree in far greater things than we differ in; and thence be more strongly inclined to hold together, by the things wherein we agree, than to contend with one another about the things wherein we differ.

[3.] Hereby our religion would revive, and become a vital powerful thing; and consequently more grateful to God, and awful to men.

First, More grateful to God, who is not pleased with the stench of carcasses, or with the dead shews of religion instead of the living substance. We should hereupon not be deserted of the divine presence, which we cannot but reckon will retire, when we entertain him but with insipid formalities. What became of the Christian interest in the world, when christians had so sensibly diverted from minding the great things of religion to little minute circumstances, about which they affected to busy themselves, or to the pursuit of worldly advantages and delight?

Secondly, More awful to men; They who are tempted to despise

the faint languid appearances of an impotent inefficacious, spiritless religion, discern a majesty in that which is visibly living, powerful, and productive of suitable fruits. Who that shall consider the state of the Christian church, and the gradual declining of religion for that three hundred years from Constantine's time to that of Phocas, but shall see cause at once to lament the sin and folly of men, and adore the righteous severity of God? For as christians grew gradually to be loose, wanton, sensual, and their leaders contentious, luxurious, covetous, proud, ambitious affecters of domination, so was the Christian church gradually forsaken of the divine presence. Inasmuch as that at the same time when Boniface obtained from Phocas the title of universal bishop, in defiance of the severe sentence of his predecessor Gregory the great, sprang up the dreadful delusion of Mahomet. (*Brerewood's enquiries.*) And so spread itself to this day, through Asia, Africa, and too considerable a part of Europe, that where christians were twenty or thirty to one, there was now scarce one christian to twenty or thirty mahometans or grosser pagans. And what between the mahometan infatuation, and the popish tyranny, good Lord! What is christendom become! when by the one, the very name is lost, and by the other, little else left but the name?

[4.] Hereby we shall be enabled most resolutely to suffer being called to it, when it is for the great things of the gospel, the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, clearly and with assurance understood and acknowledged. Such a faith will not be without its pleasant relishes. It is an uncomfortable thing to suffer either for the mere spiritless, uncertain, unoperative notions and opinions, or for the unenlivened outward forms of religion, that we never felt to do us good, in which we never tasted sweetness, or felt power, that we were really nothing ever the better for. But who will hesitate at suffering for so great things as the substantial of the gospel, which he hath clearly understood, whereof he is fully assured, and which he hath practically acknowledged, and embraced, so as to feel the energy and power of them, and relish their delicious sweetness in his soul! And though by such suffering he himself perish from off this earth, his religion lives, is spread the more in the present age and propagated to after ages: so seminal and fruitful a thing is the blood of martyrs! as hath always been observed. And as such a faith of the mystery of the gospel appears to have this tendency to the best, firmest, and most lasting union among christians, and the consequent preservation of the Christian interest, this mystery being more generally considered only; so this tendency of it would be more distinctly seen, if we should consider the more eminent and remarka-

ble parts of it; the mystery of the Redeemer's person: the Immanuel, God uniting himself with the nature of man; his office; as reconciler of God and man to each other; his death, as a propitiatory sacrifice to slay all enmity; his victory and conquest over it, wherein is founded his universal empire over all; his triumphant entrance into heaven, whither he is to collect all that ever loved, trusted, and obeyed him, to dwell and be conversant together in his eternal love and praises. How directly do all these tend to endear and bind the hearts and souls of christians to God, and him, and one another in everlasting bonds!

Thus then we have the answer to our question in the two parts of the text. The former pointing out to us the subjects of our union, with the uniting principle by which they are to be combined with one another: the other the centre of it with the uniting principle, whereby they are all to be united in that centre.

Use, And what now remains but that we lament the decay of these two principles, and, to our uttermost, endeavour the revival of them.

1. We have great cause to lament their decay; for how visible is it! and how destructive to the common truly Christian interest! It was once the usual cognisance of those of this holy profession, "See how these christians love one another, and even refuse not to die for each other!" Now it may be, "How do they hate! and are like to die and perish by the hands of one another!" Our Lord himself gave it them to be their distinguishing character. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if you love one another." Good Lord! what are they now to be known by!

And what a cloudy, wavering, uncertain, lank, spiritless thing is the faith of Christians in this age become! How little are the ascertaining grounds of it understood, or endeavoured to be understood! Most content themselves to profess it only as the religion of their country, and which was delivered to them by their forefathers. And so are christians, but upon the same terms, as other nations are mahometans or more gross pagans, as a worthy writer some time since took notice. * How few make it their business to see things with their own eyes, to believe, and be sure that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God! How far are we from the riches of the full assurance of understanding! How little practical, and governing is the faith of the most! How little doth it import of an acknowledgment of the mystery of God, namely, of the Father, and of Christ! How little effectual is it! which it can be but in proportion to the grounds upon which it rests. When the gospel is received, not as the word of man, but of God, it works effectually in them that so believe it, 1 Thes. 2. 13.

* Pink's trial of a christian's love to Christ.

2. Let us endeavour the revival of these principles. This is that in reference whereto we need no human laws. We need not edicts of princes to be our warrant for this practice, of loving one another, and cleaving with a more grounded lively faith to God and his Christ. Here is no place for scruple of conscience in this matter. And as to this mutual love: What if others will not do their parts to make it so? What shall we only love them that love us, and be fair to them that are fair to us, salute them that salute us? Do not even the publicans the same? what then do we more than others? as was the just expostulation of our Saviour upon this supposition, Mat. 5. 47.

And let us endeavour the more thorough deep radication of our faith, that it may be more lively and fruitful: which this apostle you see (not forgetting his scope and aim) further presses in the following verses, testifying his joy for what he understood there was of it among these christians. Though I be absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ, ver. 5. And exhorting them to pursue the same course, As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving ver. 6. 7.

And what also, must we suspend the exercise and improvement of our faith in the great mysteries of the gospel, till all others will agree upon the same thing! Let us do our own part, so as we may be able to say, "*Per me non stetit, it was not my fault*, but christians had been combined, and entirely one with each other, but they had been more thoroughly Christian, and more entirely united with God in Christ, that Christianity had been a more lively, powerful, awful, amiable thing. If the Christian community moulder, decay, be enfeebled, broken, dispirited, ruined in great part, this ruin shall not rest under my hand." We shall have abundant consolation in our own souls, if we can acquit ourselves that as to these two things, we lamented the decay and loss, and endeavoured the restitution of them, and therein as much as in us was, of the Christian interest.

A SERMON

PREACHED

ON THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER, 1703.

READER,

THIS discourse was preached without any, the least thought of its being made more public; and a considerable time pass'd afterwards, without any such intention. I thought it indeed too uncomposed, to appear in the world; but in a matter of no worse consequence, I make no difficulty of acknowledging, that I at length chose rather to follow the judgment of the many hearers, that mov'd for this further publication, than my own. Therefore amidst much other business, and great infirmities, that are sufficiently monitory to me to be unconcerned for the gratifying of curiosity, in myself, or in any others; I so far revised it, as very imperfect memorials would enable me. If anywhere it be somewhat enlarged, that can be no prejudice to them that heard it; and much less to them that heard it not.

That it may be of some use to direct our thanksgivings (and supplications also) so as, without the neglect of lower and subservient mercies, they may have principal respect to blessings of the highest value; is the serious desire, and prayer of an earnest and well-willer to the true prosperity of the Christian church,

J. II.

A SERMON.

Col. 1, 13.

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

YOU already know, that the occasion of our assembling together this day is twofold ; to commemorate some former national mercies, and deliverances from certain very considerable efforts of that power of darkness, which is peculiar to the devil's kingdom: and also, to prepare for the commemoration, at the approaching season, of the much more general mercy of our common redemption, in the observation of a solemn rite belonging to the kingdom of Christ.† The two parts of this text give us an apt, and suitable ground for each of these. For giving God thanks, for great former mercies ; and preparation for that designed holy solemnity.

First. We begin, for the former of these purposes, with the first part of the text, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness.” And that we may see how accommodate this will be to the former mentioned purpose (as comprehended within the import of this clause, and but comprehended, it being of much greater latitude) some things I must previously note to you. As,

1. That there is a kingdom manifestly implied in these words, “The power of darkness,” unto which the kingdom of God's dear Son is opposite.

2. That this kingdom can be no other than the devil's kingdom, whom our Lord himself doth own to have a kingdom. If

† It being our usual monthly season of preparation for the Lord's supper.

Satan be divided against himself, how then can his kingdom stand? Mat. 12, 26. These are our Lord's own words, and joined, in that context, with what sufficiently intimates that kingdom to be directly opposite to his own.

3. That the distinguishing characters of these two opposite kingdoms, the kingdom of the devil, and the kingdom of God's dear Son, are darkness, and light; the one is a kingdom of darkness, and the other is a kingdom of light. The devils are called the rulers of the former, so stigmatized. Ephs. 6, 12. principalities, and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world. Our Lord's is implied to be a kingdom of light, in the words immediately foregoing: Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints of light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, &c. It is a kingdom they are to inherit, Mat. 25, 34. In its most perfect state it comprehends brightest light, purity, and glory; as the opposite kingdom, consummate, is utter darkness. And so are the beginnings and first principles of each. Ye were darkness, now are light in the Lord—Ephs. 5, 8. Both are seen, in the unconverted, and converted state; to turn them from darkness to light, and (which shews that darkness to be satanical) from the power of Satan, unto God, Acts 26, 18. As what their inheritance is hereupon to be, the next words shew, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified. And yet again,

4. That the darkness, which characterizes the devil's kingdom, includes those things that are directly opposite unto those included in the light, which characterizes the kingdom of Christ. The light that characterizes the kingdom of Christ, includes these two things, truth and holiness.

These are the principal things, comprehended in the notion of light, as it is characteristic of the kingdom of the Son of God. The light of truth, objectively revealed, and subjectively received, the frame of Christian doctrine, with the knowledge, and belief thereof; and the light of holiness, so shining in the lives of christians, that men may see their good works, (Mat. 5, 16.) Accordingly the darkness, that doth characterize the devil's kingdom, doth comprehend in it falsehood and wickedness.

It comprehends in it all manner of falsehood, truth obscured and perverted, ignorance, error, deceit, blindness of heart, (Eph. 4, 18.) a wilful overlooking of the great and most necessary truths, which the souls of men are, above all other, concerned to take in, and admit into their inward parts. And it comprehends wickedness in the whole compass of it; wickedness against God, all manner of impiety, idolatry, blasphemy,

neglect and profanation of the ordinances and institutions, wherein he claims to be worshipped, in the proper seasons thereof. Wickedness against men, all comprehended and summed up in their hatred of one another. He that hateth his brother, is in darkness, even diabolical; for they who emerge, and are recovered out of it, are said to have overcome the wicked one. 1 John. 2. 11, 13. And both these sorts of wickedness are put together, Rom. 13. 12, 13. Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. And those works of darkness are said to be chambering, wantonness, rioting, drunkenness, strife and envying. And Ephes. 5. 11. We are warned to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Which works are (ver. 3. and 4.) said to be fornication, uncleanness, covetousness (which is also said to be idolatry) filthiness, foolish talking, &c. as things that bar us from any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, or of God. And christians are therefore forbidden to be partakers therein, (ver. 7.) because they are light, and children of light, ver. 8. And as it is, 1 Thes. 5. 5. of the day, not of the night, nor of darkness. They are of the opposite kingdom, and must walk conformably thereto. Our way being thus far plain, we go on to add,

5. That the power which the devil exerts and exercises, in this darkness, is twofold, first, spiritual and internal. Secondly, secular and external.

(1.) There is a spiritual power which he exercises in this darkness, acting more immediately upon the minds and spirits of men. The God of this world blinds their minds, who believe not, 2 Cor. 4. 4. And he is said to be the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, Ephes. 2. 2. And the impenitent, such as have not hitherto repented and turned to God, it is said: He leads them captive at his will, 2 Tim. 2. 26. And

(2.) There is a secular power which he also exerts, in the midst of that darkness that he hath brought upon this world, relating, as far as he can obtain leave, to the bodies of men, and their external concerns and affairs; and not only of particular persons, but of nations and kingdoms, especially where he observes any design, to be more directly formed against his kingdom, and interest in this world; he thereupon comes to be engaged in a more open and explicit opposition. And so when he is the author of this or that bodily or outward affliction, to a particular person, as he can obtain divine permission; this is an effort of his power, in the midst of that darkness. Such as are rescued out of his kingdom, his design is to vex, because he cannot destroy them, whom he cannot

mortally touch; namely, such as are born of God, and have a new nature, by that divine birth, the wicked one touches them not, (1 John. 5. 18.) that is, not mortally to make them sin unto death, as ver. 16. But if he can however have leave to touch them in their bodies, or external concernments, he will rather do that than nothing; ruin them he cannot, but he will afflict them as he can. Therefore is he said to go about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; which is there meant, immediately, in reference to their external concernments, as will appear if you observe the context, 1 Pet. 5. 8. For it follows in the 9th verse, Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren, that are in the world. It is true, being uncertain of the event, he hath a further aim to overthrow their faith, and by his roaring to fright them out of their religion; therefore it is said: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, defeat his final design. But as the means to his end, when he roars like a lion against any of the servants of Christ, it is with design to bring them into the most afflicted condition he can; that so he may, at least, make them signify the less in that state of opposition wherein they are engaged against him, in the world. So you find the imprisonment of Christ's servants imputed to Satan, Rev. 2. 10. The devil shall cast some of you into prison, and you shall have tribulation for ten days, which some understand of the ten persecutions. Whatever the devil meant, God intended their trial, as it is there said, and the demonstration of the victorious power of the divine principle, their faith, and his spirit in them, that being tried, it might be found unto praise and glory—1 Pet. 1. 7. And we cannot but doubt he let Job come on the stage, as his champion to combat Satan, who was the prime author of his manifold calamities; his accuser first, and his persecutor afterwards. He accuseth him of want of integrity, Doth Job serve God for nought? (chap. 1. 9.) and at the same time complains of his own want of power to come at him: Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? ver. 10. Whereupon, for the trial of Job's fidelity and patience, God puts all he had into the devil's power, his person only excepted, which as yet he must not touch; manifest therefore it is, the devil animated the Sabceans, and Chaldeans to take away his oxen, and asses, and to slay his servants with the edge of the sword; (ver. 14. 15, 18.) that kindled the fire in the lower heavens, that burnt up his sheep, and servants; (ver. 16.) that raised the storm from the wilderness, that smote the four corners of the house, where his sons and his daughters were eating, and drinking, and buried them in its ruins, ver.

18. And we are expressly told that it was the devil, upon his enlarged licence, that smote him with those venomous boils, chap. 2. 7. It was the devil that bound that daughter of Abraham eighteen years, Luke. 13. 16. It was the devil that brought, upon the Christian church, the famed ten persecutions, under the pagan Roman empire, understood to be meant by the great red dragon, Rev. 12, 3. Whence also, he wears that very name, ver. 9. The great red dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the devil, and Satan—These are some of those efforts, amidst that darkness, wherein the devil bath, and uses so great power. But yet further,

6. It is manifestly a far greater deliverance to be freed from his spiritual power, and the horrid effects thereof, than from that which he may use in reference to our outward concerns.

Therefore now, upon these mentioned considerations, on this former part of the text, that we may apply it suitably to our present purpose, these two things are to be asserted and evinced.—That to be delivered from the devil's power, in external respects, is a real and great deliverance: But that—To be delivered from his power, in spiritual respects, is a much greater deliverance.

(1.) That to be delivered from the devil's power, in external respects, either personal, or national, is a real, and very great deliverance. We are to look upon that deliverance, which this day we more particularly commemorate, now almost a hundred years ago, as a defeated plot of the devil. It carries that manifest aspect with it to every eye, a contrivance formed, and designed to be executed, by the subtilty, and power of the prince of the darkness of this world. I need not repeat the narrative of it, being sufficiently known to you, or may be read in our histories; but nothing can be plainer, than that here was a design and plot of hell and devils, contrived in the dark, and so to have been executed, till the execution itself should have brought it to light. For what darkness, but that of hell, could have so much fire in it? so much of destructive rage and fury? And though there was hazard in the undertaking to the instrumental actors, what did the devil care what became of them? If his main design succeeded, he had been a great gainer, and glutted his ravenous appetite; if it succeeded not, but turned upon the heads of the undertakers, he had been no loser, but only less a gainer, having some prey however to feed, but not satiate a devouring appetite, which must be eternally insatiable. And what can be more devil like?

And what was the deliverance, by which God did again signalize this very day fifteen years ago, but a repetition of the same mercy? The same in substance, though different in circum-

stance. It was from the same enemy, the same invisible, and the same visible enemy, that we were preserved then, and more lately since. And what is our continued peace and quiet hitherto, but the same mercy continued, under the care and conduct of our present sovereign? It is preservation from the same enemy, and from the powers of the same darkness, that we continue hitherto to enjoy. And this mercy is not only real, but great, both in itself great, and great in respect of what it incloses, and subserves. In itself, for it is preservation from a great enemy, the greatest in all the world: a daring one, that feared not to contend perpetually with the Almighty, and without hope of self-advantage; who loves mischief therefore for mischief's sake, and working with mighty power, and power that works in such darkness, as to us mortals is impenetrable. And great, in respect of what it incloses, and is subservient unto; for it incloses the precious gospel of our Lord, yet continued unto us, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the gracious communications we partake in, by and through them; and is subservient to their true and proper design. And therefore mercy, of that kind, ought to be looked upon as real, and very great, which way soever you consider it. We should therefore take heed of being guilty of so vile ingratitude, as not to commemorate, with a suitable impression upon our spirits, this sort of mercies, which were the foundation of the mercies we have in so long a course enjoyed; for former mercies are fundamental to later ones. The expression is very emphatical, and worthy our most serious regard, which we have, psal. lxxxix. 2. For I have said, mercy shall be built up for ever. And how is mercy said to be built up, but as former mercies are fundamental to later ones? Thus are the present mercies, that we enjoy this day, founded upon the mercies of former days, such as we ought joyfully and thankfully to recount, with delight and praise; remembering the years of the right hand of the most High. But yet,

(2.) I must also note to you, that however we are to esteem mercies, of that kind, namely, deliverances from the external power of the prince of darkness, real, and very great mercies; we are yet to account deliverance from the spiritual power, exerted in that darkness, much greater. I hope all your minds and hearts will close with me in this, as soon as you hear it, it carrying its own light and evidence in itself. For if you do but compare the cases of them, who have been all along the authors of those great calamities and miseries, to the inhabitants of this lower world, and especially to the church of Christ in it, with theirs that have been the sufferers, upon the most peculiar account; you cannot but say, the portion and lot of the sufferers is most unspeakably rather to be chosen. We know

who have been the authors of those great calamities in the world, and in the church of God in it, for many ages by-past; the same who were to have been the authors of our intended destruction. And in taking a view of their case, let us consider both their character, and their doom; both which you may find set down together, in one place, viz. 2 Thes. ix. 10, 11, 12.

[1.] Their character, which really is enough to fright any man that is but master of his own reason, to see how and in what way they have abandoned and lost theirs, to behold men so stigmatized, as indeed they have marked out themselves: they whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power; here is the devil's power at work in them, the horrid cause of their stupendous demeritation. The effects do follow: and by them in signs, and lying wonders, among all which wonders the greatest wonder is themselves; that the thing called man in them should be so metamorphosed, and transformed into so brutal, and diabolical a monster! so destitute of understanding, so full of malignity, (as we shall further see, by and by) and all deceivableness of unrighteousness. So far their character is continued, and it partly further follows, interwoven with some part of their present doom; as also their final doom is both interserted, and distinctly expressed. Therefore take into their character, their being under strong delusion, the energy of deceit, as the greek signifies, to believe a lie; spoken indefinitely, to note that any, the most absurd figment they can be imposed upon to believe, that God sends them, as belonging to their doom, we shall consider afterwards. And we might enlarge their character, by taking in from ver. 3. that they are apostates, such as were fallen away from a state of excellency; and spoken of as one person, from their oneness in spirit and design, as a man of sin, a son of perdition (capable of the active, as well as passive sense) and ver. 4. who opposes, exalteth himself above all that is called God, sits in his temple, is worshipped as God. And ver. 8. the wicked or lawless one. This is their character that are, and have been, through many centuries of years, the authors of the miseries and calamities the church of God hath suffered, and partly doth suffer, and is endangered by at this day. In this their character, I shall take notice of two things.

Of the great infatuation that is upon their minds.—Of the monstrous degeneracy, not from Christianity only, but even from humanity too, that is to be found in the temper of their spirits.

First. The great infatuation that is upon their minds. It appears that they are under strong delusions, potent, efficacious ones, they are most effectually deluded. And of this I could give many instances, but shall content myself only with the mention of two.

The first is, That great fundamental wild conceit which they have laid at the bottom of their whole enchanted fabric, by which one would wonder, how they could hope to impose on any part of the rational world; or could be imposed upon themselves, that all the power they claim, and use, to the disturbance of mankind, and oppression of the Christian church, they pretend to have by deputation from our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and by succession from the holy apostle Peter. By deputation from Christ, as if they were his deputies, in doing such monstrous work as this! as if Christ had deputed them to destroy Christianity, to render it a ridiculous thing, by their inserted fooleries; and odious, by their barbarous cruelties! That He, who was the light of the world, should appoint them to overspread it with darkness! That he, who so freely shed his blood to redeem it, had commissioned them so copiously to shed human, and Christian blood. To make even his church, the temple of the living God a shambles and slaughter-house, and affright the rest of mankind from coming near it; who yet could be as little safe in declining it, if they were within the reach of their arm! What fearful havock did they make, unprovoked in America, as soon as they could get any footing there; destroying multitudes of (towards them) harmless, innocent creatures, and who (as strangers) received them with all possible kindness, even to the number of no less than forty millions; as hath been acknowledged by some of their own historians. † Their kings and princes were put to death, with most exquisite torture, upon the unjustifiable pretence of their being infidels; but with design to make them confess their gold and treasure, which they did but suspect they concealed. By these inhuman cruelties they laid waste whole fruitful countries, and turned well-peopled lands into mere desarts. And what other tendency could this have, than to engage the nations of the earth against christians, and Christianity itself, as a thing by no means to be endured in the world; and were such multitudes destroyed by Christ's direction, and to propagate the Christian faith! And what commotions, wars, and bloodshed did they introduce into that large country of Habassia, disturbing that quiet and peaceful empire, though Christian, only because it would not be Roman! § And have we not reason to add the many horrid tragedies acted by them, more within our near notice, in the several parts of Europe, and in this kingdom particularly: and that all this should be pretended to be done by a power derived from Christ! in so open, and contemptu-

† D. Barth. de. I. Casas B. of Chiap.

§ Of which see Ludolphus, and at large, D. Geddes Ethiop. histor.

ous opposition to the laws, and spirit of Christ! the design of his coming into this world! and the very genius, and natural tendency of christianity itself. The things themselves are full of black horror. But that they should be said to be done in that name, speaks the most monstrous impudence, and infatuation! As if Christ had changed names with the devil, and laying aside that of a Saviour, had chosen to be called Abaddon, or Apollyon, the common destroyer of mankind. And having changed his mind, and his very nature, did now set himself to counter-act, and defeat the design for which he came into the world!

And that they have this power, by succession from St. Peter, is as idle and absurd a pretence. If he were their predecessor, they were sure very unsuitable successors. Did he ever go before them in such work? What precepts, what footsteps of his have they followed? Did he ever claim a power to annul, at his own pleasure, the laws and ordinances of his Master and Lord? to amass treasures, to accumulate dignities, acquire ample revenues, to dispose of crowns and sceptres, and, as he should think fit, to dethrone, or unthroned the princes and potentates of this earth?

If he had such power, what is that to them? How came they by it from him? was it because he was bishop of Rome, that therefore the assumed, usurped name, without the apostolical office, and the (inseparable) spirit, and spiritual power, acts, and design, could create them such? As well might the habit make a monk, or a beard a philosopher; by their fruits and works they are to be known. Our Lord reckoned himself sufficiently to have refuted their vain pretence, who gloried in being Abraham's successors, by telling them: So did not Abraham, John. 8. 40. But all their learning, wit, and sophistry will never answer what hath been written†, to make it highly probable that St. Peter was never at Rome, much less sat twenty five years there. It must therefore be a strong delusion must make them build so mighty a fabric, upon so infirm and weak a foundation.

The second thing I shall instance in, is their worshipping a piece of bread as a deity. What a strange infatuation is that, that one cannot distinguish a piece of bread from a God, or an object of worship! And to believe this against the most irrefragable reason, and common sense, and without any pretence from Scripture, more plausible than it would be to say, the

† In the modest enquiry, upon that subject; a work, that though anonymous, the author needed not be ashamed of; besides what hath been said by divers others.

sun in the firmament is a God, or that a buckler, which one turns with his hand this way or that, and wherewith men defend themselves in battle, is a deity, or an object of worship ; because God is said in Scripture, to be a sun and a shield : with a thousand like instances that might be given.

Secondly. But we are to consider also, as we proposed, and as belonging to the character of these men, the monstrous degeneracy not from Christianity only ; but also, from common humanity itself, that appears in the temper of their spirits. This depends upon the former, which could not be spoken of, without some excursion into this ; but they are distinct things, and therefore the latter requires to be distinctly, but briefly touched upon. And this depravedness of their spirits is that which is unspeakably more horrid (if any thing can be thought to be more so) than men, and who profess themselves christians, could impose it upon themselves to be so barbarously bloody and cruel, to every one that is not so stupidly foolish in these things as themselves, that they would destroy all the rest of mankind, if it were in their power, for not agreeing with them in the same sentiments ; though to agree with them, I must disagree with myself, and with all other men that have yet their reason, and their senses left them, and the faith of christians, in other points, most essential to religion. If I will not believe that they are deputed by Christ, as the successors of St. Peter, to do what they please, in secular governments, and religion ; if I will not believe a piece of bread ought to be worshipped as a God ; I am to be tortured to death, for this my disbelief ! which is so horrid a transformation of a human creature, as no power of thought can frame an idea of any thing more monstrous, throughout the world ! Namely, a christian, because he is so, must be made the common butcher of mankind ! to destroy as many human lives as he can reach ! For if this treatment be for this reason deserved, it ought to take place to our utmost every where. Whence also is to be collected, that men might, had they not been christians, have been sociable, kind, friendly, and have lived quietly, and pleasantly with one another ! So that Christian religion is the transforming principle, and obliges men to be the destroyers of their brethren, as much as in them lies ; and with exquisite torment that of burning alive, such as common humanity would abhor to use, towards a beast. And besides, the tortures of their inquisition must be thought a thousand times worse than burning for an hour or two ! And let now this matter be impartially considered, doth it not already appear, that the authors of such miseries and calamities to the rest of men, and the rest of christians, especially such as are sincere, are in

much worse case than the poor sufferers? We cannot but judge so, on the following accounts : namely,

Here is first a transformation of minds. The minds of men, of reasonable creatures are transformed into the most horrid things ; that is, they are turned, excepting the mere human shape, (and every one that understands what belongs to the human essence, easily apprehends how little mere external shape doth, to the making of a man) they are turned into ravenous wild beasts, into lions, tygers, bears, wolves, destroying and tearing in pieces whatever comes in their way ! And do but consider, were it not a much more eligible thing to have the nature of man, the understanding of man, common humanity remaining, though the external shape were altered ; than to have the shape of a man remaining, but to be in the temper of one's mind a tiger, a bear ravaging and destroying wheresoever one goes ? Such are set up as portents, prodigies, and as monitory signs, both to astonish mankind, that the impression may be deeper and more permanent ; and thereupon to warn them, seasonably to repress the beginnings of any such disposition, fearing whither it may grow. And therefore to consider, with dread, how fearful a thing it is that there should be such a sort of creatures, in human shape, as can take delight in tormenting them that never did or wished them harm ; as with pleasure can torture others, for no other cause but merely because they take the same liberty of thought, which as a common right themselves assume ; and cannot be of their opinion, against common sense, and the common reason of mankind, and without pretence any way. If a man were to express his sense as to this matter, in a solemn prayer to the Almighty, would he not say : Lord, let me rather be the most monstrous deformed creature, in external shape, that ever was produced in this world ; only let me have in me a right, nor give me up to a reprobate mind ! And what can we conceive more essential to man, than these two things, reason, and love ; and both these are abandoned and lost, in those men whose character hath been given. Their reason and love do, at least, suffer the highest violation both together. They believe themselves, and would have all others believe, against the common reason and sense of men ; and are become haters of mankind, otherwise than as they shall fall in with their absurd sentiments, and will be subservient to their cursed designs. Again,

We shall secondly be easily induced to look upon the author's case, as much the less eligible, than the sufferer's, upon this further account ; that this horrid degeneracy, and depravedness of spirit is most entirely voluntary, and proceeds from their plenary consent with the devil, as an inactuating spirit

in them. Such is the import of those tremendous words (that would make one shrug to think of them)—that spirit that in-worketh (or hath energy) in the children of disobedience, Eph. 2. 2. Their perfect voluntariness appears, in their most complacential self approbation, under so direful a transforming change, from man, into part brute, part devil. Others feel in themselves some disaffections, and distempers of spirit, which they deplore, lament, and contend against. These men glory in their own shame, and what ought to make them a hissing,† and reproach to the nations of the earth, they applaud them for. They declare their sin, as Sodom, justify the prodigious deformities of their own spirits, write volumes to defend them, and put on a countenance, unaccustomed to blushing; as if in good earnest they expected other men should think their cause to be good! And to what a stupendous height doth this raise the horror of their case!

But hence also it is that the devil hath that access to the inward parts, into the more secret receptacles, and chambers of their souls; unto which he could have none, if their consenting will did not open him the door. Not that there is any formal bargain, or contract between him and them, for his power, you find, works in darkness; but he and they agree upon the same things, so doth the devil lead them captive at his will, 2 Tim. 2. 26. The sufferers, in the mean time, are only such; and as they endure evils, in themselves incomparably less, they do but endure them; not being active to procure them, otherwise than by being, and doing what they ought. And so they have, in their suffering, that great matter of relief and rejoicing, the testimony of their conscience, (2 Cor. 1. 12.) besides the expectation of a glorious reward; while, for the authors of their sufferings, is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, Jude. 13. Which leads to the consideration of,

[2.] Their doom (for hitherto we had chiefly considered but their character) and this is partly present, partly final.

Present, That for this cause, God sends them strong delusions, (2 Thes. 2. 11.) not by active infusion of malignity, whereof, on God's part, there was no possibility, nor on their part, any need. They have enough of their own, besides the addition of what that text notes, that their coming is after the working of Satan with all power. These are a sort of men abandoned of God, delivered over to Satan, under whose conduct they have put themselves. A fearful case! They are, not by divine commission, but permission only, left in his

† — Populus mihi sibilat.

hands; and now, the lusts of their father they will do, John. 8. 44.

Final. That they all might be damned—A severe sentence! but justified by what went before, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; but struck off from the Christian religion, what should make it amiable and self-recommending (and by what follows,) that they took pleasure in unrighteousness; hence they are left of God, in order to their future damnation. Not that God made any men, on purpose to damn them; but when they had contracted such guilt, by sinning against the clearest light, against the law of their own nature, and against the law of Christ; they are damned, as having marked themselves out for hell, and the society of devils, whose associates and subjects they were before. And if it be said, of them who do evil, that good may come, “their damnation is just” much more of them that love mischief, for mischief’s sake. And who would not now choose the tortures of a flaming fire, for an hour or two, rather than be turned into hell, to endure infernal flames for ever!

And we may add (to shew how much greater this spiritual deliverance is, than deliverance from the external powers of darkness) that the fearful tragedies that these men act, being by the so manifest and immediate power of the devil, he is therefore most highly gratified, by having his will so far of them. Nothing could be more grateful to him, than to have made them his tools, his instruments, to fill the world and the Christian church with such miseries and calamities, as they are the voluntary authors of; and hereupon they will be the subjects of his triumph and scorn at last. And here, if you would but pause a little and consider, “What would I not rather choose, than to be the subject of the scorn and insultation of devils!” This is the case of this very generation of men. How will the devils insult over them! “See what fools I have made of so great a part of mankind, how ready have they been to serve me, and my most horrid designs! There is nothing that I would have them believe, be it never so absurd, but I could make them believe it; there is nothing so horrid to act, but if I bid them, they are ready to act it!” And how much the greater will the matter of their insultation be, that such could be found, even in the Christian world, that should be made to serve his vile and horrid purposes, and so render Christianity hateful to mankind! How hath the extent and growth of it, by this means, been hindered! And it can never spread, till it have another kind of representation, than is given by this sort of men. And consider that, in opposition to what was last mentioned, from the spiritual power of the devil,

which he acts in this darkness, all the sincere are truly, and shall be fully delivered; whereas from his external power they are many times not delivered. It is not ascertained to them, that they shall not be impoverished that they shall not be cast into prison, that they shall not be put to death; but it is certain that Satan is dethroned in their souls, and that God will bruise him under their feet shortly, and they shall have opportunity and ground for eternal triumph, over all his power and malice. Therefore, upon all these accounts, this must be far the more eligible deliverance; though deliverance, in the former kind, is by no means to be made light of. They that are sincere, are sure at last of a most glorious victory over the devil. They shall overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of his testimony; not having loved their lives unto the death. And that is certainly the most desirable course and state, that hath the most desirable and valuable end.

And according hereto should the temper of our spirits be, in reference to such deliverance from the power of darkness, which we have occasion to make mention of, this day. We ought to remember, with great gratitude, our preservation from those efforts of this power, wherein it is exercised with reference to the external secular concernments of particular persons, and of nations, more especially our own. We have reason to bless God for that deliverance, that hath been wrought out for us in that kind; and that it hath been so often repeated, and so long continued. We ought to take much to heart the mercies of God herein. and although we are here met under somewhat a distinct character, to bear a part in the solemn thanksgivings of this day; we are not the less obliged to be very serious herein: and however, have for our part great reason not to expect any thing hard or grievous from such, differing from us, as understand religion; between whom and us, there is an agreement in all the substantials thereof. We have the same articles of doctrine, the same institutions of worship, and the same rules of life, conversation, and practice towards our sovereign, and fellow-subjects. And when there is so great an agreement, that which is left to be the matter of disagreement, can be only very little circumstantial things; and which they, from whom we differ, professedly call indifferent, not tending therefore, in themselves, to make either better men, or better christians. And whereas some of us do not think so, throughout, that disagreement is, we hope, the rather to be pardoned, both because it is little, so little that there are few men of considering minds that, upon strict inquiry and comparing of thoughts, will not be found to differ in much greater things; and very consistently with most entire mutual love, or at least

no design of hurt to each other. And yet the difference is real, and not to be dissimuled, nor thrown off at pleasure; it being in no man's power, that would keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man, to form his judgment this way, or that, as he will.

And whereas there are churches abroad, and at home, where-with we agree, and from which we differ, in these smaller things; we are not willing quite to disjoin ourselves from either sort, in which the substance is visible of our common religion; for they are in their nature and kind, one and the same. Nor can we apprehend how a church, or a society formed for the purposes of religion, can be constituted, and distinguished for sole communion with that, and no other, by such things as are confessed, on all hands, to be no parts of religion; nor to have any necessary connection with it. The more truly catholic, the communion of christians is, it is the more truly Christian. There is a mental communion, which is more intimate than merely local; which yet we cannot have, with them with whom we judge it unlawful to have actual, local communion, if there be occasion. But one may have both, wheresoever the essentials of Christianity do appear; not subverted by the addition of other things, that are inconsistent with any of those essentials: as the case is with them, whose black character hath been given, in this discourse.

But though we are not to expect hard things from friends, we are to remember the same common enemy, to them and us, is still in being, and hath great power in the world; and that prince of darkness, that animates them, is still powerful, and as full of mischief as ever. And we know not what advantages our too common iniquities may, from the justice of a righteous God, give the common enemy against us; where-upon we have no reason to be secure. If things therefore should be brought to that state, that Smithfield fires should be kindled again, so as that we shall not be delivered from that sort of the powers of darkness; let us labour to get into that good state, as to be able to bless God, even in the midst of flames, that we are delivered from the worst sort of the powers of darkness; that the prince of this world is dethroned in our souls, that he is judged there. And let us labour to have that temper of mind, towards such as may be the authors of those sufferings to us, that our love towards them may not be extinguished. Labour that every one of us may say from our hearts: Let them discover what hatred they will towards me, God forbid that I should not exercise true love towards them. If they curse me, I will bless them; if they despitefully use me, and persecute me, I will pray for them.

Secondly. But we have also the second part of the

text to be briefly reflected upon. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" Our present limits allow us not to enlarge upon this part. And it cannot but be thought reasonable, that this occasion being monthly, and often considered, the other but annual, and rarely returning, we should choose to insist more largely upon it. But how great a privilege is this translation, and how amazing! that it should be represented to us by so endearing an expression! "Because my Son is dear to me, I will take you into his kingdom. He is not so dear to me, but I can be very well contented to make you partakers of all the blessings, that his kingdom carries in it."

And you know that there is no kingdom but what hath its particular laws and statutes and ordinances and privileges belonging to it. There is one great ordinance, belonging to this kingdom of our Lord's, that we are solemnly to attend, the next Lord's day. If we look upon ourselves as not only delivered from the power of darkness, but translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; this is indeed a great privilege, but there is no such privilege which hath not its duty belonging to it. We ought to consider how we shall carry the matter upon this translation, being translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; and being to partake in the privileges that belong to his kingdom, how shall we deport ourselves suitably hereto, with what temper of spirit;

1. With an admiring temper of spirit, considering the state out of which we are delivered. He hath delivered us from the power of darkness, he hath turned us from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God. This is that I am sent for, saith the apostle Paul, as a gospel minister, Acts. 26. 18. To open your eyes, and turn you from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God. Then into what a transport should it put us, to think that we should have been under the power of the devil unto this very day, the power of the prince of the air, that works in the children of disobedience, that works energetically, as the word signifies, his work in them hath an energy in it, Ephes. 2. 2. Oh frightful thought! to have such a horrid fiend lying continually in my bosom, preying upon the very vitals of my soul, leading me captive at his will! What the devil would have me be, and do, that I was, and did most readily!

2. We should recount, with great thanksgiving, our admission into this kingdom. Think we, first, whence we are delivered; and then into what state we are admitted, into the kingdom of his dear Son. Into what an adoring thankful frame should that put us, that our blessed God should translate us

into his own Son's kingdom ! You shall hereupon be so provided and cared for, as none else in the world are besides. He will watch over your spirits, your souls shall be bound up in the bundle of life ; you shall have all the supports and comforts to, that, in infinite wisdom and love, he shall judge necessary for you, in this world ; and at length be brought into the presence of the divine glory, with exceeding great joy !

3. Consider that the particular ordinances, of this kingdom of his, are aptly designed for your advantage. This that we are now to prepare for, is an ordinance belonging to that kingdom ; I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, saith our Lord, Luke 22. 29. 30. that you may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom, We are to eat and drink with him, in his kingdom ; and that ordinance, wherein we are to eat and drink with him, is the emblem of what is there finally designed and meant, when we are to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.

4. We should consider what faith is required, on our part, being come into such a kingdom, and having the privileges thereof secured unto us, by such a sealing ordinance. There ought to be no dubious thought of him, who so kindly invites us ; especially when we are, in so friendly a way, eating and drinking together.

5. It is to be considered what fidelity is required of us. We are to swear fealty to the King of this kingdom, never let it be said, we, that eat and drink at his table, have lift up our heel against him.

6. With what joy should we consider our state, in our approach to such an ordinance ; we are received as friends to the King's table. Let Israel rejoice, in him that made him, let the children of Zion rejoice in their King, Psal. cxlix. 2. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, thy King cometh, meek and lowly. Zech. ix. 9. How infinitely condescending, when he treats such as we for his welcome guests ! And take both the parts of the text together, and they will give us this twofold hint of use.

1. Consider how solicitous we ought to be, till we know that we are got out of that dark and horrid kingdom, and brought into this kingdom of light, and grace. When we know that these two kingdoms divide the world, and how fearful a thing it is to belong to the former, and how desirable a thing to belong to the latter kingdom ; who would not be solicitous, till he knows that he is got out of that horrid kingdom, into this blissful one, and into so safe and happy a state ? And how stupid negligence is it not to know, or be concerned to what kingdom I belong ! Dost thou not know who is thy king ?

Whether the dear Son of God. or that accursed king ; I hope you will labour not long to be ignorant, in a matter of so great concern, but drive it to a speedy issue.

2 With reference to both these, if you have a comfortable ground to hope that you are delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son ; be serious in your thanksgivings, and endeavour to arrive at greater degrees of gratitude, that your hearts may be more warm, and raised in your thanksgivings. And such thanksgivings ought to be gratefully expressed, in acts of mercy to the poor and needy. Blessed are the merciful, for they have received mercy, and shall receive it.

FUNERAL SERMONS.

TO MY WORTHY FRIEND,

DR. HENRY SAMPSON.

SIR,

I Have perused the papers which you sent me, and find, as far as I can recollect, they contain in them the substance of what was delivered; with no more mistakes than is usual in writing from the mouth of one who is not of the slowest speakers.

Some things besides, which the limits of the time allowed not to be spoken (having some short memorials of them by me) I have added, conceiving they might also contribute towards the good end you proposed to yourself, in so earnestly desiring this publication, the assisting of their patience, and their good and placid thoughts of God, who are exercised under long and languishing distempers. The observations which your profession hath occasioned you to make, in the cases of many others, hath I doubt not let you see the need of somewhat to this purpose; otherwise the example you have had so long before your eyes of so calm and composed a temper, in this excellent relative of yours, might have made you less apprehensive how great an addition a fretful inquiet spirit is, both to the sin, and the affliction of a sickly state. I am sensible your own affliction is great, in the loss you now sustain; the relief will be great, and suitable, which the forethoughts of that state will afford, where they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God, in heaven.

I am, Sir,

Yours in much sincerity, and affection,

to serve you in the work

and labour of the gospel,

J. H.



ON THE DEATH OF

Mrs. ESTHER SAMPSON.

Luke xiii. 16.

And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day ?

YOU will soon see the occasion, and connection of these words, by viewing over the whole paragraph to which they belong, ver. 10. And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. (11.) And behold there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. (12.) When Jesus saw her, he said to her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. (13.) And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. (14.) And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work : in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. (15.) The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite ! doth not each of you on the sabbath loose his ox and his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering ; (16.) And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day ? (17.) And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed : and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Inasmuch as our blessed Lord spake these words, and did the thing which occasioned them, upon that which was, with the Jews, their Sabbath-day ; it cannot be unfit for us to cou-

sider them upon ours, they so fitly leading us to consider also another release, wrought for a daughter of Abraham too, on our Sabbath-day. It was formerly told you upon what occasion, and I doubt not but you generally know upon whose account we were to divert from our usual course, and subject at this time. Nor could any thing have been more suitable to the present occasion, for not only was this daughter of Abraham released from her infirmity upon the sabbath-day; but the time wherein it remained upon her, in a great and manifold complication, was (as her surviving consort hath acquainted me, and who therefore recommended this subject) precisely about eighteen years.

There are, it is true, disagreements between our case, and that case in the text, which do not therefore render both together less instructive to us, but the more. And, to make way to what may be so, you must here take notice, that these words are part of our Lord's defence of what he had done, in performing this work of mercy, wherein what he says is justly severe, and very clearly convictive. It is very deserved and just severity, that he called him, who caviled in the case, by his own true name, thou hypocrite. He, under pretence of great sanctity, discovers the highest enmity, even against our blessed Lord himself, who came (being sent) upon the holiest and kindest design into this world. The zeal which he pretends for the observation of the sabbath, could not be the thing that he did really mean, or that acted him in this case; for it was not likely he could be ignorant of what was a known adjudged case among the Jews (as some of their own rabbies * inform us) that all needful endeavours ought to be used for the cure of the sick upon the sabbath-day. So as that he very well knew, no rule could be broken in this case. But this he reckons was somewhat plausible, and he pleases himself in it, that he could tell how to vent his spite against Christ and Christianity, under a mock-shew of great sanctimony. And our Lord justly calls him what indeed he was, when he would thus seem what he was not. It was not that he cared for religion, or for any thing of real sanctity, of which a due and just observation of the sabbath was a real part; but that he had a mind, as far as conveniently he could, to express his displeasure at that evidence and lustre, wherewith the glorious works

* Vid Maimon. constitut. de fundam. c. 5. 9. cum Abrav. N. 13, 14. And, as our own Dr. Lightfoot says upon that question of our Lord's: Is it lawful to heal upon the Sabbath-day? (quoting divers more of theirs to that purpose) he violated not the Sabbath so much as their own cautions allowed. See his works, vol. 2.

our Lord wrought evinced him to be the Messiah; while yet he was struck with that awe of him, that he adventures not to direct his reproof to him, but the people.

It is here by the way to be noted, that they were not thus disaffected to our Lord, and the religion he was about to introduce; no, but this ceremonious bigot, a ruler of the synagogue, was the ill-pleased disaffected person.

I shall not trouble you with the discussion what sort of power it was that belonged to that office. Some, well acquainted with the jewish writings, say that the ruler of the synagogue was not wont himself to officiate, as minister *in sacris*; but his business was *circa sacra*, to regulate the administration. We consider not his power, but his ill-will and enmity against Christ and true religion. The people, in the mean time, thronged after him in multitudes, and beheld the great works he wrought with joy, and glorified God. Only where was more power, and probably more knowledge, there was more too of a peevish spite and envy, that the interest of our Lord was, by so proper means, growing in the world. A sad (and not a new) thing! that religion should have most opposition, whence it should have most of countenance, and advantage to dilate and spread itself. Do any of the rulers believe on him? But the people (whom they despised, and pronounced accursed for that reason) were more apt and forward to receive the gospel, Joh. 7. 48. 49. The more there is of light, unaccompanied with a pious inclination, the higher, the more intense and fervent, the finer and more subtle is the venom and malice against Christ, and real Christianity.

But our Lord was not diverted from his kind and compassionate design, by any such obstructions as these. His love triumphs over them, and he make that discovery of his compassion which could not but carry the clearest conviction with it; as his reproof carried the brightest justice. Why what saith he: Do not any of you loose an ox, or an ass from the stall on the sabbath-day? and shall not I loose a daughter of Abraham? It is like she was a daughter of Abraham, not only as being a jewess, but as being a believer, as being, according to Scripture language, of Abraham's seed in the spiritual sense, as well as the natural, and he was the more peculiarly compassionate upon that account; and yet more, because her ail proceeded from the malignant influence of the devil. Shall not I loose such a one whom Satan hath bound, that great enemy of mankind? Why should not I shew myself so much the more a friend, by how much the more he appears an enemy, and give the earliest relief the matter can admit?

It is very true indeed, his compassion was never to incline

him to do unfit and unseasonable things, or things that were no way subservient to his principal end; but such a subserviency being supposed, his relief must be with the earliest, to day before morrow, though it were the sabbath-day. And so now you have the ground of discourse plainly in view before you. That the devil cannot be more maliciously intent to afflict those that relate to God (even, when it is in his power, with bodily distempers) than our Lord Jesus is compassionately willing to relieve them, without distinction of time, when it shall be consistent with, and subservient to his higher and greater purposes. In speaking to this, I shall,

I. Touch briefly upon what is here expressed in the text, the hand that Satan may have in the afflictions, yea and in the bodily distempers of men, and even of them that belong to God among them.

II. What hand our Lord Jesus has in their relief and release-ment.

III. How far we may understand, or may reasonably expect his compassion to influence him, in such cases.

IV. I shall shew that however the release be wrought, it is done very mercifully towards them that belong peculiarly to God.

V. And so make use of all.

I. Somewhat briefly as to that first query: What hand it is supposable the devil may have in the afflictions of men, and more particularly of them that belong to God; as that woman, being a daughter of Abraham, was to be considered, as one within the compass of God's covenant, and not improbably as one that, in the strictest sense, was in covenant with God.

1. It is plain, in the text, the devil had a direct hand in her distemper, called a spirit of infirmity. There were more evident, and more frequent instances of this kind in that time, the devil then setting himself more openly to contend against the incarnate Son of God, upon his more open appearance to rescue and recover an apostate world from under his dominion and tyranny. But as to more ordinary cases we may further consider,

2. That the devil is a constant enemy to mankind, apt and inclined, as far as God permits him, to do men all the mischief he can.

3. That as he first introduced sin into the world, so he hath, by consequence, all the calamities that afflict it. There had been no death, sickness, or distemper upon the bodies of men, but from hence. Consider the devil therefore, as the prince and leader of the apostacy, who first drew man into transgression, and thereby rendered him liable to the justice of his Maker, turned his paradise into a desert, and a region of

immortal undecaying life into a valley of sickly languishings and death itself. So may he be said to have had a remoter hand, in binding not only this daughter of Abraham, but every child of Adam, in all the afflictions, maladies, and distempers which befall them here; and finally in the bonds of death too, whereof he is said to have had the power Heb. 2. 14, 15. Though the children of the second Adam (with whom, for this purpose, he was partaker of flesh and blood, and became with them a son of Abraham, and of his seed) are, by being so bound, released and made free, both from death, and the bondage of fearing it, to which they were otherwise subject all their days; as we shall further see anon.

4. Though God do not ordinarily allow him more power, yet we may well suppose him to have more malice against these children of Abraham (who thereby pass into the account of his own children also) being more intent upon vexing and afflicting whom he apprehends or suspects he shall never be able to destroy; and always apt to use all the power shall be allowed him, to this mischievous purpose. We find that the afflictions of the people of God, in other kinds, and even in this kind, are expressly, often, attributed to the devil. In other kinds: Satan shall cast some of you into prison, Rev. 2. 10. And divers think that thorn in the flesh, which the apostle suffered, (2 Cor. 12.) was some acute bodily pain; and he says expressly: It was a messenger of Satan, sent to buffet him. He, it is said, smote Job with the tormenting boils that afflicted him so grievously, and so long, and brought the other calamities upon him, that you read of in his story.

5. And again it is further to be considered, that whereas in all diseases the morbid matter, whether immediate in men's bodies, or remoter in the encompassing air, differs not from other matter, otherwise than only in the various disposition, figuration and motion of parts and particeles, whereof it is made up; inasmuch as the devil is called the prince of the power of the air, we know nothing to the contrary, but that he may frequently so modify that, as that it shall have most pernicious influences upon the bodies of men; and upon those especially, so far as God permits, that he has any greater malice against.

6. And again (supposing this) it is not a stranger thing that God should permit him to afflict the bodies of them that belong to him, than to disturb their minds. Sure their bodies are not more sacred. If we should suppose that he may some way or other perniciously agitate the humours in human bodies, it is no harder a supposition than that he should so variously form the images in the fancy, by which he tempts; for herein surely he comes nearer us, and is more inward to us.

7. Nor is it less supposable that God should, in some instances, permit the devils to follow their inclinations in afflicting his people, than wicked men to follow theirs, which, in the general, carry them to the same thing; when he knows how to turn the one to after-advantage, as well as the other. But we have no ground to think, notwithstanding all this, that the wisdom and goodness of providence will ordinarily permit that this agency of the devil, in the mentioned cases, shall be altogether in a contra-natural way; but only, by so moving and acting with natural causes, that he may be also obviated, through the ordinary blessing of God, by natural means, and and causes too. Much less is it reasonable that diseases should be themselves reckoned very devils, as was the opinion of the gnostics of old, wherein they much concurred with the manichees; whom, together with them, the more honest-minded pagan Plotinus so copiously confutes (though that was more anciently a common opinion, the Septuagint's rendering the word that signifies *plague* by the word *δαίμωνιον*, in several places of Scripture, seems to intimate. But the commonness of such an opinion, in a dark time, signifies nothing to sway ours this way, or that) But whatsoever hand the devil may be supposed to have in their afflictions, or sicknesses that belong to God, we are,

II. Sure that our Lord Jesus has a most kind hand (whenever it is) in their release, which though it were here in a more extraordinary and immediate way, and beside the course of nature, the disparity in this case signifies nothing to the lessening of the favour, towards those whom he vouchsafes to relieve in other cases; for the influence that he has in ordinary cases is as truly divine. If the cure of a diseased person be wrought, by his blessing, upon ordinary natural means; his co-operating with nature is less amazing, but not less effectual, or less kind: as also the efflux from God is (for his own part) as real, when he works with second causes, as without them, and as immediately reaches the effect, in both the senses of immediateness, whereof so much noise is made in the schools.

And we must further know our Lord Christ is now the universal Regent of all nature, even as he is the Christ, the world being devolved into his hands, and all power being given to him both in heaven, and earth. He is Lord of all, when therefore any of you are sick, it is by his disposal, if you are recovered out of that sickness. Nor is his agency less or lower, whether it be by blessing a medicine, or working a miracle; his power, and love are the same either way. And know there is an honour, and acknowledgment due from chris-

tians to their great crucified Lord, who hath founded a dominion over this world in his blood, who died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord of living, and dead. Therefore you are to reckon you are beholden to Christ for all your recoveries, and all your refreshings that you meet with, amidst the many infirmities and frailties of this your present mortal state.

And if the release be by death, as the case is which we now have specially to do with, that universal power of his, over all lives, must be understood immediately to reach to that case too. It is he that measures lives, that lengthens them out, and cuts them shorter at his own pleasure. And as to those that are more peculiarly his own, it is a more peculiar, and favourable superintendency that he has over that affair, even of their very dying. Their death is precious in his sight. He with a most gentle tender hand unties the knot of man, releases and receives the dislodging soul: Lord Jesus receive my spirit, as dying Stephen speaks. But

III. We are to consider how far our Lord Jesus his compassion concerns him in such cases, or wherein that may move him to interpose in them, so as in this case he did.—And here two things are to be asserted—That his compassion has not supreme and principal influence in this case; and—That yet it hath real influence.

1. That it hath not supreme or principal influence in such cases. And this doth really require to be more principally insisted on, as of greater importance to narrow, terrene minds, that are apt to measure all things by themselves, and in reference to their own little sphere and compass; and to themselves only in their present state, as they are inhabitants of this minute spot of earth; as if all things ought to bend, and yield to their present convenience and accommodation here. Whereupon they wonder when they are sick, and in pain, God doth not presently relieve and ease them; and think they should do so for any friend, or neighbour, if it were in their power.

Know, therefore, it was not from compassion, as the solitary, or as the chief inducement that our Lord did work this release for this daughter of Abraham. That cannot be supposed, for he can never be understood to make a creature, and the advantages of a creature, his supreme end. That would have been to invert the order of things, to dethrone God, and deify man, and had been itself a real sort of that idolatry, which was one among the many horrid evils which he purposely came to redress, and give remedy to in this apostate degenerate world. He had a greater inducement, that is that he

might diffuse the glory of God among the children of men ; and that he might give evidence thereby to the truth of his own mission, and prove most convincingly that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, the very person that was anointed, and sent about that great undertaking, to recover God's rights in this lap-sed world, to bring about a reconciliation between God, and men. And upon this account, when he wrought cures upon men's bodies, it was out of a higher compassion to their souls. And though even this itself, of saving men's souls, was not his highest design, but the glory of God (as we shall see further by and by) yet it being truly designed by him, and more principally than their bodily ease and relief, this was an apt means to this his lower end. For whereas, in order to this, he was to manifest himself a divine Saviour ; it was requisite he should give a joint, and an equal demonstration of the two things which his being so implies, his godlike power, and love. The former alone it did not serve his purpose to shew, which he might have shewn as much by inflicting plagues on men's bodies, as working cures ; by striking them with blindness, lameness, &c. as by giving them sight and soundness. But it was necessary to his end his miracles should be beneficent, and that he should (as it is elsewhere said in the evangelical story he did) go about doing good, and not make men afraid of him, by showing the power of a God in destructive strokes, and judgments ; but (which became a Saviour) express a divine good will towards men, and thereby make his way into their hearts, bring them to understand, and own a Saviour ; and as such to fall in, and comply with his kind design towards them. And this, as it served to exalt God in this world, chiefly induced him to work this present cure. If his compassion towards a poor afflicted woman, labouring under bodily infirmity, were his principal inducement ; if therefore, she must be presently cured out of hand, even on the sabbath-day, because she had been now bound eighteen years : why, I pray you, was she to have been bound eighteen years ? or why bound at all ? His divine knowledge of the case, and power to have redressed, or prevented it, had as well served his compassionate inclination long before. Or why was not such a course formerly set on foot, and continued in the world, that men might be cured of blindness, deafness, lameness, fevers, dropsies, or whatsoever other maladies, easily, and by speaking a word, in any former time ? Why was it deferred to this time ? Or why hath not such a course been kept a foot ever since his ascension ? Hath heaven rendered him less merciful, and compassionate ? Is it so unkind, and ill natured a place ? It is true that his apology for the cure he now wrought, to this ruler of the sy-

nagogue, seems to have no higher reference, nor was he bound, unseasonably, to declare his utmost end and design, to a prejudiced, malicious enemy. That was to speak itself, to shine by its own light, and by such means and methods as these, gradually to make its own way into less obstructed minds, insensibly sliding in upon them; which might better be done (time being given at leisure to consider things) by the real evidence which his works carried with them, than by industrious, and often-repeated verbal commentaries and expositions.

He sometimes spake it out expressly, as he thought fit, to competent and more prepared hearers, that his great design was to make himself, and his errand be understood; who he was, and what he came into the world for; that he was the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and that his business was to save them that were lost; and to restore God's interest in an apostate lost world whose rights were to be cared for, in the first place. He redeemed us to God by his blood, Rev. 5. 9. Or for the glory of God, as he summed it up in the case of Lazarus, when he was told of his being sick, Joh. 11. 4. This sickness is not unto death, that is, it was not to terminate in a continuing death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of man might be glorified; the same account which this evangelist gives of all these his great works, and why they were recorded, that we might believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, &c. chap. 20. 30. And otherwise was it so considerable a thing, that a man well got out of this fearful gulf, as Lazarus now was, should be fetched back again! that so mighty a wonder should be wrought! that the inclosure of the grave should be torn open! and the released soul should be again drawn down, as a bird escaped, caught back into its former confinement, to converse a while longer amidst the impurities of a world lying in wickedness, and with shadows, in a world the fashion whereof passes away!

No, miracles were not so cheap things. We may observe the great, and wise God hath, for great and weighty reasons, been always very sparing in making very observable innovations upon nature, or any considerable changes in the ordinary course and method of natural causes, and their operations, as a thing less suitable to a state of probation, wherein men were to be held in this world. And hath only been wont to do it, where the inconveniencce was to be balanced by preponderating greater reasons; which might as much require that he should depart from the fixed rule sometimes, as other reasons might, that he should not do it often. It was equally necessary that miracles should not be common, as that there should be any wrought at all; and in great part for the same reason.

For if they were common, they must lose the only design, for which they could be at all useful. If God should do, in this kind, what is not necessary, he should the less effect by it that which is; inasmuch as they are only useful, as they are strange, and, in the natural way, unaccountable. But there is nothing so great in this kind, but ceases to be thought strange, if it be common; otherwise, is not the forming of the eye, in itself as great a thing, as to give sight to the blind? Or the framing such a world as this as great a thing, as the most stupendous miracle that ever was wrought in it?

It was indeed necessary somewhat extraordinary should at first be done, to demonstrate that man, Jesus of Nazareth, to be the Son of God; which it was impossible should otherwise be known. When that was fully done, it was not necessary there should still be a repetition of miracles, from age to age, to prove the former were wrought, or the truth of the narratives which reported them. That was sufficiently to be known, in the ordinary way, as other matters of fact are, or other history, about which there is no doubt made among men. And the history of these things has greater advantages to recommend it to the certain belief of after-time, than most that ever were writ besides, upon many accounts. It was indeed most becoming the majesty, wisdom, and goodness of God (taken together) to do what might answer the real necessities of men, whom he was designing to save; but not to indulge their curiosity, nor their unaccountable dulness, sloth, or prejudice, whereby they may be unapt to inquire about, or receive plain things.

Therefore miracles were to be done as rarities, sometimes, not at all times; and at such a time, and upon such an occasion most of all to notify, and signalize the Redeemer, at his first appearance, to draw men's eyes upon him, that they might take notice of him, and demean themselves towards him accordingly. This was to be done sufficiently once for all. And the great stupidity of the world made a matter, which needed some supernatural evidence, need so much in that kind. Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe. And if he did so far comply with the necessity of degenerate humanity, as to give once some signal convictive evidence that he was the Christ; the divine wisdom would take care it should not be so often done, as to become trivial, and insignificant to its proper end; the importance whereof was such, as that it ought to transcend any regard to the welfare of men's bodies, but not to exclude it: Which we now come briefly to shew, in the next place, namely.

2. That though compassion towards an infirm creature,

under bodily distemper, was not the principal inducement unto this cure ; it was a real one. Our Lord doth really compassionate the frailties of those that relate to him, while they dwell in mortal flesh. He himself bears our sicknesses. He has a tenderness towards them, even while he doth not think it fit actually to release and set them free ; which makes way to what was proposed, in the last place, to be insisted on, as preparatory to the intended use.

IV. That in what way soever our Lord Jesus works a release for them that are most specially his own, from their bodily distempers ; he doth it in mercy to them. He lets their affliction continue upon them in mercy, greater mercy, indeed, than would be in an unseasonable deliverance. But when he sees it a fit season to give them a release, that is an unquestionable mercy too ; though it be not in such a way, as appears such to vulgar eyes.

It is more easily apprehensible to be from compassion, if he relieves a poor, pained, weak, languishing, sickly creature, by giving renewed strength, and ease, and health in this world. But when the release is by death, as in the case we have under our farther present consideration, it is hard to persuade that this is done in mercy, that there is compassion in this case. There is, it is true, in this a manifest disparity, but not a disadvantageous one. Is it a less thing to release a holy soul from the body, than from bodily distempers ? It can only be so in the opinion of such blind moles of the earth, as the children of men, are now generally become. But let the case be considered according to its true and real import. Why ! a recovery from sickness is but an adjournment of death, it is but death deferred a while. When there is a release wrought in such a way as this, in which hers was wrought, whom God hath lately taken from amongst us ; here is a cure, not only of one bodily distemper, but of all ; not only of actual diseasedness, but of the possibility of ever being diseased more ; here is a cure wrought, not only of infirmity, but of death. For the saints conquer death by suffering it, yea a cure, not of death only, but of mortality, of any liableness to death, so as it can never touch them more ; yea further, not only of bodily diseases, but of spiritual too, far worse, and more grievous than all bodily diseases, whatsoever ; a cure of blindness of mind, deadness, and hardness of heart, of all indispositions towards God, his ways, and presence, towards the most spiritual duties, and the best, and most excellent of our enjoyments. The body of sin, and the mortal body are both put off together. The imprisoned soul is set free, and enters upon a state of everlasting liberty ; is released

from the bands of death, of whatsoever kind, and in the highest, fullest sense shall reign in life, through Jesus Christ. What is the decease of a saint, but a translation out of a valley of death, a golgotha, a place of skulls, a region where death reigns into the region of perfect and everlasting life? It is not to be called death simply or absolutely, but with diminution; it is death only in a certain respect, when in a higher, and much more considerable respect, it is a birth rather, a dying out of one world, and a being born at the same time into another, a much more lightsome, a purer, and more glorious world. The soul is cured in a moment, of whatsoever was grievous or afflicting to it; and the body put into a certain way of cure, of being made from an earthly, mean, mortal thing, heavenly, spiritual, incorruptible, and immortal; from a vile, a glorious body, like Christ's own, and by that power, by which he can subdue all things to himself, Phil. iii. 21.

V. And now for use.

I. Learn that there is no inconsistency in the case, that the same person should be at once the subject of long continued bodily affliction, and of divine compassion. These are reconcilable things, sickly languishings, under which one may be ready to fail; and compassions that fail not. This is a common theme, but the due consideration of it is too little common. Let it now be considered, with impartial equity, and with deep seriousness. Do you think the all-comprehending mind of the Son of God now first began to pity this daughter of Abraham? While he was not yet ascended, this attribution is given him; otherwise, no doubt, than as a false compliment; Lord, thou knowest all things—Since his ascension, we are assured he hath a feeling of our infirmities, so as to be touched with them, a continuing sympathy, remembering the inconveniencies of that state he had passed through, (as she once, *non ignara mali, &c. not unmindful of the evil, &c.*) and is always ready, therefore, to do the part of a faithful, and merciful high priest. Before his descent, we must, with equal reason, suppose him to have an entire prospect of the sad case of wretched mortals, in this miserable world of ours. What else made him descend? And after that he was descended, this mark could not but lie still before the eye of his divine mind, to which all his works were known from the beginning of the world. Yet the cure is deferred, the release is not given till the appointed season. When it is the case of any of you to be afflicted with long sickness, and to feel the tediousness of a lingering disease (count upon it that it may be so, as it is like it hath been, with divers of you) do not then permit the matter to the censure of an incompetent, partial judge. If you consult flesh and blood, if

sense be to pronounce in the case and give judgment, how hard will it be to persuade that you are not neglected in your languishings, that your groans and faintings are unpitied; though you are so plainly told: That whom the Lord loves, he chastens? Are you not ready to say, How can this stand with being, at the same time, the object of divine pity? If he pity me, would he let me lie, and languish thus, in so miserable a plight, day after day, and year after year? Yes, these things very well agree, and I would fain shortly evince to you that they do.

(1.) His compassion may sufficiently be evidenced in another kind and by another sort of instances. Sure it will speak compassion, if he frequently visit his frail infirm creatures, and by his visitation preserve their spirits, if he support them, if he refresh them, this is grace. My grace shall be sufficient for thee, saith he to the great apostle, when he refused to release him from that thorn in the flesh, that messenger of Satan that did buffet him.

(2.) Besides, compassion may appear by this kind of dispensation itself. It may not only carry that with it, but in it, which may shew good-will. If long continued affliction may be supposed to proceed from compassion, it doth much more consist with it. It may proceed from compassion, and bear the relation to it of an effect to the cause. We find it expressly so said in Scripture, and who can so truly speak God's mind as himself? He afflicts in very faithfulness, and as many as the Lord loves, he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives, Prov. iii. 12. quoted, Heb. xii. 5, 6. Rev. iii. 19. Affliction must be the effect of his real, and most sincere good-will, and compassion, though of long continuance, if it be apt, and intended to do you good, in higher and in greater regards than those wherein you suffer. Or if the good your affliction does you, or is fitly designed to do you, be of a nobler and more excellent kind, than that whereof it deprives you; it must be understood, not only to be consistent with kindness and good-will, but to be produced of it. For the same principle that intends the end, must also intend the proper means that serve to effect it. Now the kind of this good is thus to be estimated. You read Psal. ciii. 13. As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him. As a father. The relation he is in to them, is that of a father to his children. But we must understand, under what notion, he is related; and we are told, Heb. xii. 9, 10. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not then much rather be in subjection to the Father of our spirits, and live? For they, verily for a few days, chastened us

after their own pleasure ; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. We have here an account where the relation terminates, and see both the object of his more special kindness and good-will, which accompany the relation, and the end of it. He is the Father of their spirits, whence, therefore, we may collect, the object of that love, which goes with the relation, must be their spirits also : the end of it is their spiritual advantage, to make them partakers of his own holiness. His holiness is a lofty word, and carries the matter high. Understanding it soberly (as we may be sure it was meant) it must signify the holiness which he hath himself impressed, and the impression whereof is the lively resemblance and image of his own. And is not this a good of a nobler, and more excellent kind, than we can lose by a sickness ? better than the ease of this vile flesh, that was made out of dust, and tends thither ? The object is their spirits, for there the kindness, that belongs to the relation, must terminate, where the relation terminates. How much more shall we not be subject to the Father of our spirits, and live ? The Father of our spirits is there contradistinguished from the fathers of our flesh. God is not the father of our flesh, but the Father of our spirits ; He is the Creator of our flesh too, our flesh is his creature, but not his offspring. There must be a similitude and likeness of nature between a father, and a child, which there is not necessarily between a maker, and the thing made. In respect of our spiritual part, we are his offspring ; and he is so a Father to us, both as the souls of men in common bear his natural image, and, if they be regenerate, as they bear his holy image too. And the case may be so, that the suffering of our flesh is necessary for the advantage of our spirits. Our flesh may suffer so, as that the spirit shall be the better for it ; and then pity itself, compassion itself must not only permit, but cause and produce such a course of dispensation, as whereby that end shall be attained, the making us partakers of his holiness. So the apostle speaks of his own case : Though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day, 2 Cor. iv. 16. Though our outward man perish. We are compassed about with deaths, that are continually beating down the walls of this outward man, they are beating upon it, and are likely to infer its perishing ; and if it perish, let it perish, I am not solicitous as though he had said about that. If it must come down, let it come down ; in the midst of all these outward assaults, our inward man is renewed day by day, gathers a fresh, and increasing strength, and vigour, whilst this outward man is tending to dissolution and dust. And several ways such continued afflictions, upon the

outward man, may make for the advantage of the inward man, in the best kind.

[1.] As they withdraw, and take off the mind and heart from this world, a debasing and defiling thing; and which transforms the soul, that converses too much with it, into a dunghill, fills it with ill savour. But what doth all this world signify to a sickly, pained person?

[2.] As it engages them to be much in prayer. Nothing is more suitable, than that an afflicted life, be a life of much prayer. Is any man afflicted, let him pray, Jam. v. 13. Much affliction hath a natural aptitude to incline men this way. In their affliction they will seek me early, Hos. v. 15. It is a dictate of nature, even when grace, as yet, hath no possession; but which through God's blessing, may, by this means, help to introduce it. For it urges the soul Godward, who is the God of all grace: obliges it to converse with him, whereby somewhat better may be gained than is sought. In their afflictions they will be submissive and lie at my feet, saith God; they will seek me early, from whom, otherwise, I should never hear, it may be, all their life long. Oh! that you would understand the matter so, when God afflicts in such kinds, so as his hand touches your very bone and flesh; this is the design of it, to make you pray, to bring you upon your knees, to put you into a supplicating posture: if he can, upon any terms, hear from you, though you seek him but for bodily ease and refreshing, it may be a means of the greatest advantage to you, ere God have done with you, when once he has brought you, by this means, to treat; when he has got you into a more tractable disposition, there is hope in the case. If thus he open your ear to discipline, and be to you an interpreter, one of a thousand, to shew you his righteousness; he may seal instruction to you, and save your soul from going down to the pit, having found a ransom for you, Job xxxiii. 15. &c.

But for those that have a real interest in God, and union with Christ, that which occasions much prayer, is likely to be the means of much spiritual improvement, and advantage to them.

[3.] It puts several suitable graces upon exercise, and by being exercised, they grow. It tries their faith, and improves it. Faith is, in such a case as this, necessarily called forth into act, if there be the principle; and as it acts, it grows, and becomes more and more strong, and lively. Their patience is exercised by it, and perfected; and that has a great influence upon their universal perfection. Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect, Jam. 1. 2, 3, 4. There will be a universal languour (as if he should have said) upon your

spirits, if you be impatient; if you cannot suffer (as patience is an ability for suffering) if you can by no means endure, without tempestuous agitations, or sullen despondencies of spirit. But if patience have its perfect work, that will infer a universal healthfulness, and good habit into your whole soul.

Their love to God is, in such a case, eminently tried, and improved. Blessed is the man that endures temptation (tentative affliction is there meant; as above, ver. 2.) For when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him, (Jam. i, 12.) which implies, their love to him is the great thing put upon trial, in that case. And it is a great trial of love to God, a very improvable opportunity of discerning its sincerity, when, upon a long affliction, you can appeal to God, and say: Thou knowest I love thee; though thou smite and kill, I will still love thee. No discontentful motion, no repining thought shall ever be allowed a place in my breast; there may be sighs, but no murmurings, groans, but no tumults, nothing of displeasure against thy holy pleasure.

[4.] It occasions such to live much upon the borders of eternity. Under affliction we look not to the things that are seen and temporal; but to the things that are unseen, and eternal; which make us count our affliction, though long, but momentary, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. And those souls will prosper and flourish that have so unspeakably more to do with the other world, than with this. It is in this way that the afflictions of this present state do work for us the far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory, (ver. 17.) as they direct our eye forward, while we look, (18.) not to the things that are seen, which are but temporal; but to the things that are unseen, and eternal. Life and spirit, strength and vigour enter, as though he had said, at our eye, which is prompted by the horror of frightful spectacles in this scene of things, to look to another, where all things appear lightsome, pleasant, and glorious.

There are other considerations, whereby you might argue to yourselves not only the consistency, but the great suitability of an afflicted state in this world, with God's favour, kindness, and compassion towards you. As that when he is more highly provoked, he threatens not to afflict, as the heaviest of penalties. Why should they be smitten any more? Isa. 1. 5. I will no more punish your daughters, &c. Hos. iv. 14. Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone, ver. 17. And again also, That his Covenant obliges him to it, as to them, who are, on stricter terms in covenant with him, Christ's own seed be-

ing signified by David's; as by David is manifestly Christ himself, Psal. lxxxix. Where you may see how, and after what tenor his covenant runs, ver. 30, ——— 34. According whereto he himself elsewhere acknowledges, that in very faithfulness God had afflicted him, (Psal. exix. 75.) that in experience, we are apt to grow remiss, secure and negligent, when all things are externally well with us. And let us but appeal to ourselves, how much a wakeful temper of spirit, under affliction, is better than carelessness, and vanity of mind, accompanied with fleshly ease and pleasure: that we can ourselves easily apprehend, that it may not only consist with the tenderness of a parent to have the wound of a child searched, though with much pain; but proceed from it: that in heaven our judgment of things will be right and incorrupt, where we shall apprehend no cause of complaint, that through many sicknesses, diseases, and death itself, our way was made for us thither. And if that shall then be a true judgment, the thing itself must be as true now. But these I hastily hint, and pass to some further use.

2. We may next collect, that since it is out of doubt the devil may have some hand in our outward affliction; we are concerned to take so much the more care, that he may not have his end upon us by it. A hand he may have, and we cannot determine how far; but whether it be more or less, great care we are concerned to take how to frustrate his design. He has the most mischievous ends that can be, and designs worse things to us than the affliction, which is the means, whatsoever that be. He would fain engage us in a controversy with God, would have us contend with him, murmur, fret, blaspheme and curse God; and therewith send out our last, and dying breath. That was his design upon Job. Let us labour to frustrate it, as he did. Divers of the ancients (Justian Martyr, Jerome, Cyprian, and Austin) speak much to this purpose, how great a design the devil drives in being the author of sicknesses and diseases to men, that he might make them apply themselves to him, and divert from God; as that wicked prince did, whom by the prophet we find so sharply reprov'd for it, as if there were no God in Israel, that he went to the god of Ekron (some demon or other, as we have reason to think) The last mentioned of these authors speaks of it as just matter of excommunication, when those that bear the name of Christians shall, in such cases, use means bearing no natural proportion or accommodateness to the end, charms, spells, &c. for ease, or cure of maladies; wherein no relief could reasonably be expected, but from the devil's agency, who may be officious enough, if especially he have first hurt, to heal too. that by practising

upon their bodies, he may entangle their souls ; and (according to his wont of running counter to God, who wounds that he may the more effectually heal and save) by a present temporary cure, wound mortally, and finally destroy.

He hath not left the world (no not the Christian world) quite ignorant of his methods in these kinds, of training men, by gradual steps, into things, first, that seem innocent, and then into such familiarities (whether their real distress, or their curiosity were the first handle he took hold of them by, or the engine by which he drew them) till, at length, it come to express covenanting. If the matter come not so far, it is rare to come off from the least tamperings without a scratch. He that is born of God, keeps himself, that the evil one may not touch him, (1 John. 5. 18.) as knowing he designs to touch mortally, and, if he touch, to kill. If it proceed so far as a solemn league, how tragical consequences doth story abound with! That of count Matiscon (plucked away by the devil from among divers persons of quality, whom he was entertaining, and at noon-day, whirled in the air three times about the city, in open view of the people, to whom he in vain cried for help) reported by some historians ; and that of an infamous magician of Saltzburg, and divers others, are instances both very extraordinary, and very monitory. But as to a future ruin, which he finally aims to involve men in, with himself ; he hath not faster hold of any, than those that have learnt to ridicule every thing of this kind, and who have put so much sadducism into their creed (consisting of so many negatives, or things they believe not, that they scarce leave enough positive to admit that name) as to think there is no such creature, perhaps as being conscious there can be no worse than themselves. But how near is he to them that think him out of the universe !

3. Since it is possible the devil may bind even those that belong to God, with some kind of bodily affliction or other ; it is the more to be apprehended, how much worse bonds they are, in which he binds those that do not belong to him. Oh ! that you would be serious here ! How many such sad cases are there, amongst even them as may be feared that are called christians, concerning which it may be said, here is a soul that satan hath bound, not eighteen, but, it may be, thirty, forty, fifty years ! Oh ! when shall this soul be released, that satan hath so long bound !

4. As from the devil's malice to the bodies of men, we may collect his greater malice to their souls ; so we may judge proportionably of Christ's compassions, that as they incline him to give them all suitable relief in their bodily afflictions, as far as can consist with those measures which infinite wisdom hath

pitched upon, for the government of this present world, and as shall fall in with the design of his office of a Redeemer and Saviour to us; so they much more incline him to relieve en-bondaged souls. For this doth most directly fall in with his design, and is the proper business of his office; the other may be only collateral to it, and as it were to be done on the bye. He came not into this world to procure that men might not be sick, or pained, or be presently restored to health, and ease; but he came and died, that souls might live; to procure for them pardon, reconciliation with God, all needful assisting influences of grace, and eternal life. Of these therefore they may be most assured, if they duly apply themselves. And some encouragement to expect so much they may draw, even from this instance. This infirm woman, in order to bodily cure, did apply herself to him, she came after him, as others did, for this purpose, and did, in a sort, put herself in the way of his healing influence. Now if any of you find your souls are yet held by the devil, in worse bonds; apply yourselves to the merciful compassionate Jesus: there is hope in the case. Oh! will you not say so much to him for a soul in bondage? Lord, loose this poor soul of mine, that satan hath bound for so many sad years. Do but labour to know you are bound, to feel your bonds. Whatsoever there is of prevailing sin in you, it is a bond, by which the devil holds your souls. The wicked are held in the cords of their own iniquities, Prov. 5. 22. And sins are said to be the works of satan, from which it is the design of the Redeemer to loose us. The Son of God was for this purpose manifested, that he might destroy (we read) it is that he might dissolve the works of the devil, as though he had said, that he might release, and unbind souls, that the devil as yet holds in fast bonds. And you may find you are so bound, when upon self-reflection you take notice, you are ordinarily restrained from what you should do, against the light and conviction of your own minds and judgments; that is, you find, if you reflect, a conviction hath taken place in your consciences that you ought to love God, but there is with you no such motion of soul, no inclination towards him; you ought, in a stated course, to pray, and pour out your soul to him, but you are bound, you cannot offer at it, you have no liberty for it, your terrene inclination, or love to vanity plucks you back; you ought to walk in the ways of God, but you are fettered you cannot move a foot; you ought to do the works of God, but you are manacled, you cannot stir a hand. Are you so bound, and will you not know it? What! never feel your bonds; when once they are felt, you will soon begin to cry, and supplicate. And if once you shall be brought seri-

ously, and incessantly to supplicate, it may be hoped the release will follow. Was our Lord so compassionate towards infirm bodies, in the days of his flesh in this world; and do we think he, above, is less compassionate to souls? Can it be thought heaven hath altered him to your disadvantage? Is he less kind, benign, and less apt to do good, now he is enthroned in glory? Why should you not believe he will give release unto your captived enbondaged souls, if you implore his help and mercy, with seriousness, and insist upon it, and do not give him over? Say to him, Jesus, thou Son of God. have mercy on me; for do you not know it is his office? The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and opening of prisons to them that are bound, Isa. lxi. 1. What! will you be bound all your days, and never lift up a cry to the great Redeemer and Saviour of souls, to give you release? How deservedly should these bonds end with you in the chains, wherein the devils themselves shall for ever be bound with you?

5. We may collect, there is an awful regard due to the sabbath-day. When our Lord justified the cure now wrought on their sabbath, only on this account, that it was an act of mercy towards a daughter of Abraham; by the exception of such a case he strengthens the general rule, and intimates so holy a day should not, upon light occasions, be otherwise employed, than for the proper end of its appointment. Though our day be not the same, the business of it, in great part, is; by the reason given in the fourth commandment, which being placed among the rest of those ten words, so many ways remarkably distinguished from the other laws given the Jews, and signifying that these were intended not to them alone, but to mankind, and given upon a reason common to man; the words also not necessarily signifying more, than there should be a seventh day kept as sacred to God, reserving it to after significations of his pleasure to mark out, and signalize this or that day, as he should see fit. And our Saviour having told us expressly: The sabbath was made for man (that is as men, not for Jews, as Jews) These considerations taken together, with many more (not fit to be here mentioned) do challenge a very great regard to the day, which we have cause to think it is the will of God we should keep as our sabbath.

6. That there is somewhat of privilege due, by gracious vouchsafement and grant, to the children of Abraham, to Abraham's seed, that is, to speak by analogy, to the children of covenanted parents. Abraham is considerable here, as being under that notion, a father; whosoever of you therefore are the children of such, as were of the faith of Abraham, and you

are now come to that adult state, wherein you are capable of transacting with God for yourselves, and wherein the *transitus* is made from minority to maturity : if now you own the God of your fathers, if you will now say, my father's God shall be my God ; he keeps mercy for thousands of them that love him, and keep his commandments, that is, if there were a thousand generations of such, (generations being spoken of so immediately before, namely, that he would visit iniquity upon them that hate him, to the third, and fourth generation ; but shew mercy to them that love him, and keep his commandments, unto a thousand generations, that is to never so many) if you will not, when now grown up, disavow your father's God, if you will avow and own him, and devote yourselves to him ; he will be your God, as well as theirs. Here is now the privilege due to Abraham's children, or to the children of covenanted parents. God has an early preventive interest in them, upon which they may lay their claim to him, as their God ; if they will but now give up themselves to him, and stand to his covenant. But if you will not do so, but slight, and reject the God of your fathers, then your birth privilege can signify nothing to you ; then think not to say with yourselves, We have Abraham to our father, in that 3d. of Matthew's gospel ; for God will never want children, he is able of stones to raise up children to Abraham, as if he had said, rather stones than you. And then indeed, upon a true account, Abraham is none of your father, as our Lord Jesus tells the Jews, if you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. You do so and so, thus did not Abraham, John viii. 39, 40. Pray consider what Abraham was, and how he lived on earth, like an inhabitant of heaven, as an heir of the heavenly country, his business was to seek the better country, that is, the heavenly ; wherefore God was not ashamed to be called his God ; as in that 11th. to the Heb. ver. 16. But if you will go from day to day grovelling in the dust of the earth, this did not Abraham. If you will spend your lives in the pursuit of vanity and trifles, this did not Abraham. There is a great privilege belonging by gospel grant, unto the children of covenanted parents, if they do not forfeit it, by neglecting, and practically disavowing their father's God.

7. But I further infer hence, that since this compassion has a real, though not a principal hand in the release that is given to them that belong to God, in whatsoever way they are released, from all their infirmities, and ails, and afflictions in this world ; it very much becomes, and much concerns all the children of Abraham patiently to wait for it, in God's own way. Patient-

ly, I say, in God's own way wait for it. The children of Abraham shall be loosened sooner or later, and in one way or other, though very long, though so many years bound by such and such afflicting distempers. You have a great instance of this kind in that daughter of Abraham, whom God hath called away from us. In all that long exercise, the main thing she was ever wont to insist upon, was that in all this affliction she might gain patience, submission, and instruction. And in her later time, when she drew nearer to eternity, was more in view of it, that was the great subject wherewith she entertained herself, and was conversant much with somewhat more lately written upon that subject, as by Mr. Shower (now known to most of you) and by another author. And her last entertainment, as I have been told (as to helps from creatures in any such kind) was the repetition of what some of you have heard concerning the Immanuel, wherewith she formerly pleased herself, as being, it is likely much habituated in the temper of her spirit to the thoughts of him; that having, by agreement with her pious consort, been their motto,* at their first coming together, Immanuel, God with us.

8. I shall only add one instruction more, to shut up all, that since our Lord Jesus hath such an agency, and even with compassion in the release of those that do belong to him, from their afflicting infirmities; we should all of us labour, with a due and right frame, and disposition of spirit to behold any such releasement. It is a great matter to be able to behold instances of that kind, with a right frame of mind, and spirit. If one be released by recovery, into ease, health, and strength in this world; it is easily and readily made matter of joy. Is one recovered out of a long and languishing sickness? Friends and relations behold it with great complacency and gladness of heart. But if a godly friend be released by dying, truly we can hardly make ourselves believe that this is a release, or so valuable a release; so much are we under the government of sense, so little doth that faith signify with us, or do its part, that is the substance of what we hope for, and the evidence of what we see not. No! This is to go with us for no release. We look only upon the sensible, that is, upon the gloomy part of such a dispensation, when such a one is gone, released, set at liberty (as a bird out of the cage, or the snare) we can hardly tell how to consider it as a release, we will not be induced to apprehend it so. There are no dispositions, no deportments commonly that suit such an apprehension. And Oh! how unbecoming and incongruous a thing, when Christ is, in that way, about releasing

* The posy on their wedding ring.

such a one, to have a holy soul just upon the confines of a glorious blessed eternity, compassed about with sighs, sobs, tears, and lamentations. How great an incongruity! I have many times thought with myself, the love and kindness of friends and relations is very pleasant in life, but grievous at death. It is indeed, in some respects, a very desirable thing (if God shall vouchsafe it) to die with one's friends about one. It may be one may need some little bodily relief, in those last hours; besides that, some proper thoughts may be suggested by them, to mingle with one's own. And, if God afford the use of reason, and speech, and the supply of his own Spirit, one may possibly, in this last juncture, be a means of some good to them. One may possibly say that that may abide with them, and be of future advantage to them. But in other respects, if the related friendly by-standers cannot duly temper themselves, if they are apter to receive or do more hurt, than good, if christians do not labour to shew a truly Christian spirit, in such a case; their presence has very little eligible in it. And, indeed, the deportment even of those that profess Christianity, about their deceasing godly friends, is such for the most part, as if the foundations of all religion were shaken with them, and as if they had a design to shake them too, if possible, in such with whom they are now to part; as if it were to be called in question, whether what God hath said concerning another world, and the blessed state of the innumerable and holy assembly above be true or no, or were not doubted to be false, and a solemn fiction, invented to delude mortals here on earth.

It is little considered how opposite such a temper of spirit, as commonly appears in us, is to the very design of all Christianity. For doth not the whole of Christianity terminate upon eternity, and upon another state and world? Now do but consider the inconsistencies that are to be found in this case, between the carriage, and temper of many that profess Christianity, and their very profession itself. They acknowledge, they own that the design of Christ's appearing here in this world, and of his dying upon the cross, was to bring us to God, to bring the many sons to glory. They grant that this is not to be done all at once, not all in a day; but it is to be done by degrees. Here he takes up one, and there another; leaving others still to transmit religion, and continue it on to the end of time. So far they agree with our common Lord, and seem to approve the divine determinations, in all these steps of his procedure. But yet for all this, if they might have their own will, Christ should not have one to ascend to him, of those for whom he died, and himself ascended to open heaven for them,

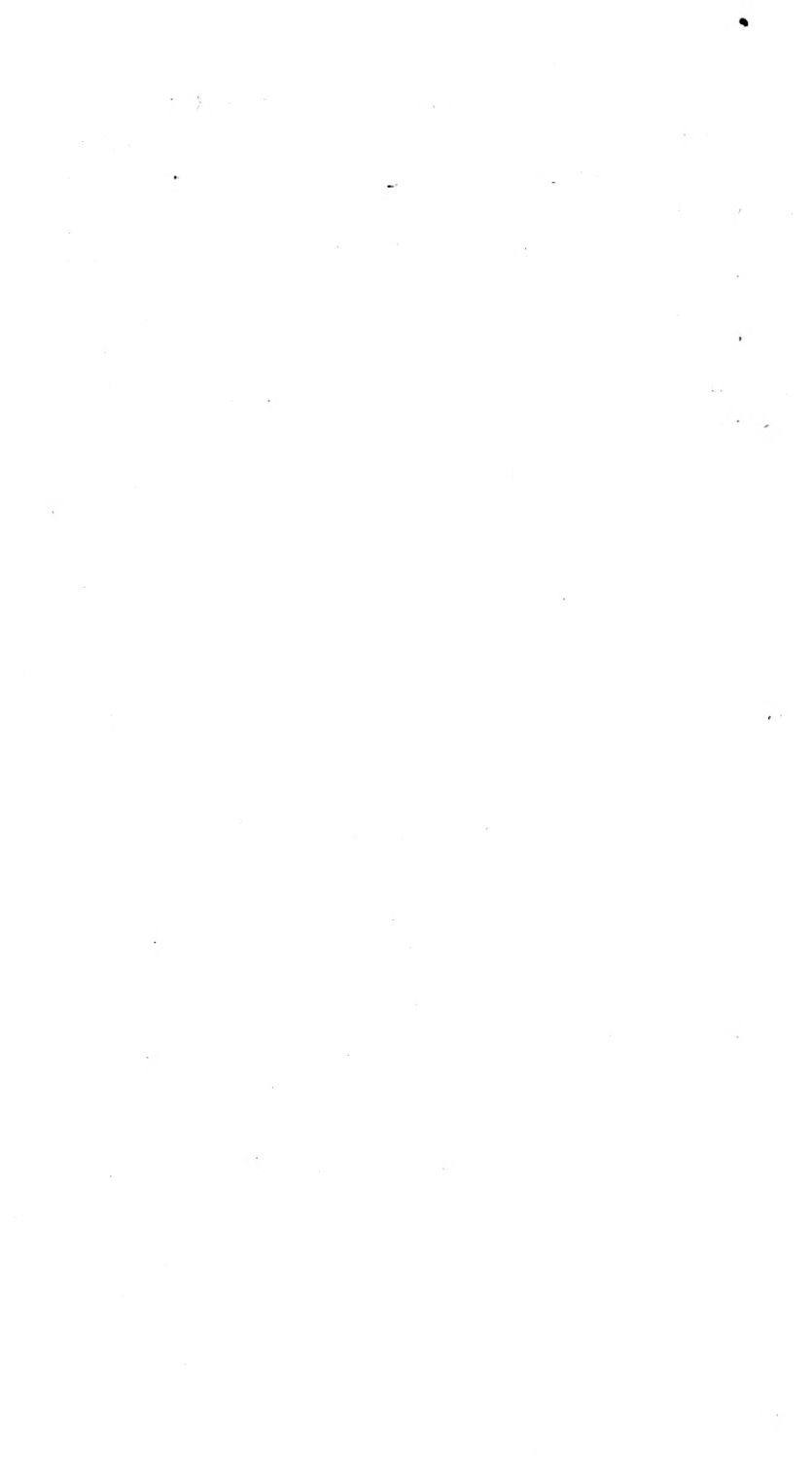
and to prepare a place for their reception, as their Fore-runner, there. I say not one to ascend after him, for they take up with a general approving of this design of his. Very well! say they, it is fitly ordered, his method is wise, and just, and kind, and let him take them that belong to him, when he thinks fit, only let him excuse my family; let him take whom he will, only let him touch no relation of mine, not my husband, wife, child, brother, sister, take whom he will, but let all mine alone. I agree to all he shall do well enough, only let him allow me my exception. But if every one be of this temper and resolution, for themselves and theirs, according to this tendency and course of things, he shall have none at all to ascend; none to bring with him, when he returns. Those that are dead in Jesus, he is to bring with him. No, he should be solitary, and unattended for all them. They, and all their relations would be immortal upon earth. How ill doth this agree, and accord with the Christian scheme and model of things?

But you will say, what! would I persuade you to be indifferent, and not to love, and care for your relatives, or be unwilling to part with them! No. All that I persuade to is, that there be a mixture in your temper, and such a mixture, as that the prevailing ingredient therein may agree with the stronger and weightier reason. It is not that I would have love extinguished among relatives, but I would have it moderated and subdued, to that degree as to admit of being governed by superior, greater, and nobler considerations. Do you think Christ did expect, or design that his disciples should not love him? And yet he tells them. John. 14. 28. If you loved me, you would rejoice that I say I go to my Father. And who in all this world could ever have such a loss, as they of him, dwelling in flesh among them? Yet, says he, if you loved me, you would rejoice that I say I go to my Father. And when the apostle, visibly tending towards death, by the prediction given concerning him, (Acts. 21. 13.) said to the disciples round about him: What mean you to weep, and to break my heart? I am ready, not only to be bound, but to die for the name of Jesus; if there had not been a faulty excess in the affection they expressed, certainly he would not have rebuked it, he would not have blamed what he thought not blame-worthy.

In short, it were desirable (if God see good) to die amidst the pleasant friends and relatives, who were not ill-pleased that we lived; that living, and dying, breath might mingle, and ascend together in prayers, and praises to the blessed Lord of heaven and earth, the God of our lives; if then we could part with consent, a rational, and a joyful consent.

Otherwise, to die with ceremony, to die amongst the fashionable bemoanings, and lamentations, as if we despaired of futurity! One would say (with humble submission to the divine pleasure) Lord! Let me rather die alone! in perfect solitude! in some unfrequented wood, or on the top of some far remote mountain! where none might interrupt the solemn transactions between thy glorious blessed self, and my joyfully departing, self-resigning soul!

But in all this we must refer ourselves to God's holy pleasure, who will dispose of us, living, and dying, in the best, the wisest, and the kindest way.



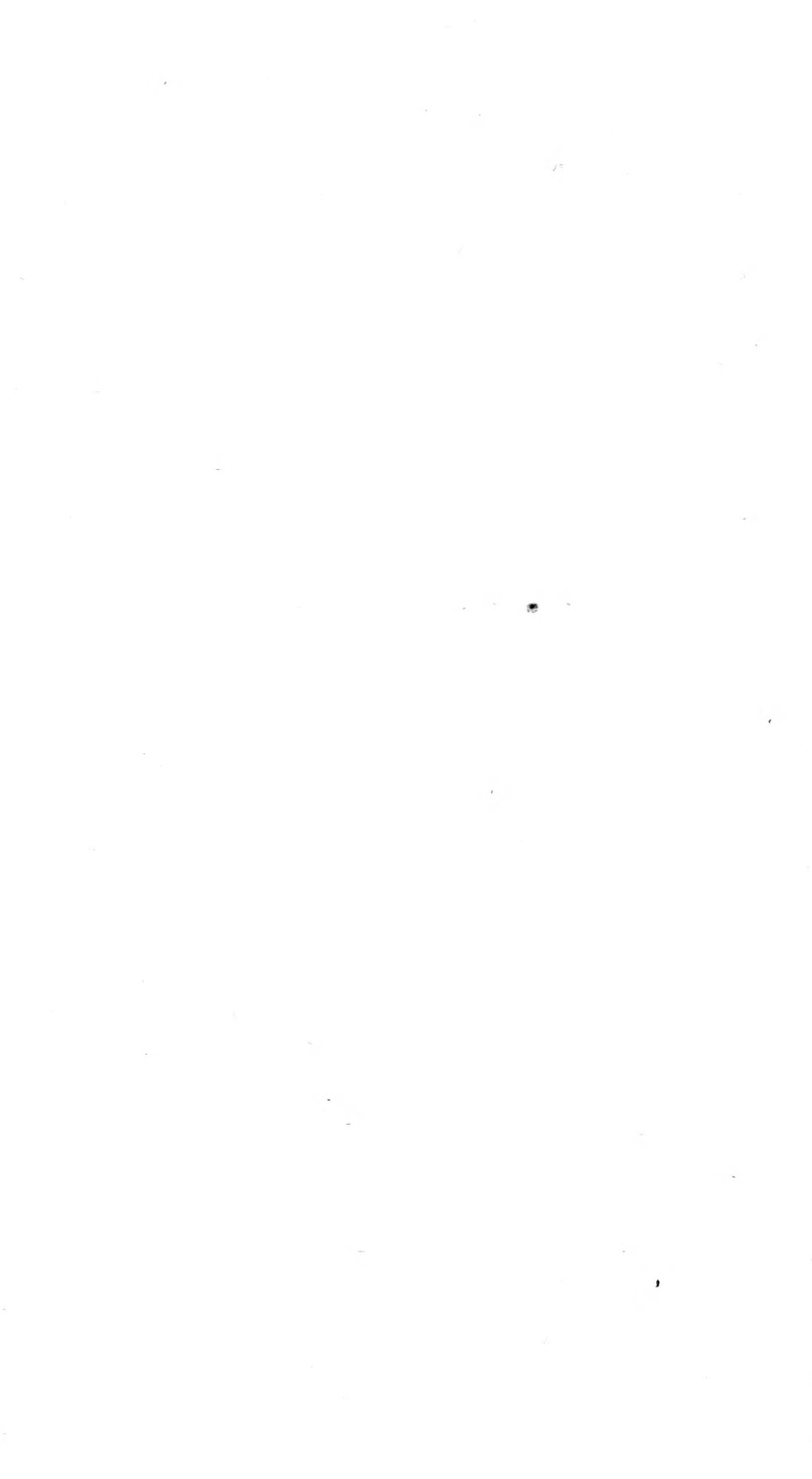
A

Discourse

RELATING TO THE

MUCH LAMENTED DEATH, AND SOLEMN FUNERAL OF

QUEEN MARY.



TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

RACHAEL, LADY RUSSEL.

MADAM.

I Can be at no loss for inducements to prefix your ladyship's name to this discourse. I know the subject is grateful to you, and if I only give you the occasion hereby of revolving in your mind this sublime context, you will entertain yourself from it, with more enlarged and exalted thoughts, than this discourse, especially confined within so narrow limits, can suggest.

And your ladyship knows so much of the incomparable queen, that you can the more easily believe the rest. I reckon you, Madam, a great frequenter of that assembly above, to which she is now adjoined. You have, besides the greater attractives that are common to all serious christians, a very peculiar one, to draw your mind often thither. A joint-root with you is there by transplantation, and a noble branch, from you both, and in whom two illustrious families meet, is, under your care, shooting upwards also. All indeed that have true honour for him, will earnestly covet he may be long serviceable to the most valuable purposes, in this world; and that, by the blessing of heaven upon his approaching nuptials (with one from whom may be expected all that so sweet and tender a bud, now beginning to open, can promise) he may, in due time, spread forth many branches, that may flourish here; but it is to be hoped he will be found to have a greater mind, than can be confined to so low, and little a thing, as this earth is.

The thought may much the better be digested, that terrestrial nuptials will some time end in funerals; if once, by God's prescribed methods, it can be made certain to us also, that those funerals shall end in celestial triumphs.

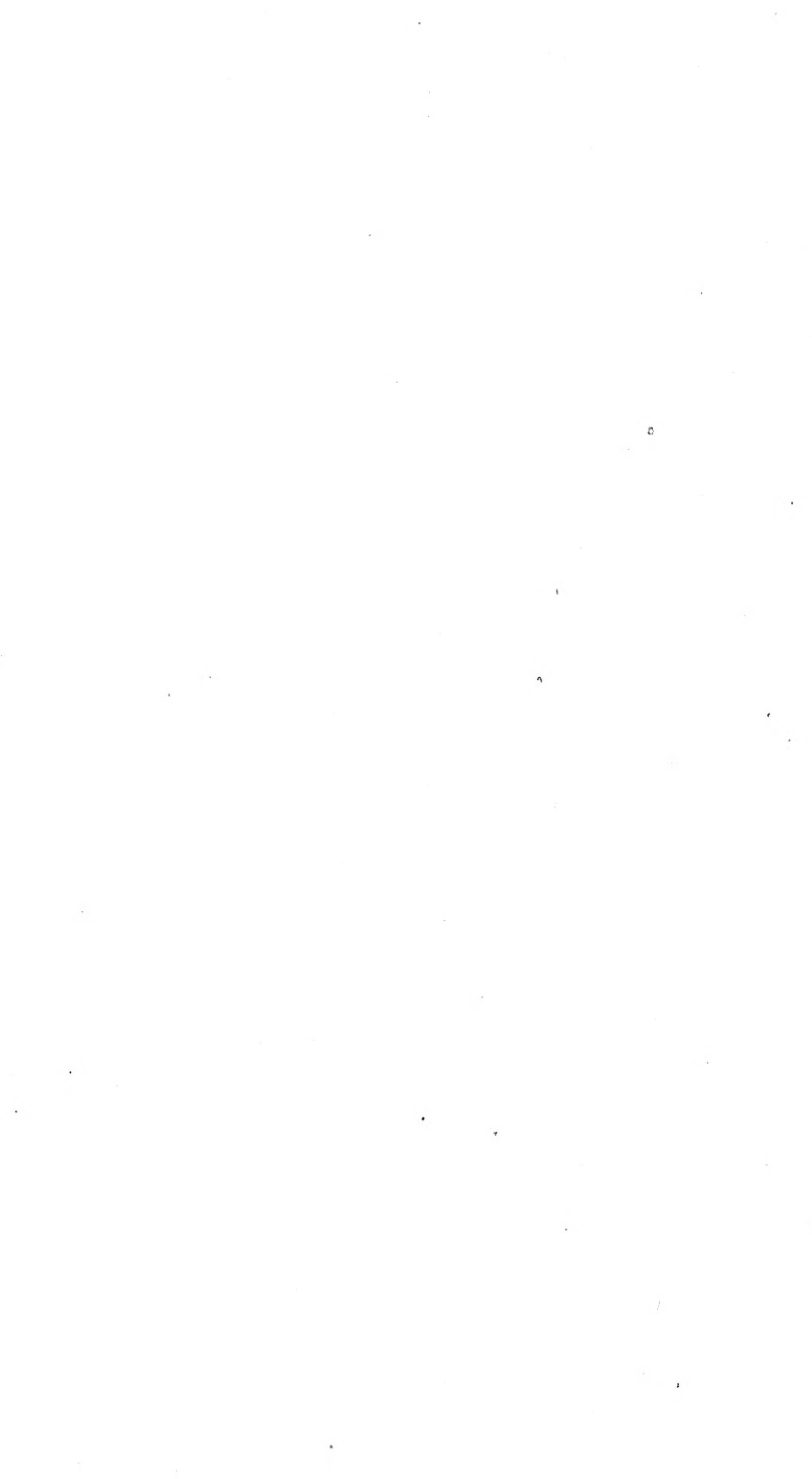
Your ladyship's eyes (which better serve for heaven, than earth) being observably much directed upward, will give aim and direction to theirs, who depend upon you, to look the same way; and withal draw down from thence continual blessings upon yourself, and them. Which is the serious desire, and hope of,

MADAM,

Your Ladyship's most Obedient,

and Obligated Humble Servant,

J H.



A SERMON.

HEB. xii. 23, latter part.

And to the spirits of just men, made perfect.

LET me invite back your eye to the foregoing words, that are in nearer connection with these. ver. 22. But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, ver. 23. To the general assembly, and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

We have had this last week a public solemnity, that was becomingly great and magnificent, upon a sad and mournful occasion, the last act of a doleful scene that hath lasted many weeks. You know I have taken notice to you (my usual hearers) of the first, and saddest, the leading part in this tragedy, once and again; nor would I have this last to pass us, without some instructive observation and remark. It will the more instruct us, the less it detains us; or if only taking a due (not, I mean, a slight and too hasty, but yet a transient) notice of it, we be prompted by it to look forward, from what was in its own kind most deservedly great, to what is incomparably greater, in a more excellent kind.

In such a funeral solemnity, for so great and excellent a perso-

nage, there is what may most fitly entertain awhile; there is not that which ought finally to terminate a wise and a judicious eye. Honours done to the memory of great persons deceased have, by the wisdom of all nations, been counted decencies, and even debts; when especially the deceased have been sometime, and might have been much longer public blessings: Then indeed it is that such rites are most fitly (as they are usually) called *justa*. But we are too prone to be taken only with the mere pomp of such spectacles, and, which is the infirmity of our too degenerate spirits, to be wholly possessed with fanciful ideas; as those were intimated to be, which were from a spectacle of the same common kind, though on a very diverse occasion, by that elegant expression, *μετα πολλης φαντασιαις*, Acts. 25. 23. such as do but amuse our imagination, awhile, but must of course vanish, and cannot stay long with us. But we need that somewhat greater, and too latent to strike our eye, should another way enter, and teach our mind; making such expressions there, as may claim an abode, and that ought to remain, and dwell with us. You read of a very solemn funeral, Gen. 1. The whole country into which the march was made, was amused at the state and greatness of that mournful cavalcade, wherein it is said, ver. 9. there were chariots, and horsemen, even a very great company. That which you have many of you so lately seen, and no doubt all of you heard of, was a most august funeral solemnity; such as whereof less concerned foreign spectators might say, as the canaanites by mistake did of that, ver. 11. This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians.

They were indeed anciently the most celebrated mourners, for such as died from amongst them, in all the world, in respect of their funeral rites, and of their monuments for the dead, (Diod. Sic. l. 1.) of which they are said to have taken more care than of the habitations of the living; accounting these they were to inhabit only a short time, but those they reckoned their *αιδιαις οικαις*, *their eternal habitations*. An imagination, which how wild soever it were of the habitations of souls (which only could be supposed capable of being pleased with them) yet implied their belief of their immortality, whereof some have, groundlessly, thought them the first assertors. (Herod. Euterp.) But the Canaanites were, as was intimated, mistaken in apprehending that to be chiefly an Egyptian mourning. The true Israelites (those that were such indeed) were the true, concerned mourners. The father of Israel was dead, as now with us, the mother. A political, though not a natural, nor merely an economical one: a mother, not in the narrower and more minute, but in the larger and most noble

sense ; not of a single family only, but of nations. The Egyptians assisted to make up the shew in that mourning, but were probably the prepared (as their posterity were the active) instruments of the slavery and misery of that people ; with whom they were now seeming sharers in lamentation.

Ours was a mourning not less grievous than theirs, not more grievous than just to the English nation, that is, to whom the soil and the genius are together native, that are not of an Egyptian spirit, Unto which, as things happen (to its power, or to its impotency) there is a radical innate disposition, either to make slaves, or to be such. There is a sort of people (as was once said) born to slavery, to whom it is a birthright. They have it in their natures, and no other state, as he most aptly spake, (Plin. Paneg.) is agreeable or becoming to them. *Quos non decet esse nisi servos.* They know not what to do with liberty, any more than that silly creature that used to haunt the dunghill, with the pearl. Therefore they can but suitably value the restorers and assertors of it. No irons can be heavier, or less tolerable to them, than a generous, and a Christian state of freedom. Therefore if none else will do them the kind office to put them into gentler shackles, they grow so unnaturally cruel, as to shackle themselves, in the ignoblest sort of bondage. Prov. 5. 22. They are held in the cords of their own sins, and make the chain, whereby they are to be dragged. (Sen. Trag.) British appetites and inclinations are to them severer taskmasters, than it can ever be in their power to become to others. They can themselves, at the utmost, but domineer over other men's externals ; but these have subdued their wills, and tyrannize in their very minds.

Thus it is with them in relation to their governing, and their being governed ; and their policy and religion come both out of the same mint. To them this season of sorrow is a time of festivity, and laughter, who, when they have suffered a more monstrous transformation themselves, can easily turn the house of mourning into that of mirth. Eccles. 7. 4. The wise man tells us what sort of people they are, whose heart is in this latter house ; and what is to be thought of such mirth and laughter chap. 2. 2. And indeed without a serious repentance (by which men do *resipiscere*, or *become wise*) theirs is like to prove the Sardonian's laughter, a certain prelude to death and ruin.

But it is to be hoped, this sort of men do dwindle into a not much regardable paucity. The current of the nation runs against them, which must turn and constrain them to fall in with it. For, we had upon the late sad occasion a *panegyris*. We find that word in the introductive part of the text, and though

it is more commonly applied to a multitude, gathered on other occasions, it disagrees not to that orderly great concourse on that mournful occasion, a general assembly, that is a national one, met then on purpose to mourn; a nation assembled, and mourning in their representative. It was decent it should be so, a loss so national, so general a sorrow were with no congruity otherwise to be represented and expressed. Our mourning was therefore by all the estates of the kingdom, the head only mourning, with greater and more decent majesty in retirement, or being (as is usual in solemn mournings) hid, and covered on that day. So was the whole legislature concerned in that sorrow, as if it were ordained by statute, or as if our mourning were as that for an excellent prince also (2. Chron. 35. 25.) by an ordinance in our Israel; and as if our tears and lamentations were, as before they were by merit, to be also made due by law! Death marched in state and triumph that day, the king of terrors took the throne, and filled that part which it had made vacant, having plucked away from thence not only so bright an ornament, but so glorious an instrument, in our government; and all the orders of the realm, as captives, attended the chariot of the conquerer. England had lost its delight, its pleasant comeliness, and even half its soul. Nothing could correspond to such a case, but a national groan, as of an half-expiring kingdom, ready almost to breathe its last, and give up the ghost.

It must be confessed, our just tribute to the memory of our admirable queen can never be said to be fully paid; nor can this discourse leave out occasional reflections that may be of this import. But my present design is to endeavour our minds may be drawn upwards, and to make that improvement of this most instructive providence, unto which this chosen text will direct. Not to entertain you with her character, and praises (for it is the same thing to characterize, and to praise her) that part is performed in divers excellent discourses, which I have read, as I believe many of you have, and I hope with fruit as well as approbation; and (as there is cause) with great admiration of the divine goodness, that so illustriously shone forth in her, and that vouchsafed, so long, to intrust the people of England with so rare a jewel, whose lustre, was yet exceeded by its real virtues. By which also we may make our estimate of the displeasure wherewith it is so soon withdrawn, and caught away from us, so as to entertain the age (as our divine Herbert) with—a *mirth but opened, and shut up again*—a burning and a shining light (for so she also was in a true sense, and in her proper sphere) in the light whereof we rejoiced but a season.

But every such providence hath its dark side, and its bright. View it downward as it looks upon us who remain beneath, and we behold blackness, and darkness, and a horrible tempest. Such a state of things we may fear our queen hath left unto us who stay below, while we do so. But look we upon it upwards, whither she is ascended, and whither we are professedly tending, and are in some sort come, if we be followers of them, who through faith, and patience have inherited the promises; and we find it is to mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly, and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. And hither (that we may fetch instruction out of terror, out of the eater meat, and life out of death) let us bend and apply ourselves.

We have had a mournful sad solemnity and assembly, though decently pompous and great; England's glory clad in sables, and glittering in a cloud. But now let us lift up our eye, and endeavour it may penetrate through this darkness, and behold the glorious spectacle which this context presents us with. Funeral solemnities, even for pious and holy persons, and that were of greatest use in the world, are dull and gloomy spectacles, if they are only considered in their retrospection, without prospect; or if they only solemnize their exit out of this world of ours, but be understood to have no reference to their ascent and entrance into the regions of immortality and bliss above. And, without this, we see ourselves out done by the Egyptians themselves, with whom their funeral apparatus had reference to a subsequent immortality.

These words are illusive, and promiscuously refer, partly to things known and famous among the Greeks, but are more principally accommodate to these Christian Israelites, or Hebrews, to whom they are writ (and in a scheme of speech, familiar and well known to them) have respect to their passage out of Egypt (as the 3d and 4th chapters of this epistle also have) towards the land of their promised inheritance, whereof the remains of their venerable ancestor and head, holy Jacob, or Israel, had by divine instinct and direction, in that mentioned solemn funeral procession been conveyed before, to take a sort of typical and prophetic prepossession of it for them. They are in the whole a figure, an allegory, which is expounded, Gal. 3. In their way to their terrestrial Canaan, this people come to mount Sinai. The emblem of their Jewish church state, under rigorous severities, which they were to pass from; and so shall we. The text expresses what they were come, and

were tending to, the representation whereof hath a double reference, intermediate to the state and constitution of the Christian church, and final to the heavenly state; the former being both a resemblance, and some degree of the latter.

Ye are come (saith he) to mount Sion, the seat of the sacred temple, the shecinah, the habitation of the divine presence, not ambulatory, as the tabernacle was, while they were journeying through the wilderness, but the fixed residence of the eternal King, where the order of worship was to be continued, to the fulness of time; as afterwards in the Christian church it was to be permanent, and unchanged to the end of time; and in the heavenly state unalterable and eternal. And here, in opposition to the case at mount Sinai, where the people were to stay beneath the mount (whereas they were to go up to the house of God, on mount Sion) they are now to ascend, *and be higher than heaven*; † as their glorious Head, and Lord is said to be; ‡ to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to signify the vicinity wherein God will have his people be to him, as Jerusalem was to Sion, their houses and dwellings being near to his own, the city to the temple. And this passage may also look back upon their former state; whereas they had heretofore nothing but wilderness, they had now a city. § To which that also agrees, Heb. 10, 16. Their earlier progenitors were wanderers and strangers even in Canaan itself, but now God had prepared for them a city in the heavenly Canaan, as before he did in the earthly. But lest their minds should stay in the external sign, he lets them know he means the heavenly Jerusalem, that is, the Christian church, which was the kingdom of heaven begun; and heaven itself, as being that kingdom, in its final and consummate state. To an innumerable company of angels, *αγγελισιν*, which though in the singular it signifies a definite number; being here put plurally, may well be understood to signify indefinitely a numberless multitude: or whereas some selected squadrons might only attend the solemnity of giving the law at mount Sinai, here is the whole heavenly host, whose stated office it is to guard the church below, and worship the Majesty of heaven above: to the general assembly, the *πανηγυρις* the glorious *confessus* of all orders of blessed spirits; which as it may be supposed constant, at all times, so is as supposable to be more frequented and solemn at some, and whither any may resort, as quick as the glance of an eye or a thought; and perhaps do at appointed seasons, so as to make more solemn appearances before the throne of God, as the laws

† *Ανωτεροι του ουρανου* Chrys. in loc. ‡ Heb. vii. 26.

§ *Εκει ερημος ενταυθα πολις*. Id. ibid.

and usages of that blessed world shall require. And we may well understand here an allusion to the appointed time, at which there was a resort from all parts of Judea to Jerusalem; and as in the Christian church are, at set seasons, more numerous and solemn assemblies. Here may also be an allusion to the *Panathenica*, the more general conventions of all the people of Athens, upon some solemn occasions, which were wont to be called *πανηγυρις*. These can be referred to but as faint resemblances and shadows (whether they were the Jewish, or the Grecian assemblies) of this universal conversation, that fills the vast expanse of heaven; in comparison whereof not only this little earth of ours but the whole *vortice*, to which it belongs, can be considered but as a very minute spot or point. The inhabitants that people those immense, pure and bright regions, in their grand stated solemn assembly, make the term to which holy souls, ascending from among us, are continually coming. And here with what ineffable pleasure must these pure celestial intelligences, all filled with light, wisdom, life, benignity, love, and joy, converse with one another; behold, reverence, love, worship, and enjoy their sovereign Lord, displaying his glory perpetually before them, and making his rich immense goodness diffuse itself, and flow in rivers of pleasure most copiously among them!

The church of the first-born written in heaven. These all constitute but one church, of whatsoever orders those blessed spirits are. And they are all said to be first-born, the church here meant consisting only of such, in whom the divine life, or the holy living image of God hath place; they having all the privileges which did belong to the first-born, the inheritance, the principality, and the priesthood: for all God's sons are also heirs, Rom. 8. 17. And they are all made kings, and priests, (Rev. 1. 6.) having all their crowns, which they often cast down before the supreme King; and their employment being perpetual oblation of praise, adoration and all possible acknowledgement to him. They are all of excellent dignity, and every one enrolled so that none have a place there, by oversight, casualty, or intrusion. We must here understand an allusion to what citizens need not be told, the known custom of registering such as were *civitate donati, or made free*.

And to God the judge of all. This may have reference to that office of the judge in the olympic concertations, to whom it belonged to determine who were victors, and to whom the garlands or crowns were justly due. Here the privilege is, that they whose cause is to be tried, are sure of righteous judgment, and that they may approach the enthroned majesty of heaven itself. None of them are denied liberty of access to the

throne of glory above, as in the Christian church none are to the throne of grace below.

And to the spirits of just men made perfect. This shews they all make but one church, even such spirits as have dwelt in flesh, being received into the communion of those whose dwelling never was with flesh. And, in the mean time, those that yet continue in these low earthly stations, as soon as the principles of the divine life have place in them, belong, and are related to that glorious community; for they are said to be already come thereto, and all together compose but one family. For there is but one *paterfamilias*, of whom the whole family in heaven, and earth is said to be named, Ephes. 3. 15. Now for the encouragement of christians unto a faithful perseverance, through all the difficulties of this their present conflicting, imperfect state, is this glorious representation made of the blessed issue, their labours and sufferings shall have at last. Whither they shall be gathered at the finishing of their course, and how Godlike, how worthy of himself the end shall be, into which he will run up all things, when the state of probation and preparation is over with his intelligent creatures, and the stable, permanent eternal state comes to take place; which, because it is final, can admit no more changes, and because it is perfect, can no more need any. Hither christians are to come, and in some sense the sincere are said to be come already. And now upon this part of the term of their access, namely, that they are come to (the spirits of the just made perfect) we are to stay awhile, and shall consider,

I. The perfection the spirits of the just do finally arrive to, in their future state.

II. In what sense, sincere christians, in their present state, can be said to be come to them, who are so made perfect: And then

III. Add some reflections.

I. For the former of these, we may easily admit this being made perfect to be an agonistical phrase, as some of great note and worth have expounded it; and unto which that in the beginning of this chapter, of running the race set before us (as though he had said, the way laid out between the lines on each hand) doth plainly lead us. But it should hereupon be remote from us to think, that a mere relative dignity, or any external honours, are the things we must principally understand to be conferred, or which these *adepti* must be now thought to have obtained. It is a real, inward, subjective perfection, by which they all become most excellent creatures, that must be chiefly meant. Perfection, taken in the moral sense, doth, in the language of the holy Scriptures, contain a threefold gradation.

1. At the lowest, sincerity; as when our Saviour propo-

ses to that querist, Mat. 19. 21. If he would be perfect, to sell all he had, and give to the poor, following him, with the expectation of no other recompence but of a treasure in heaven. If a man's soul be not in a disposition to comport with such terms, upon a sufficient signification of our Lord's pleasure, that he shall now do so; or if at any time this be the case, that he must either forego all this world, and even life itself, or else renounce Christ and Christianity: he is not yet in a right posture towards his last end. He hath not taken the Lord for his God, and best good; his heart more strongly adheres to this present world. But if he have arrived hither, which is his first step, resolving upon his true and right end, which he will supremely pursue, against whatsoever competition of less valuable things; he is now, in the lowest sense, perfect, that is, a resolved, thorough christian.

2. An eminent improvement, greater maturity in divine knowledge, and all other Christian virtues. As when the apostle, blaming the slower progress of the Christian Hebrews, chap. 5. 13. 14. that they were yet so unskilful in the word of righteousness, and only capable of milk, not the strong meat, fit for persons come to a more grown age, nor had their senses as yet well exercised, &c. he exhorts them, chap. 6. 1. leaving the first principles of the Christian doctrine, to go on to perfection.

3. The third is the consummate state of a christian: so is a perfect man expounded by being come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. That state, to which all gifts given by our ascended, conquering, crowned Redeemer; the whole gospel, the apostolate, the entire ministry, the whole frame and constitution of the Christian church, all evangelical truths and institutions, with whatsoever illuminations and influences we can suppose superadded to all these, have ultimate and final reference. And the state to which all shall come, (Eph. 4. 8,———13.) is this most perfect state, in respect whereof the apostle says of himself, that he had not yet attained, nor was already perfect, Phil. 3. 12. I do not reckon the mere natural perfection, either of the inner or outer, man, to be here necessarily excluded; but that the moral is chiefly intended, and of that the ultimate consummative degrees, still reserving room for such additions as will follow the final judgment.

And I doubt it is not enough considered, how much the felicity of the future state depends upon such perfection of the subject of it. Concerning the object of felicity, we are agreed it can be no other than the blessed God himself, the all-comprehending good, fully adequate to the highest and most en-

larged reasonable desires. But the contemperation of our faculties to the holy, blissful object, is so necessary to our satisfying fruition, that without that we are no more capable thereof, than a brute of the festivities of a quaint oration, or a stone of the relishes of the most pleasant meats and drinks. That meetness, which the apostle speaks of, Col. 1. 12. To be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; is of no small importance to our participation itself.

We are too apt to fill our minds with ideas of a heaven made up of external, out-side glories, forgetting we must have the kingdom of God within us, hereafter, in its perfect, as well as here, in its initial state: a kingdom that consists in righteousness, first, a universal holy rectitude of all our powers; then consequently in peace, and joy. The perfect cure of all the distempers of our spirits, and a confirmed most perfectly happy temper, is of most absolute necessity to the blessedness of the heavenly state; and without it any imagined external glory will signify no more to our satisfaction, than rich and gorgeous apparel can give the desired content and ease to an ulcerous diseased body; or (as the Plutar. moralist speaks) a diadem to an aching head, a gay slipper to a pained foot, or a gold ring to a sore finger.

Let a soul be supposed actually adjoined to that glorious assembly, and church above, that is yet unacquainted with God, strange, and disaffected to him, alienated from the divine life, still carnally minded, loving most, and looking back with a lingering eye towards this present world and state of things, full of pride, haughtiness, and self-magnifying thoughts, of envy, wrath, hatred, contentiousness, of deceit, guilefulness and dissimulation, filled with ravenous lusts, and inordinate, insatiable desires after impossible things; such a soul will only seem to have mistaken its way, place, state, and company, and can only be a fit associate for devils, and infernal spirits. Its condition would be equally uneasy to itself, and all about it; the outrage of its own lusts and passions would create to it a hell, in the midst of heaven, and be to it as a thousand devils, both for wickedness, and for torment.

But to give you a summary of this internal perfection of the spirits of just men, in their most perfect state, I cannot give you a fuller and more comprehensive one than is expressed in those few words. 1 John. 3. 3. We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Where are two things conjoined, that together express the perfect state of these blessed spirits, likeness to God; and the vision of him.

And these two are so connected, as to admit of a twofold reference each to other; either that this likeness to God be

considered as preparative for the vision of him, and so that the latter words be considered as an argument of the former, namely, that because it is designed we shall live in the perpetual vision of God, it is therefore necessary we should be like him, without which we can be no way capable of such a sight, or of beholding so bright a glory. Or else, that the vision of God be perpetually productive of this likeness to him; and so that the latter words be understood not only to contain an argument, whence we may conclude this likeness must be, but also to express the immediate cause by which it is. As the form of expression will admit either of these references, so I doubt not the nature of the thing will require that we take them in both. There could be no such vision of God as is here meant, if there were not some previous likeness to him, in our former state. And when, in our final state, we are first admitted to that beatific glorious vision, by that means, we may reasonably understand will ensue the perfection of that likeness. Whereof also it is to be considered, that vision (which spoken of the mind is knowledge) must not only be taken for a cause, but a part; for the image of God is at first renewed (and with equal reason must be supposed at last perfected) in knowledge Col. 3. 10.

This image or likeness of God therefore, if we consider the natural order of working upon an intelligent subject, must as to that part of it which hath its seat in the mind or understanding faculty, be caused by the immediate irradiation of the divine light and glory upon that, and be the cause of the rest. But both together are the inherent subjective perfection of these blessed spirits of the just, and comprehend all that belongs to this their moral perfection; the latter being itself also virtually comprehended in the former.

The vision of God therefore, or their perfect knowledge of him, with whom they must ever have most of all to do, as the principal object of their fruition and enjoyment, must be the primary and the leading thing in this their perfection; for no doubt it is that perfection which directly concerns their ultimate satisfaction and blessedness, which is here intended, with which their eternal employment is most conjunct and complicated, as we shall after see. They enjoy, and adore the same blessed object at once, and in doing the one, do the other. And besides the knowledge of him, there must be by his beams, and in his light (Psal. 36. 9.) the perfect knowledge of all that it is needful or requisite they should know; without which, since all their enjoyments in the heavenly state must be in their first rise intellectual, it would be impossible they should ever perfectly enjoy any thing at all. And that this perfection

of just men's spirits is intended to be summarily comprehended in the perfection of their knowledge, is more than intimated, by that series of discourse which we find, 1 Cor. 13. 9. —12. the apostle, comparing the imperfection of our present, with the perfection of our future state, sums up all in this: That we know now but in part, and that then we shall know as we are known. But the perfection of this knowledge he seems more to state in the manner of knowing, than in the extent and compass of the things known. That in this latter respect it may admit of increase, they cannot doubt who consider the finite capacity of a created mind, and the mighty advantages we shall have for continual improvement, both from the clear discovery of things, in that bright and glorious light, and from the receptiveness of our enlarged and most apprehensive minds. But that state can admit of no culpable ignorance, nor of any that shall more infer infelicity, than include sin.

Therefore now to speak more distinctly, We take this perfection of the spirits of the just to be principally meant of their moral perfection, such as excludes all sin, and all misery; as morality comprehends and connects together sanctity, the goodness of the means; and felicity, the goodness of the end: the former most directly, but most certainly inferring the latter. If therefore we say this is their sinless perfection, we say all that the case requires. In that it is said to be the perfection of spirits, it must indeed suppose all that natural perfection which belongs to such a sort of creatures, as such, in their own kind. But inasmuch as the specification is added (of the just) it is their moral perfection, or most perfectly holy rectitude, from which their blessedness is inseparable, that seems ultimately intended. But now whereas this their ultimate perfection hath been said to be virtually contained and summed up in knowledge, we are hereupon to consider how this may appear to be a complete summary of all such perfection. And nothing can more evidently appear, if you join together. The true matter or object, and right manner or nature of this knowledge.

(1.) The true and proper object of it must be, not *omnia scibile*, all that may be known, but whatsoever they can be obliged or concerned to know, or that is requisite to their duty and felicity; all that lies within their compass, as they are creatures, that in such a distinct sphere, or in their own proper order, are to correspond to the ends of their creation, that is, to glorify the Author of their beings, and be happy in him. Infinite knowledge belongs not to them, is not competent to their nature, nor necessary either to their employment, or to their blessedness in the heavenly state. Whatsoever knowledge

is requisite to these ends, will be included in this their final perfection.

It is, by the way, to be observed how this matter is expressed, made perfect, which signifies our arriving to this perfection out of an imperfect state. We were-created with an original perfection, sufficient to a state of probation. By our apostacy we became sinfully imperfect, all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, Rom. 3. 23. We have been put upon a new trial by our Redeemer. Their perfection, who have run out their course, is, by the grace of God, and by his methods, restored, and improved to its just pitch. They are now, their trial being over, set in a consummate rectitude towards the ends of their creation; and herein are endowed with all the knowledge they need, namely, of such things as, in reference to those ends, they can any way be concerned with.

With the blessed God himself they are most of all concerned, for him they are eternally to adore and enjoy. Therefore that their perfection should be virtually included in divine knowledge, is congruous to the state of their case, and to the language of the holy Scriptures; which expresses their most perfect state by the vision of God, in the mentioned 1 John. 3. 2. and Mat. 5. 8. Heb. 12. 14. &c. Which phrase is not borrowed from the sight of the eye, and transferred to that of the mind, at random, or without (most probable) design. It most aptly signifies the great facility of this knowledge that it is not toilsome, there is little labour in it, it is not such as requires great pains; it is but intuition, not a cautious, wary ratiocination, wherein we use to be very solicitous, lest we draw any irregular or untrue consequences. We do very easily, and on the sudden, without suspicion, or fear of error, only behold what is offered to our view. This is a great perfection of mind with these blessed spirits, to be capable of knowing the greatest things so easily, and so soon, to know by seeing. And their aptness hereto is a moral perfection, for the clearness of the discovery infers their greater obligation to attend, and not to divert from what shall cost them so little. The blessed God's manifestation of himself, in that brightest and most glorious light, is not only evidently supposed, for in his light only can we see light, (Psal. 36. 9.) but it is emphatically expressed in the before-mentioned text, 1 Cor. 13. 12. of seeing face to face; which signifies, on his part, gracious vouchsafement, his offering his blessed face to view, that he hides it not, nor turns it away, as here sometimes he doth, in just displeasure. And his face means even his most conspicuous glory, such as, in this state of mortality, it would be mortal to us to behold; for no man, not so divine a man as Moses

himself, could see his face and live. And it signifies, on their part who are thus made perfect, their applying and turning their face towards his, namely, that they see not casually, or by fortuitous glances, but eye to eye, by direct and most voluntary intuition; which therefore, on their part, implies moral perfection, the will directing and commanding the eye, and upon unexpressible relishes of joy and pleasure forbidding is diversion, holds it steady and intent. Here our ignorance of God is culpable, being voluntary, not liking to retain him in our knowledge, Rom. 1. 28. There our knowledge is inculpable and sinless, being chosen, purposed, and always, principally, for its most proper ends, the perfect adoration and fruition of the blessed object we so fixedly behold, and so earnestly covet to know.

It is also fit to be noted, that the very fruition of the blessed God itself, which the holy Scripture includes in our vision of him, is not only our very blessedness itself, but it is our duty too. It is a thing enjoined us, and comprehended in that first and great commandment: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and might, and mind; which who can perfectly do, without a complacential acquiescence, and final rest of their will in him, as the best, the most perfect, and all-comprehending good? And hereupon, though we are wont to distinguish our glorifying God, and enjoying him; they are most manifestly co-incident, and but notionally distinct. For in this our fruitive acquiescence or will in him stands our highest veneration, our most practical, most significant acknowledgement and testimony concerning him, as the highest, the most complete, and most absolutely perfect good; in that we seek no further, but take up our final rest in him. This is to give him the proper glory of his godhead, to glorify him as God! And therefore this being the fullest sense of that great and summary command, it is only a commanding us to be happy. As, on the other hand, the misery of the intelligent creature is his greatest, and most injurious iniquity, an aversion of will from the blessed God, a testimony against him, as none of the best good, and the greatest indignity which created nature can put upon him, who is goodness itself. Thus then is the knowledge or vision of God, even as it is fruitive, a moral perfection. But the divine knowledge, more at large, of these holy spirits, though it be principally conversant about God, as its noblest object; excludes not their applying their minds to other objects too, according to their concernment with them. And yet,

(2.) How aptly this perfection is included in such knowlence, will further appear, if you consider the manner of knowing, or

the special nature and kind of this vision or knowledge, namely that it is not that slight, ineffectual, merely notional, insipid knowledge, which unregenerate minds are now wont to have of the most evident truths ; namely, that, for instance, that God is the most excellent, the most perfect, the most desirable, as well as the most adorable good ; which knowledge, because it answers not the true end of divine knowledge, is called ignorance : whereupon they are said to be alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them. Ephes. 4. 18. But that ignorance is paraphrased by blindness of heart, that is, a most perfectly voluntary and chosen ignorance, founded in aversion of will. And elsewhere, (Jer. 4. 3,——6.) by a refusing to know God, a saying to him, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways, Job. 21. 14. Whereupon the light that is in such is said to be very darkness, and then how great is that darkness ! Mat. 6. 23.

This knowledge, or vision, now in perfection, is most deeply and inwardly penetrative, efficacious, and transforming, admits a light which spreads and transfuses itself through the whole soul. So it is, at first, in every truly regenerate spirit ; whereby such a one is begotten into the divine likeness, his image is impressed upon it, which, as hath been noted, is said to be renewed in knowledge, Col. 3. 10. So that, as by solemn message to the sons of men, God is declared to be pure light, 1 John. 1. 5. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare to you, that God is light, and with him is no darkness at all. And as he is the original, the paternal light, the Father of lights, (James. 1. 17.) so they that are born of him are said to be light itself, and the children of light. Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord ; walk as children of light, Eph. 5. 8. And they are therefore said, as the sons of God, to shine as lights, (Phil. 2. 15.) or required to do so ; for the words bear either form. This so energetical, efficacious light, is, in the mentioned texts, manifestly intended to connote holiness ; as it doth also, Rom. 13. 12. which the antithesis there shews : works of darkness, and armour of light : and in many other places.

Accordingly the whole, even of practical religion and godliness, is in the holy Scriptures expressed by the knowledge of God, 2 Chron. 30. 22. It is signified to be in its own nature sanctifying, and inconsistent with prevailing sin, (1 Cor. 15. 34.) in which they that live are therefore said to be destitute of it, who are also upon the same account said not to have had any sight of God ; 3 John. ver. 11. He that sinneth (the word is *κακοποιων*, a doer, or worker of sin) hath not seen God. The light which this vision of God receives, must much

more, in the perfected spirits of the just, be supposed so prevalent and victorious, as quite to have chased away and expelled all remainders of this impure darkness. Every such spirit is therefore become as it were an orb of purest, most operative, and lively light, an intellectual, and a self-actuating sun, full of fervour and motive power, besides mere light. Whereupon whatsoever this light and knowledge discovers it is fit for such a soul to be, it is ; and fit for it to do, it can never fail to do it.

Therefore the making of such spirits perfect must be understood, in greatest part, to consist in restoring the order of their faculties towards each other ; which was broken by the apostacy to that degree, and they so debilitated and become so languid, so impotent and enfeebled, that neither could the one faculty lead, nor the other follow. Whence light, even about the most practical, and the most important matters imaginable, true notions, right sentiments, signified no more to command, to govern, to form and direct the inclinations and motions of the soul ; than if, as to all its sentiments about these matters, you did put false instead of true, wrong instead of right, most absurd, most impossible, instead of most congruous, most necessary. Take, for instance, the idea of God, let it be supposed to comprehend (as every one grants it doth, whether he acknowledge his existence or no) all conceivable, all possible excellencies ; that it means an infinite, eternal, ever-living, self subsisting being, most perfectly intelligent, wise, true, holy, righteous, powerful, and blessed, the original of life, being, and blessedness to the creation, according to the several kinds, natures, and capacities of his creatures, the supreme and sovereign Lord of all, to whom it belongs to govern and dispose of what he hath made, of most immense and abounding goodness and benignity, most bountiful to the indigent, compassionate to the miserable, reconcilable to the guilty, propitious to the penitent, most complacentially kind, with highest delight, to the holy and the good, severe only to the obstinately impenitent and implacable, that will by no means or methods be reclaimed.

Take we, again, from hence the measures by which we are to judge what ought to be the dispositions and deportments of his reasonable creatures towards him ; that they be entirely composed and made up of love, reverence, humility, dependance, devotedness, subjection, gratitude and adoration. And suppose we that, in the theory, this be, as it generally is, admitted and acknowledged as the just and most regular consequence of the former. And let us again suppose, that we being made after his image, which in the natural part remains,

and is still common to mankind; and as to the moral part, is restored in all that are regenerate and born of God. And that therefore we ought to love universally all mankind, to wish and do well to them, as to ourselves; and no more to injure any man, than we would destroy, pull in pieces, or offer violence to our own life and being. And that we ought, with a more peculiar delectation, to embrace and love all holy and good men, without other distinction, than as any appear more to excel in goodness.

Our light about these things is so clear, they are so little disputable, and so difficult it is to form any argument to the contrary; that few ever set themselves, by any explicit or formed thoughts, to oppose or contend against them. It is not (at least, not generally) so much as attempted to disprove them, or assert contrary principles in opposition to them. Therefore that the dispositions and common practice of men do so little agree with these principles, is not that their notions are herein doubtful, but spiritless; their light is not uncertain, but weak and impotent. And hereupon their knowledge signifies as little to its proper end, as if their apprehensions touching these things were none at all, or quite contrary to what they are.

They as much neglect and slight the blessed God, or decline to be concerned with him, as if they denied all the things of him which his idea contains; or as if they affirmed all the things of him, which it most directly excludes. They shun, they fly from him, as if they thought him the worst of beings; while they acknowledge him the best and most excellent good, disobey, and affront him, as if they thought he had no right to rule them; while they confess him the sovereign Lord of all the world. And steer their course both towards him, and one another, in as direct repugnancy to his rules, as if they thought them all reversed; and that the most opposite system of laws and precepts were given them, by some undoubted authority, to regulate all their practice.

It would amaze a thinking man that all this should be so! That intelligent creatures, that the reasonable, living, immortal spirits of men should be sunk to so low a pitch of degeneracy and vileness! But much more, that it being so apparently thus, it should be so seldom reflected on! that men are not afraid of themselves! that they appear not as so many frightful monsters, each in their own eyes! That they consider not, what are these faculties for; Why have I such notions of truth in my mind; why have I a will whereby to choose, resolve, act, and be accordingly? what a distorted misshapen creature is this soul of mine; every thing in me running counter

to right and fit ! Whatever hath thus fatally perverted all their powers, hath stupified them too ; so as not only not to find fault, but to applaud and be well pleased with themselves for all this.

But now shall we not take our advantage from hence, to conceive and be enamoured of the rectitude, the amiableness of this most excellent state of the perfected spirits of the just ! Now doth comely order succeed, instead of the most horrid deformity ; distorted limbs are set right, the ligaments and connection of the disjointed faculties to each other are restored ; and whatsoever the enlightened mind suggests as fit and due, presently obtains. No complaint remains of seeing what is better, and doing what is worse ; or that when good should be done, evil is present. There is nothing but perfect regularity, harmony, and agreement. All things move smoothly, and with constant equability and decorum. Right dictates of the leading faculty, and ready compliance of such as are to follow, make with them a perpetual, even, and uninterrupted course.

Likeness to God, therefore, in every other just respect, certainly ensues, upon such preceding knowledge of him ; for the kind and nature of that knowledge being, as it ought to be, powerful, vigorous, transforming of the whole soul, and the will ductile and compliant ; agreeable impressions do most certainly take place. As now, beholding——we are changed, 2 Cor. 3. 18. Much more in that state where the injected divine beams are so strong, and vivid, and the receptive disposition so prompt, free, apt and facile. Therefore to be made like God, is to be made perfect, according to the ultimate intendment of these words. The vision, or knowledge of God, in the heavenly state, being never intended for idle, ineffectual speculation ; as this perfection is not otherwise to be understood, than with reference to the ends we were made for ; that we may be immediately capable of, and apt for everlasting adoration, and fruition of the blessed God, in a joint, and most full consent, and communion, with the general assembly, the whole community of all the blessed spirits besides, whose eternal work, and delight this will be.

This likeness to God must yet be understood with exception to the divine peculiarities, as hath been elsewhere shewn † (whether we now refer, only to save the labour of transcribing.) In respect of which peculiarities also there must be, on our part, a correspondency, that is, a likeness with allowance for necessary disagreement ; as between a seal and the impression where what is convex in the one, is hollow in the other, and

† Blessedness of the Righteous.

yet otherwise like, that is, correspondent to each other too. So the case is between the blessed God's all-sufficient fulness, and our receptive emptiness; between his supremaey, and our subjection. In respect to other things, common to him and us, with the rest of those happy spirits that inhabit the regions of light and bliss, spirituality itself, life and vigour, knowledge, wisdom, holiness, love, serenity, benignity, mercy, peace, and joy, there is a nearer resemblance; these things passing under the same name with him, and with us, but with the infinite inequality still of God, and creature.

Now let us here give ourselves leave to pause awhile, and contemplate those innumerable multitudes of pure and happy creatures, perfected, or ever perfect spirits, that inhabit and replenish those ample spacious regions above, the vast (and to us, or to any thought of ours) immense and endless tracts of light and glory. Consider them every one composed, and made up of lively light, and love, as we are told God is light, 1 John. 1. 5. and God is love, chap. 4. ver. 16. Consider them all as most intelligent, and knowing creatures, even of the most profound and hidden mysteries, that here were wont to perplex and puzzle the most inquisitive mind; ignorant of nothing, or apt to comprehend any thing, needful, and pleasant to be known, or lawful to be inquired into; curious to know nothing useless, or unlawful; most perfectly wise creatures, prudent sages, endowed with a self governing wisdom, so as easily without a vexatious solicitude and anxiety, but with a noble freedom, to order and command all their thoughts, appetitions, actions, and deportments towards God, themselves, and one another, so as never to be guilty of mistake or error, in any motion of mind or will; never to omit any thing in its season, or do any thing out of season. Consider them whether in solemn assembly (which may be stated and perpetual, by successively appointed numbers for ought we know) or diverting and retiring, or faring to and fro, as inclination, with allowance, or command, may direct. Yet all every where full of God, continually receiving the vital, satisfying, glorious communications of the every where present, self-manifesting Deity; all full of reverence, and most dutiful love to the eternal Father of spirits, his eternal Son, and Spirit: all formed into perpetual, lowliest, and most grateful adoration, with highest delight and pleasure, all apprehensive of their depending state, and that they owe their all to that fulness which filleth all in all. Every one in his own eyes a self-nothing, having no separate divided interest, sentiment, will, or inclination. Every one continually self-consistent, agreeing with himself, ever free of all self-dis-

pleasure, never finding any cause, or shadow of a cause, for any angry self-reflection upon any undue thought or wish in that their present, perfect state; though not unmindful what they were, or might have been, and ascribing their present state, and stability, to the grace of God, and dedicating their all to the praise and glory of that most free and unaccountable grace; all well assured, and unsuspectingly conscious, with unexpressible satisfaction, of their acceptance with God, and placing with the fullest sense and relish their very life in his favour. All full of the most complacential benignity towards one another, counting each one's felicity his own, and every one's enjoyments being accordingly multiplied so many thousand-fold, as he apprehends every one as perfectly pleased and happy as himself.

Let but any one recount these things with himself, as he easily may, with far greater enlargement of thoughts, many more such things as these; and he needs not be at a loss for a notion of this perfect state of the spirits of the just. And for further confirmation, as well as for a somewhat more distinct and explicit conception hereof, let it be moreover considered, What was the undertaking and design of our Redeemer, to whom the next words direct our eye: And to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, &c. He was to be the restorer of these once lost, apostate spirits, and besides reconciling them to God by his blood, that speaks better things than that of Abel, was to impart his own Spirit to them; and by the tenour of that new testament, or covenant, whereof he was Mediator, was not only to procure that their sins and iniquities should be remembered no more; but that the divine laws should be put in their minds, and written in their hearts, chap. 8. 10, 12. They are therefore, by the blood of the everlasting covenant to be made perfect, (chap. 13. 20. 21.) in every good work to do his will, having all that wrought in them which is well pleasing in his sight, through Christ Jesus. Now when shall he be said to have accomplished his design? Not till every one be presented perfect (Col. 1. 28.) and faultless, in the presence of the divine glory. Jude 24. Do but consider what was a design worthy of so great an undertaker, the Son of God; and of his being engaged so deeply, of his being so earnestly intent upon it, as to become first a man, then a sacrifice to effect it.

Consider his death, and resurrection, wherein he will have all that belong to him to have a *consortium*, a participation with him, and conformity to him; as is largely discoursed, Phil. 3. and hence we are to make our estimate what is the mark and prize of the high calling of God in Christ, ver. 12. 14.

This can be no other than final consummate Christianity, the christians high calling in *termino*; and which they that are inchoatively perfect or sincere, must be so minded, as to design it for themselves, ver. 15. Therefore let me but tell any man, so that he can understand me, what true Christianity now is, and he can tell me what heaven is. Let me tell him what it is to be a sincere christian, in this present state; and he can tell me what it is to be perfect, in the heavenly state. The writing God's law in the heart truly, and perfectly, goes far towards both.

The two great commandments impressed, that are both fulfilled in love, are of vast compass to this purpose. and with the certain *comexa*, comprehend all: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, &c. And——thy neighbour as thyself, &c. What a heaven upon earth would these two create, reduced to practice! and when the impression is perfect, what needs there more? But God knows, men too commonly measure their heaven by their Christianity, on the wrong hand; a Christianity, and a heaven, both external and foreign to them. God deliver me from this so palpable and destructive a delusion of a Christianity, and a heaven foreign to my soul! A religion, and a felicity that touch not our minds, that never impress our inner man; what can we be the better for them; What! to be imposed upon by so absurd a mis-conceit, and so repugnant to Scripture? which so expressly tells us, that glory, we are finally to expect, is a glory whereby we are to be glorified, made glorious, and to be revealed in us, and wherein we are to partake with Christ. Rom. 8. 17, 18. Or did the Son of God put on man, and suffer so deeply for us, with a design upon us less than this? But now my work is done (nor do my limits allow me to enlarge) in reference to the.

II Head of discourse proposed: In what sense sincere christians may be said to be already come to the spirits of the just made perfect. Enough may be collected from what hath been said. It is to be understood.

1. In a relative sense, they are come, they already belong to that general assembly, that church which the myriads of angels, and the perfected spirits of the just are of. A local coming none can pretend in this case to dream of, they are said to be come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Such were truly said to be come into the very constitution of the Roman Poliey, that were *civitate donati*, admitted freemen, though they lived a thousand miles of.

2. In a real sense, by a gradual, but true participation of

the *primordia*, the first and most constituent principles, and perfections of the heavenly state.

And now, if that were the thing designed, there is a most adequate ground work laid for a true, and the most ample encomium of that rare person, our never too deeply lamented, nor too highly renowned queen, whose funerals drew my thoughts to this theme. View the perfections of the spirits of the just, as they were growing, and more eminently grown towards their highest pitch; and here is our ground. Do not wonder it is laid as high as heaven, for thence they begin, as well as end there. By most benign influences from thence, though the plant was set on earth, they had an early bud, in concealment; but we have seen them blossom in open view, still aspiring thitherward, as there they are fully blown. Her otherwise royal parentage, was thus incomparably more royal. The lustre of her excellent virtues had all the advantage which they could have by dwelling well; as the endowments (what they were) of a great prince heretofore, were noted to have had the contrary disadvantage. It was common sense, not the poet's authority, that could make the apprehension take place: that virtue is more grateful, exerted from a comely body. So illustrious an instance would give more countenance, than the most argumentative philosophy, to the opinion, that souls have a great, subordinate, agency in forming their own mansions: which the more one apprehends, the less credulous he would be of their original equality. It must be a very peculiar genius, that could stamp so inimitable and undeceiving signatures, as appeared in her majesty's most graceful countenance, in her comely mien and looks, and all her deportments. Whosoever should behold the fabric she inhabited, made up of pulchritude, and state; must conclude some very lovely and venerable inhabitant dwelt there. But nearer approaches discovered such excellencies of the indwelling mind, that quickness of apprehension, that clearness and strength of reason, that solidity of judgment, that complectionate goodness, *εὐφροσύνη* which that noble philosopher speaks of, as the seed-plot of virtues; that must soon beget, not conviction only, but admiration.

Such were the bounties of nature in the forming a rare and excellent person, but how munificent were the largesses of grace! That reverence of the divine Majesty that appeared in her whole course, a life transacted under the government of religion, her constant care to avoid what she thought sinful, and readiness to do what she judged might be serviceable to the interest of God, her detestation of the profligate wickedness, that she knew to be dishonourable and offensive to him,

and of all the principles that any way tended thereto. Her continued conversation with God, in the constant practice of religious duties, and in all the exercises of godliness that belonged to her (most beloved and frequented) closet, the family, or more solemn assembly, her most composed seriousness in attendance upon the worship of God, in the way which she chose (and which that she chose no one could think strange) the natural, and most unaffected appearances hereof, the remotest from ostentation, but which could not quite be hid, nor ought, when in religious assemblies we are to testify we all worship the same God, and that all our applications, and addresses, have one centre above, and are all to be directed to one and the same glorious object (unless one would have the religion of the church be allowed the retiredness of a closet, or reduce joint social worship, wherein all are, some way or other, to express their unanimity and consent, unto that which is merely solitary and single) her assiduity in her religious course, the seasons, order, and constancy whereof seemed to be governed by the ordinances of heaven, that ascertain the succession of day and night, so that what was said so long ago of that famed person's justice (and which equally may of hers) might have a nobler application to her religion: that one might as soon divert the course of the sun, as turn her from her daily course in religious duties: this argued a steady principle, and of the highest excellency, that of divine love. Any other would have its more frequent quaims, and inequalities. The remark was wise and weighty, concerning the insincere man, Job. 27. 10. Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God? That course is never like to be even, uniform, and continued, that springs not from love; or is not sweetened by delight and pleasure. All these are to us great indications of a copious communication of divine grace, and that she received not the grace of God in vain. I cannot here omit her reverential regard for the Lord's day, which at the Hague I had a very particular occasion to take notice of. On a Saturday, a vessel (the packet-boat) was stranded not far from thence, which lying very near the shore, I viewed (happening to be thereabouts at that time) till the last passengers were brought (as all were) safe off. Multitudes went to see it, and her highness being informed of it, said she was willing to see it too, but thought she should not, for it was then too late for that evening, and she reckoned by Monday it would be shivered to pieces (though it remaining entire till then, she was pleased to view it that day) but she resolved, she added: she would not give so ill an example, as to go see it on the Lord's day.

Next to her exemplary piety towards God, shone with a second lustre her most amiable benignity towards men; and peculiarly towards them whom she judged pious, of whatsoever persuasion, in respect of the circumstances of religion. She opened not her mouth, but with wisdom, and in her tongue was the law of kindness. She hath divers times expressed her acceptance, value, and desire of their prayers, whom she knew in some modes of worship to differ from her; as one that well understood, that the kingdom of God stands not in lesser things, but in righteousness, peace, &c. and that they who in these things serve Christ, are acceptable to God, and are to be approved of men. She was not inaccessible to such of her subjects, whose dissentient judgments, in some such things, put them into lower circumstances. Great she was in all valuable excellencies, nor greater in any, than in her most condescending goodness. Her singular humility adorned all the rest. Speaking once of a good thing, which she intended, she added: But of myself I can do nothing; and somewhat being by one (of two more only) then present, interposed, she answered: she hoped God would help her. She is, as the text speaks, gone to mount Sion, in the highest sense of that phrase. And to sum up all, he that will read the character, Psal. xv. and xxiv. of an inhabitant of that holy hill, will there read her true and most just character. Wherein I cannot omit to take notice. how sacred she reckoned her word. I know with whom she hath sometimes conferred, whether having given a promise of such a seeming import, she could consistently therewith do so or so; saying, That whatever prejudice it were to her, she would never depart from her word.

These rich endowments every way accomplished her for all the duties that belonged to her, whether in her christian, conjugal, or political capacity. Which if we consider together, the world cannot give an instance, for many by-past ages, of so much lost out of it, in one person. When did Christianity lose so conspicuous an ornament? A king so delectable, and helpful a consort? A kingdom so venerable, and beloved a sovereign? For our king how are we concerned to pray, Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions? And we are to hope he hath some such sincere purposes, and vows deeply infixed in his heart, as those subjoined in that Psal. cxxxii. which will engage the divine presence with him, by which, neither shall his pressures be intolerable. nor his difficulties insuperable; but his bow shall abide in strength, and the arms of his hands be made strong. by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. Gen. xlix. 24. But England, England! How deplorable is thy case! In what agonies should every con-

cerned heart be for thee, O England! In the latter days (and God grant they be not too late) thou mayest consider, that after many former, defeated methods, thou hadst a prince (yea, princes) stultiously intent upon making thee a reformed, happy people. Is there now no cause to fear, lest it be determined; Let him that is filthy, be filthy still; and him that is unjust, be unjust still.—

Few can be ignorant of the endeavours of our most gracious queen, to that purpose. And I am persuaded nothing did more recommend our deceased, excellent archbishop to her Majesty, than that she knew his heart to be as hers, in that design, namely, of a general reformation of manners, that must have concerned all parties; and without which (leading and preparing us thereto) union, and the cessation of parties, was little to have been hoped for. And so far as I could understand, the attempt of it was as little intended; being otherwise not likely to meet with either a blessing from God, or any sufficient disposition to it with men. Great dispositions must, with much gratitude to God, be acknowledged in those who hold that supreme, and this subordinate station. But such a work is not likely to succeed, till (by whatsoever mean) minds be brought to that temper, that it will even do itself. And that two such persons should be removed out of them, within not much more than a month's time, is an awful umbrage to us of a divine determination: that less gentle methods are fitter for us. And God's holy will be done!

III. It is now obvious to any considering person, that many very useful reflections might be made upon the text, and the occasion together. I shall shut up this present discourse with these that follow.

1. It ought to be most remote from us to confine, in our narrow thoughts, sincere religion and godliness to a party, distinguished by little things; and most extra-essential thereto. Take we that great apostle's document: I perceive God is no respecter of persons, and what he said of nations, may not we as aptly say that of all such parties? They that fear God, and work righteousness, are accepted of him, Acts. 10.

Let us once learn to reckon substantial godliness a greater thing, than the using, or not using this or that ceremony. And account that faith, mercy, judgment, and the love of God, are not to be past over for as little things, as the titling of mint, annise, and cummin. I believe there are few in the world, if they cast their eyes about them, but might truly say (what I thank God, I have often thought) that of all our parties that hold the substantials of religion, I have known some of far greater value than myself. Let the being a good chris-

tian, signify more with us, than to belong to a so——or so——shaped, or——figured church.

A noted writer, among the ancients, brings in one, saying, by way of exprobration to christians: There is Socrates, the prince of wisdom, if any among you be so great, let them imitate him, if they can. What persuasion among us can produce a greater example, than we have been now considering; or more worthy the imitation even of private christians?

2. The spirits of the just on earth are in a great propinquity, and have a near alliance to heaven. They are not there to have the first foundations laid of their blessed state, but are only to be made perfect. They have in them here the first principles, the elements of their final blessedness; heaven in little, as the acorn contains the tree, or the embryo the man.

3. The just in this world are of the church in heaven. They are come to the general assembly, the church of the first-born, &c. All sincere christians, whether in heaven or earth (as hath been noted) make but one family, Ephes. 3. 15. Good God! Can our little differences, here, set us at greater distance than heaven, and earth! The observation is worth considering of that wise, and noble person: † It will be found a matter of great moment and use, to define what, and of what latitude those points are, which disincorporate men from the body of the church——And if any think this hath been done, now long ago, let them seriously consider with what sincerity, and moderation the same hath been performed——&c. And if it had not been done with due sincerity, and moderation in his days, it is much to be doubted whether it have since. In the mean time it is to be considered, that what differenceth any thing, constitutes it; and if a church (of whatsoever denomination) be constituted in its superstructure (though its foundation be good) of hay, and stubble, of things that can belong to no church, as a church, it must some time or other suffer loss: And though the builders be saved, it must be by a more penetrative, than an imagined, purgatory-fire.

4. Angels must have kind propensions towards men, especially good men, in this world, knowing these are of the same society and church with them; though the divine wisdom hath not judged it suitable to our present state of probation, there should be an open, and common intercourse between them and us. It is however a great incongruity we should have strange, uncouth, shy, frightful, or unfrequent thoughts of them, in the mean time.

† Lord Viscount Verul. Adv. of Learn. lib. 9.

5. When we find any excellent persons, in our world, attain far and high towards the perfection of the heavenly state; it ought to be a great encouragement to us, and is an obligation to aspire to some like pitch. We see it is not an impossible, or an unpracticable thing; and should disdain to crawl now as worms, when we are to soar as angels.

6. We ought hereupon to acknowledge and adore the munificence, and power of divine grace, that it should design the making of such objects as we, fit to be associated with such an assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect; and will not fail to effect it, if we comply with the apt methods, appointed for that blessed purpose.

7. When such ascend, and are taken up from us, that God had eminently prepared for translation; we should take great care lest we unduly regret it. That we do not envy heaven its own, to which they are more akin, than to our earth; and which had a greater right in them, than we could pretend.

8. We should look upon funeral solemnities for such, with more prospect than retrospect, and consider them as directing our eye less downward to our own forsaken world, than upwards to the celestial regions, and inhabitants. To such, to die, is to be born; they die only out of our mean world, and are born into a most glorious one. Their funerals should be celebrations of their ascent, and an exulting joy should therefore, in that case, not be quite banished from funeral sorrows, but be allowed to mingle therewith, as sun-beams glittering in a cloud. When the greatest person was leaving this world, that ever lived in it, he says: If you loved me, you would rejoice that I say, I go to the Father. We should bear our part in the joys of heaven, upon this occasion, if we relate to it. And when we are told, there is joy there, among the angels of God, for the conversion of such, who are thereby but prepared to come to their assembly; we may conclude there is much more for their glorification, when they are fully come, and joined to it. Funeral solemnities are very dull melancholy shews, without such references forwards, and upwards. With how different a temper of mind would two persons have been the spectators of Jacob's funeral, the one of whom should have looked no further than the Canaanites, or Egyptians did, who would only say, Some great person is dead; but the other, by divine illumination is enabled to apprehend, this dust here mingles with the earth of this land, to presignify this people, of whom he was the head, must possess it. Yea, moreover, here the great God will fix his residence and throne, upon such a mount shall be the palace of the supreme King. Here, after

great mutations and revolutions and great destruction both of the Egyptians, and Canaanites, shall this people have a long succession of princes, and rulers that shall be of themselves. And all this but as representing a king, and kingdom that shall rule, and spread over all the earth, and reach up at length into heaven. Canaan shall be a holy land. Unto Sion's king shall tributary princes bring their gifts, out of Egypt, and Ethiopia stretch out her hands; and all nations serve him. His empire shall confine with the universe, and all power be given him both in heaven, and earth. With what a large and raised mind would such a one have beheld this funeral! What better Canaan, than we now behold, we shall have in this world, God knows! And we should be the less solicitous to know intermediate things, when we are so fully ascertained of the glorious end of all things. And let us reflect upon the solemn pomp of that late mournful assembly, that lamented our queen's departure out of our world, comparing it with the transcended magnificence of that triumphant assembly, into which she is received above.

THE
Christian's Desire

OF

BEING ABSENT FROM THE BODY, AND PRESENT
WITH THE LORD:

A S E R M O N

ON

THE DEATH

OF

Mrs. MARGARET BAXTER.

TO
THE VERY REVEREND
Mr. RICHARD BAXTER.

SIR.

WHEN you assigned unto me that part not of forming a memorial for your excellent deceased consort (which is reserved to the fittest hand) but of instructing the people upon the occasion of her decease; this text of Scripture occurring also to my thoughts (which I reckoned might sufficiently agree with the design you generally recommended to me, though I am sensible how little the prosecution did so) it put me upon considering with how great disadvantage we set ourselves, at any time, to reason against bodily inclination; the great antagonist we have to contend against, in all our ministerial labours! An attempt which, if a higher power set not in with us, looks like the opposing of our faint breath to the steady course of a mighty river!

I have often thought of Cicero's wonder: "That since we consist of a mind, and a body, the skill of curing and preserving the body is so admired, as to have been thought a divine invention; that which refers to the mind is neither so desired, before it be found out, nor so cultivated afterwards, nor is approved and acceptable to so many. Yea is even to the most, suspected, and hateful!"

Even the tyrant Phalaris tells one, in an epistle (though by way of menace) that whereas a good physician may cure a distempered body, death is the only physician for a distempered mind. It works not indeed a universal cure. But of such on whom it may, how few are there that count not the remedy worse than the disease! Yet how many thousands are there, that for greater hoped bodily advantages, afterwards, endure much more pain and trouble, than there is in dying!

We are a mysterious sort of creatures! Yet I acknowledge the wisdom of God is great and admirable, in planting in our natures

DEDICATION.

strong a love of this bodily life, without which the best, would be more impatient of living on earth, so long as God thinks it requisite they should; and to the worst, death would not be a sufficiently formidable punishment; and consequently human laws and justice would be, in great part, eluded.

And the same divine wisdom is not less admirable, in providing there should so generally be so much of mutual love, as doth obtain among near friends and relatives; for thereby their cohabitation and mutual offices towards each other are made pleasant and easy; which is a great compensation for the concomitant evil, that by the same love their parting with one another cannot but be rendered grievous.

But for you, who live so much upon the borders, and in the pleasant view of the other state; the one separation is, I doubt not, much casier to your sense, and the other to your fore-thoughts, than they are with the most. A perfect indifferency towards this present bodily state and life, is, in mine eyes, a most covetable thing, and my daily aim; wherein I entreat your prayers may assist,

Your most respectful, though most unworthy

fellow servant, and expectant in the work,

and hope of the gospel,

J. H.

A SERMON.

2. Cor. V. 8.

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

THE solemn face of this assembly seems to tell me, that you already know the present, special occasion of it; and that I scarce need to tell any of you, that our worthy, honoured friend, Mrs. Baxter is dead. You have (it is like most of you) often met her in this place, when her pleased looks were wont to shew what delight she took to have many share in those great advantages, wherein she had a more peculiar interest; you are now to meet her here no more, but are met yourselves to lament together, that our world hath lost so desirable an inhabitant; and to learn (as I hope you design) what so instructive an occasion shall (of itself, or as it may be improved) serve to teach us.

It doth of itself most obviously teach the common document, that we, who are of the same make and mould, must all die too. And our own prudence should hereupon advance one step further, and apprehend it a most covetable thing, that the temper of our minds might comply with this unalterable state of our case; and that we be in a disposition, since we must die, to die willingly, and with our own consent. Nothing can be more irrational, or unhappy, than to be engaged in a continual quarrel with necessity, which will prevail, and be too hard for us at last. No course is so wise in itself, or good for us, as to be reconciled to what we cannot avoid; to bear a facile

yielding mind towards a determination, which admits of no repeal.

And the subject, now to be insisted on, may help us to improve the sad occasion to this very important purpose ; and shew us that dying, which cannot be willed for itself, may be joined with somewhat else which may, and ought to be so ; and in that conjunction become the object of a rational, and most complacential willingness. A subject recommended to me (though not the special text) by one, than whom I know no man that was better able to make a fit choice ; as (in the present case) none could have that right to choose. I cannot stay to discuss and open the most fruitful, pleasant series of discourse, in the foregoing verses, though there will be occasion to reflect somewhat upon it by and by ; but, in the text, the apostle asserts two things concerning the temper of his spirit, in reference to death : His confidence, and complacency, *θαρρημεν, και ευδοκιμεν*

First. His confidence, or his courage and fortitude “we are confident, I say,” he had said it before, ver. 6. We are always confident ; and assigned the cause : knowing that while we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord. And declared the kind of that knowledge (namely, which he had of that presence of the Lord, whereof he was deprived, by being present in the body) that is, that it was the knowledge of faith, not of sight, ver. 7. Now here he adds : We are confident, I say. It notes a deliberate courage, and the fixedness of it ; that it was not a sudden fit, a passion soon over. He had said above *θαρρηνυτες παντοτε*, We are confident at all times ; it was his habitual temper. And here the ingemination signifies increase, as if he had said : We grow more and more bold, and adventurous, while we consider the state of our case, and what we suffer by our presence in the body. Sense of injury or damage heightens, and adds an edge unto true valour. We would venture upon a thousand deaths, if the matter were left entirely to our own option, rather than be thus withheld any longer from the presence of our blessed Lord ; a thing whereof nothing but duty to him could make us patient. We are not destitute of the fortitude to enable us even to rush upon death, without more ado, if he did say the word ; but as yet he bids us stay, and his supreme and holy will must in all things determine ours. Therefore it is immediately subjoined, in the midst of this high transport, ver. 9. Wherefore we labour, that whether present, or absent, we might be accepted of him, or well-pleasing to him, (*ευαγεσει αιω ειναι*) we less mind the pleasing ourselves, than him. We are indifferent to life or death, being in the body, or out of it, in comparison of that ;

his pleasure is more to us than either. Here the highest fortitude yields and submits itself, otherwise, and for his own part, and as to what concerned his own inclination singly, and in the divided sense, the apostle to his confidence doth

Secondly. Add complacency. We are better pleased (*ευδοκουμεν μαλλον*) This is a distinct thing (a valiant man will venture upon wounds and death, but is not pleased with them) but in reference to so excellent an object, and occasion, they must mingle, and the latter runs into the former. We are willing rather (as we read it) to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. The word which we read willing, signifies to approve or like well, not a merely judicious, but complacential approbation; the word, whence comes the *ευδοκια* often ascribed to God in Scripture, which signifies the high satisfaction he takes in all his purposes, and determinations. The *ευδοκίαν θεληματικός*, Ephes. 1. 5. is certainly no tautology, but speaks how perfectly and pleasingly he agrees, and (as it were) consents with himself, in all that ever he had resolved on. This rather, says the apostle, is our *ευδοκια*, the thing that would please us best, and wherein we should most highly satisfy ourselves. It would not be the matter of our submission only, or whereto we could yield, when we cannot help it; but of our highest joy and pleasure. According as we find it was with the Psalmist, (psal. xvi.) in the same case (which though it had a further meaning in reference to Christ, had a true meaning as to himself also) therefore my heart is glad, my glory rejoices, my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in *sheol*, the state of the dead, nor suffer thine holy One to see corruption, but wilt shew me the path of life; and no matter though it lie through the dark shady vale, it leads however into that blessed presence of thine (the same with that in the text) where is fulness of joy; and unto that right-hand (that high and honourable station) where are pleasures for evermore. Both these, the apostle's courage and fortitude, and his complacency or well-pleasedness have express reference to the state of death, or of being absent from the body. The one respects it as a formidable (but superable) evil, the other as a desirable, and most delectable good. But both have reference to it in its concomitancy, or tendency, namely, as absence from the body should be accompanied (or be immediately followed) with being present with the Lord. The sense therefore of the whole verse, may be fitly expressed thus:—That it is the genuine temper of holy souls, not only to venture with confidence upon the state of absence, or separation from the body; but to choose it with great complacency and gladness, that they may be present with the Lord.

Body, we are not here to understand so generally, as if he affected, or counted upon a perpetual final state of separation from any body at all. No, the temper of his spirit had nothing in it so undutiful, or unnatural; no such reluctance, or disposition to contend against the common lot of men, the law of human nature, and the comely order which the Author of our beings, and of all nature, hath settled in the universe; that whereas one sort of creatures, that have life, should be wholly confined to terrestrial bodies; another, quite exempt from them; ours should be a middle nature, between the angelical, and the brutal. So as we should, with the former, partake of intellectual immortal spirit; and a mortal body made up, and organized of earthly materials, with the latter: which yet we might also depose, and reassume, changed and refined from terrene dross. The apostle's temper hath in it nothing of rebellion, or regret against this most apt and congruous order and constitution; he had no impatient proud resentment of that gradual debasement and inferiority that, in this respect, we are made a little lower than the angels. When Porphyry tells us, in the life of Plotinus, that he blushed as often as he thought of his being a body, it was agreeable enough to his notion of the pre-existence of the soul; that is, if it were true, that the original state of human spirits was the same with that of angels (which this is no fit season to dispute against) and that by their own fault, some way or other, they lapsed and slid down into grosser matter, and were caught into vital union with it, there was just cause of shame indeed. Apuleius's transformation (which many of you know what it means) if it had been real, was not more ignominious.

But it appears the apostle affected not a state, wherein he should be simply naked, or unclothed of any body at all; for he longs to be clothed upon with his heavenly house, ver. 2. And whereas he tells us, ver. 4. That which he groaned for, was not to be unclothed, but clothed upon; that being unclothed, doth not mean the act, but the state, that is, that he did not covet or aspire to a perpetual final state of being naked, or without any body at all. For so he speaks, ver. 3. If so be (as we read) that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. The particle *εἴ γε* admits to be read, since that, inasmuch as, for truly; and so the 2d. and 3d. verses will be connected thus: In this, (ver. 2.) that is, for this, namely, for this cause, as *εἰ* often signifies causality (not in this house, for *τῆς οἰκίας* will not agree) we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, that is of heaven, or suitable to heaven (*ἐξ* denotes here, as often, the matter whereof a thing is formed and made) a body made up of a

heavenly material ; or (which is all one) an earthly body refined, and transformed into such a one. And then he subjoins the reason why his desire is so conditioned, and limited, or runs only in this particular current to have not, no body at all, but only not such a body. He wishes to have a body made more habile, and commodious, and fitter for the uses of a glorified soul (which hath its own more inward clothing peculiar to itself, in respect whereof that of such a body would be an additional one, a superinvestiture, as the word *σπενδυσασθαι* imports) his desire is thus limited and modified for this reason. Inasmuch as, being thus clothed, we shall not be found naked, ver. 3. or without any body at all ; which the law of our creation admits us not to affect, or aspire unto. And therefore in qualifying our desire thus, we shall contain ourselves within our own bounds, and not offer at any thing whereof humanity is, by the Creator's pleasure, and constitution incapable. Therefore he inculcates the same thing over again. We groan not to be unclothed, but only to be clothed upon ; ver. 4. where that unclothed (the thing he desired not) must signify the state, and not the act only, is evident ; in that being clothed (the thing which he did desire) must plainly be so understood. For was it only an entrance into glory he desired, and not continuance in a glorified state ? Nor can this being unclothed much less, refer as an act to the present clothing of this earthly body, as if it were our being divested of that which he intended in this 4th. verse, as the thing he desired not, for then the 4th. verse would contradict this 8th. where he tells us he did desire it. The meaning then is, that he did not desire to be exempted from wearing a body, or to be without any at all : he did only covet to be absent from this body (gross and terrene as now it was) that he might be present with the Lord ; with which he found being in such a body, and in the several accompanying circumstances of this bodily state, to be inconsistent. Wherefore it was a terrestrial body (the earthly house of this tabernacle, as it is ver. 1.) which he was now better pleased to quit upon this account.

And I say it is the genuine temper of a holy soul to be like-minded, not their constant, explicit, discernable sense. We must allow for accidents (as we shall note afterwards) but when they are themselves, and in their right mind, and so far as the holy divine life doth prevail in them, this is their temper.

And now, that I may more fully open this matter to you, I shall,

I. Endeavour to unfold, somewhat more distinctly, the

state of the case, in reference whereto good and holy souls are thus affected.

II. Shall shew you what is their true and genuine temper, or how it is that they stand affected, in reference to that case.

III. Shall discover how agreeable this temper is to the general frame and complexion of a holy soul.

IV. And then make such reflections upon the whole, as may be more especially useful to ourselves.

I. We are to take, as much as we can, a distinct view and state of the case. We see the apostle speaks by way of comparison, *ευδοκουμεν μαλλον*, we are willing rather. We are therefore to consider (that we may comprehend clearly the true state of this case) what the things are which he compares; and between which his mind might be supposed, as it were, to have been before (at least in order of nature before) in some suspense, till at last it come so complacentially to incline, and be determined this one way. Take the account of the whole case in these particulars.

1. There are here two principal terms, between which the motion and inclination of such a mind lies, from the one to the other. The Lord and the Body. Both do as it were attract and draw (or are apt to do) two several ways. The Lord strongly draws on the one hand, and the body hangs on, and holds, and draws in as strongly to itself as it can, on the other. The body as having us present in it. And how? not locally only, but in the way of vital union, and communion with it. And that shews how we are to understand being present with the Lord too, not by a mere local presence, but of more intimate vital union and commerce. Where, as in the union between the soul and body, the more excellent communicates life, the other receives it; so it must be here. Though now the Lord is present thus, in some measure (which this attraction supposes) yet speaking comparatively, that presence is absence, in respect of what we are to look for hereafter. Both these unions are very mysterious, and both infer very strong and powerful drawing, or holding together of the things so united.

There is no greater mystery in nature, than the union between the soul and body. That a mind and spirit should be so tied and linked with a clod of clay, that, while that remains in a due temper, it cannot by any art or power free itself! It can by an act of the will move a hand, or foot, or the whole body; but cannot move from it one inch. If it move hither and thither, or by a leap upward do ascend a little, the body still follows; it cannot shake or throw it off. We cannot take ourselves out; by any allowable means we cannot, nor by any

at all (that are at least within mere human power) as long as the temperament lasts. While that remains, we cannot go; if that fail, we cannot stay; though there be so many open avenues (could we suppose any material bounds to hem in, or exclude a spirit) we cannot go out or in at pleasure. A wonderful thing! and I wonder we no more wonder at our own make and frame in this respect, that we do not, with reverent submissive adoration, discern and confess how far we are outwitted, and overpowered by our wise and great Creator; that we not only cannot undo his work upon us, in this respect; but that we cannot so much as understand it. What so much akin are a mind and a piece of earth, a clod and a thought, that they should be thus affixed to one another; or that there should be such a thing in nature as thinking clay! But hereupon, what advantage hath this body upon the soul our spirit! In the natural union is grounded a moral one, of love and affection; which (on the soul's part) draws and binds it down with mighty efficacy.

Again, how mysterious and ineffable is the union of the Lord, and the soul; and how more highly venerable, as this is a sacred mystery! And who would not admire at their proud disdainful folly, that while they cannot explain the union between the soul and body, are ready to jeer at their just, humble, and modest ignorance, that call this other a mystical union? or, because they know not what to make of it, would make nothing, and will not allow there should be any such thing, or would have it be next to nothing. Have those words no sense belonging to them, or not a great sense, (1 Cor. 6. 17.) But he that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit? And, upon this supernatural union also (be it what it will) methinks the binding, and drawing power of love should not be less!

2. We must conceive in our minds, as distinctly as we can, the peculiar adjuncts of each of these more principal terms; that is, on the part of the body first, we are to consider a sensible, a grossly corporeal world, to which this body doth connaturalize us, and whereto we are attempered by our being in the body, and living this bodily life. This body, while we live in it, is the *terminus uniens*, the medium, the unitive bond between us and it. In this world we find ourselves encompassed with objects that are suitable, grateful, and entertaining to our bodily senses, and the several principles, perceptions, and appetites that belong to the bodily life; and these things familiarize and habituate us to this world, and make us, as it were, one with it. There is, particularly, a bodily people, as is intimated in the text, that we are associated with by our being in the body. The words *ενδημησαι* and

ἐκδημησασι, in this verse (and the same are used verse the 6th and 9th) signify there is such a people of which we are, and from which we would be dissociated; ἐνδημιος is *civis, incola, or indigena*, an inhabitant, or native among this or that people; as ἐξοδημιος is *peregrinus* one that lives abroad and is severed from the people he belonged unto. The apostle considers himself, while in the body, as living among such a sort of people as dwell in bodies, a like sort of people to himself; and would be no longer a home-dweller with these, but travel away from them, to join and be a dweller with another people.

For also, on the other hand, he considers, with the Lord, an invisible world, where he resides; and an incorporeal people, he presides over. So that the case here is, are we willing to be dispeopled from this bodily sort of people, and peopled with that incorporeal sort, the world, and community of spirits?

3. It is further to be considered in this case, that we are related both ways, related to the body, and related to the Lord; to the one people, and the other, the one claims an interest in us, and so doth the other. We have many earthly alliances, it is true, and we have many heavenly; we are related to both worlds, and have affairs lying in both. And now what mighty pleadings might the case admit, on the one hand, and the other? Were the body, apart, capable of pleading for itself, to this effect it must bespeak the soul: "I am thy body, I was made and formed for thee, and someway, by thee. Thou hast so long inhabited and dwelt with me, and in me. Thou art my soul, my life, my strength, if thou be absent, I am a carcass, and fall to dirt; and thou wilt be a maimed thing, and scarce thy whole-self." But though it cannot dictate, and do not utter such words; nature doth itself plead more strongly, than words can.

And again, how much more potently might the Lord plead for his having the soul more closely united, and intimately conversant with himself! "Thou art one of the souls I have loved and chosen, which were given to me, and for which I offered up my own soul. I have visited thee in thy low and abject state, said to thee, in thy blood, Live, have inspired thee with a heavenly, sacred, divine life, the root, and seminal principle of a perfect, glorious, eternal life. Let this body drop, which hath been long thy burden! let it fall and die, it matters not! Yet since thou lovest it, I will restore it thee again, pure and glorious, like mine own. I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, John. 11. 25. Never fear to venture thyself with me, nor to commit thy body to my after-care."

And now all the question will be, Which alleges the more considerable things? and the matter will be estimated, as the temper of the soul is. An earthly sordid soul, when the overture is made to it of such a translation, will be ready to say, as the Shunamite (2 Kings. 4. 13.) did to the prophet, when he offered to speak for her to the king (perhaps that her husband might be called to court, and made a great man) I dwell among my own people (an answer that in her case well expressed the true greatness of a contented mind, but in this case nothing more mean) I am well where I am, and dwell among a people like myself. So saith the degenerate abject soul, sunk into a deep oblivion of its own country; Here I dwell a fixed inhabitant of this world, among a corporeal people, where I make one. And we find how it is with this sort of people, each one charms another, and they grow familiar, have mutual ties upon one another, and there is a loathsomeness to part. Especially as here, in this lower world, we are variously disposed, and cast into several mutual relations to one another; husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, all dwelling in bodies alike, cohabiting, eating and drinking daily, and conversing together. These are great and sensible endearments, by which the minds of men become as it were knit, and united to one another. How are men's spirits fixed to their own countries! *Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine*—it is by an inexpressible pleasure and sweetness, that the people of one country are as it were linked and held together.

But would not a heavenly, new-born soul say, No, this is none of my country, I seek a better, and am here but a pilgrim and stranger; this is none of my people? So it was with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that conversed in the earthly Canaan, but as in a strange country; their mind being gone towards that other, which they sought. And accordingly you find it said of each of them, in their story, when they quite left this world (as also of Moses and Aaron, afterwards) that they were gathered to their people; a people that were more their own. And surely, as God (who was not ashamed to be called their God) is not the God of the dead, but of the living; we must understand this was not the congregation of the dead, to which these were gathered, otherwise than in a low, relative sense, as to us only and our world. Holy men, as they die out of one world, are born into another, to associate with them that dwell in light; and be joined to a glorious community above, the general assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect: where all love and adore, praise and triumph together.

4. It is again to be taken into the state of this case, that we have, one way or other, actual present notices of both the states, which both sorts of objects, that stand in this competition, belong unto. Of the one, by sense and experience; we so know what it is to live in the body, and in a sensible world, and among a corporeal people: of the other, by faith; by believing as we are told by one who we are sure can have no design, or inclination to deceive us. There are many mansions saith he, in my Father's house, as good accommodations, as suitable society (and sufficiently numerous, which the many mansions implies) to be sure as any you have met with here. Faith is, in this case, to serve us instead of eyes, it is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of the things not seen; (Heb. 11. 1.) as we have the notion of a country where we have not been, by the description of a person whom we can trust, and that we think intends not to abuse us by forgeries, and false representations. In reference to this country, we walk and guide ourselves by sight, in our converses, and affairs wherein we have to do with it; as to that other, by faith: as ver. 7. it is implied.

5. Yet further it is to be considered, that this body, and this bodily people and world have the present possession of us. And though the spiritualized mind do as it were step forth, and place itself between both, when it is to make its choice; yet the objects of the one sort are much nearer, the other are far distant, and much more remote.

6. That it cannot but be apprehended, that though the one sort of things hath the faster hold, the other sort are things of greater value; the one hath the more entire present possession of us, the other, the better right. Thus we see the case stated.

II. We are next to shew what the temper is of a holy soul (that is, its proper and most genuine temper) in reference to this supposed state of the case. We are willing rather, or have a more complacential inclination to be unpeopled from the body, and this bodily sort of people; and to be peopled with the Lord, and that sort of incorporeal people, over which he more immediately presides in the upper world. He speaks comparatively, as the case requires, and because all comparison is founded in somewhat absolute; therefore a simple disposition, both ways, is supposed. Whence then,

1. This temper is not to despise, and hate the body, it imports no disdainful aversion to it, or to this present state.

2. Nor is it an impetuous precipitant tendency towards the Lord, impatient of delay, mutinous against the divine disposal; or that declines present duty, and catches at the

ἐξαίρετον, the crown and prize, before the prescribed race be run out. A holy man is at once dutiful and wise, as a servant he refuses not the obedience of life: and as a wise man,* embraces the gain of death.

3. But it is considerate, the effect of much foregoing deliberation, and of a thorough perspection of the case; εἰδοτες ver. 6. knowing, or considering that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. This choice is not made blindly, and in the dark.

4. It is very determinate and full, being made up of the mixture of fortitude and complacency, as was said; the one whereof copes with the evil, of being severed from the body; the other entertains the good of being present with the Lord. Therefore this is the sense of a pious soul in the present case: as though he had said, "I do indeed love this body well, and reckon it a grievous thing to be severed from it, if that part of the case be singly considered, and alone by itself; but considering it in comparison with the other part, what is this body to me? What is it as an object of love, in comparison of being with the Lord? What is death to me as an object of fear, in comparison of being absent from the Lord! which is a death many thousand times more deadly than the other.

III. The agreeableness of this temper to the general frame, and complexion of a holy soul as such. Which will appear, if we consider—what sort of frame or impression, in the general, that is that doth distinguish a sincerely pious person from another man—and the more eminent principles in particular that are constituent of it, and do as it were compose and make it up.

1. The general frame of a holy soul, as such, is natural to it. It is not an artificial thing, a piece of mechanism, a lifeless engine, nor a superficial, an external form, an evanid impression. It is the effect of a creation (as Scripture often speaks) by which the man becomes a new creature, and hath a nature peculiar to him, as other creatures have; or of regeneration, by which he is said to be born anew. Which forms of speech, whatever they have of different signification, do agree in this, that they signify a certain nature to be the thing produced. This nature is said to be divine, (2. Pet. i. 4.) somewhat born of God, as it is expressed, 1. John. v. 4. and in many places more. And it is an intellectual nature, or the restored rectitude of such a being. Now who can think but what is so peculiarly from God, a touch and impress from him upon an intelligent subject, should with design, choice and complacency, tend to him, and make the soul

* Ambros. de bono mortis.

do so? Especially, when it is so purposely designed for remedy of the apostacy, wherein men are revolted and gone off from him? Will he suffer himself to be defeated in a design, upon which he is so industriously intent? Or is it supposable the all-wise God should so mistake himself, as to do such a work upon the spirit of man, on set purpose for an end which it is no way apt to serve; yea, and when he now takes him in hand, a second time? Nor can it be but this impression of God upon the soul, must have principal reference to our final state. It is a kind of nature, and must therefore tend to what is most perfect in its own kind. But we need not reason, in a matter wherein the word of God so plainly unfolds the scope, and the success of this his own work. By it we are said to be alive to God, through Jesus Christ, (Rom. vi. 11.) to turn, and move, and act towards him, as many scriptures speak. And towards him as he is most perfectly to be served, and enjoyed, in the most perfect state of life.

We are said to be begotten again, to a lively hope (1 Pet. i. 3. where hope is taken objectively, as the following words shew) to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. And when, elsewhere, it had been said: Every one that doth righteousness is born of him, 1 John. ii. 29. there is immediately subjoined, chap. iii. 1, 2. a description of the future blessedness; whereto it is presently added, ver. 3. and every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure: implying the hope of that blessed state to be connate, implanted as a vital principle of the new, and divine nature. And all hope, we know, involves desire in it; which is here intimated to be so powerful and prevailing, as to shape and form a man's whole course to an agreeable tenour: which it could not do, if hope were not superadded to desire; for no man pursues an end whereof he despairs. And what else is living religion, but a tendency to blessedness? a seeking honour, glory, and immortality, by a patient continuance in well doing, Rom. ii. 7. Nor need we look further than this context, for evidence that this divine impression upon the soul hath this reference; for when, ver. 4. the apostle had avowed the fervour of his desire after that state wherein mortality should be swallowed up of life, he immediately adds, ver. 5. Now he that hath wrought us for this self same thing, is God, &c. And indeed, after that transforming touch, the great business of such a soul, in this world, is but a dressing itself for the divine presence, a preparation for that state, wherein we are for ever to be with the Lord. And it is not only an incongruity, but an inconsistency; not only that which is not fit, but not possible that a man should ever de-

sign that as his end, which he cares not ever to attain; or that for his last end, which he doth not supremely desire.

2. If we consider particular principles that belong to this holy divine nature, the more noble and eminent are faith and love. The former is the perceptive, visive principle; the other the motive, and fruitive. And these, though they have their other manifold references, have yet, both, their final to that state of absence from this body, and presence with the Lord; the one eying, the other coveting it, as that wherein the soul is to take up its final rest. Here some consideration should be had of objections, that some may be apt to make use of, to shift off the urgency of this truth, and excuse the unsuitable temper of their spirits to it.

(1.) That they are unassured about their states Godward, and how can they be willing to die, and be absent from the body, or not be afraid of the Lord's presence, whom they may, for ought they know, find an angry vindictive Judge, when they appear before him?

Answer. This, which is the most considerable objection that the matter admits of, if it were directly pointed against this truth, as it hath been laid down, would answer itself. For it is not dying simply that is the object of this inclination, but dying conjunctly with being with the Lord, in his blessed joyous presence. Do not therefore divide the object, and that objection is no objection. You are unwilling to die, and be banished the divine presence; but are you unwilling to die, and enjoy it? Or, upon supposition you should, are you willing? This is all that we make characteristical, and distinguishing. Where there is only an aversion to leave this bodily life and state, upon a fear we shall not be admitted into that blessed presence; there is only an accidental obstruction to the more explicit, distinct and discernable exertions of desire this way; which obstruction, if it be removed, the soul would then follow the course which the divine, and holy principle in it doth naturally incline to: but the mortal token is, when there is no such doubt, and yet there is still a prevailing aversion; when men make no question, if they die they shall go to God, and yet they are not willing to go. In the former case, there is a supreme desire of being with God, only suspended; take off that suspension, and that desire runs its natural course. In the other case, there is no desire at all. And the difference is, as between a living man that would fain go to such a place, but he is held, and therefore goes not; and one that is not held, but is dead, and cannot stir at all. For the life of the soul towards God is love, aversion therefore is (not an absolute, but) respective death, or *quoad hoc*, a death towards him; or, as to this thing, namely, being with him.

(2.) As for the objection of being more serviceable to children, friends, relations, or the glory of God in the world, and his church in it ; upon which last account this apostle, (Phil. i. 22, 23, 24.) though he express a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, yet is in a strait, and seems also very well pleased to abide in the flesh a longer time : he can himself best judge of our serviceableness. The meaning is not that we should be willing to leave the body before he would have us, but that we should not be unwilling then. And because we know not when his time will be, and it may be presently for ought we know ; we should be always willing and desirous, upon that supposition. Our desire herein should not be absolute, and peremptory, but subordinate, and apt to be determined by his will ; which can determine nothing but what will be most for his own glory, and for their best good who belong to him.

But as to this instance of the apostle, we must consider what there was peculiar in the apostle's case, and what is common or ought to be, to all serious christians. There is no doubt there was this more peculiar to him (and to persons in such a capacity and station as his was) namely as he was an apostle, he was one that had seen the Lord, which was a qualification for the more special work of that office ; whereupon he was as an eye witness, to testify of his resurrection ; upon which so great a stress lay, in asserting the truth of the Christian religion, and propagating it with the greater assurance in the world. To testify as an apostle, therefore, could not be done by one of a following age. And it is very probable when he expresses, to the Philippians, (ver. 25.) his knowledge he should abide and continue yet longer with them all, that is, with the Christian church in the world (for we cannot suppose he was to continue at Philippi) for the furtherance of the common cause of the Christian faith, which was their common joy (and which would no doubt be increased intensively and extensively at once) he had some secret intimation, that all his work in this kind was not yet over. Nor were such monitions and advertisements unfrequent with the apostles, that specially related to the circumstances of their work. And so entirely was he devoted to the Christian interest, that wherein he saw he might be so peculiarly serviceable to it, he expresses a well pleasedness to be so, as well as a confidence that he should : as we all ought to do, in reverence to any such significations of the divine will concerning us, if they were afforded to us. But as to what there is, in this instance, that is common and imitable to the generality of christians, it is no other than what we press from the text we have in hand : a desire to depart, and be with Christ, as that which is far better for us ; submitted to the regulation of

the divine will, as to the time of our departure, and accompanied with a cheerful willingness to serve him here, to our uttermost, in the mean time. But we have withal little reason to think we can do God greater service, or glorify him more here, than above. There is indeed other service to be done below, which is necessary in its own kind, and must, and shall be done by some or other. But is our service fit, in point of excellency and value, to be compared with that of glorified spirits in the upper regions? We serve God by doing his will, which is, surely, most perfectly done above. And our glorifying him, is to acknowledge and adore his glorious excellencies: not to add the glory to him which he hath not; but to celebrate and magnify that which he hath: whereof certainly the large minds of glorified creatures are far more capable. He never needs hands for any work he hath to do, but can form instruments as he pleases. And what is our little point of earth or any service that can be performed by us here, in comparison of the spacious heavens, and the noble employments of those glorious orders of creatures above, which all bear their parts in the great affairs of the vast, and widely extended heavenly kingdom? We might as well suppose, that because there is, in a prince's family, employment below stairs for cooks, and butlers, or such like underlings; that therefore their service is more considerable than that of great officers, and ministers of state.

3. And for what may be thought, by some, that this seems an unnatural inclination; we must understand what we say, and what our own nature is, when we talk of what is natural, or unnatural to us. Ours is a compounded nature, that is not simply unnatural, that is contrary to an inferior nature, and agreeable to a superior. The most deeply fundamental law, of the intellectual nature in us, was to be most addicted to the supreme good. The apostacy of this world from God, and its lapse into carnality is its most unnatural state. To have an inclination to the body is natural, but to be more addicted to it, than to God, is most contrary to the sincere dictates of original, pure and primitive nature.

IV. There are now, for our use, many things to be inferred.

1. We see here, from the immediate connexion between being absent from the body, and present with the Lord, there is no place for the intervening sleep of the separate soul. Can such a presence with the Lord, as is here meant, consist with sleeping? or is sleeping more desirable than the converse with him our present state admits? But of this, much is said elsewhere.

2. Death is not so formidable a thing as we commonly

fancy. We are confident and willing rather. There is a fortitude that can oppose the terrors of death, and overcome. How many have we known die triumphing!

3. We see that men of spiritual minds, have another notion of that which we call self, or personality, than is vulgar and common. For who are the *we* that speak of being absent from the body, and present with the Lord? The body seems excluded that notion, which we know cannot be absent from itself. How like in sound is this to *Animus cujusque is quisque?* or that *the soul is the man?* I would not indeed drive this so high as some platonists are wont to do, as if the man were nothing else but a soul, sometimes using a body. Nor do therefore think the body is no more to him, than our clothes to the body, because the apostle in this context uses that similitude; for that is not to be conceived otherwise, than (as is usual in such illustrations) with dissimilitude. A vital union must be acknowledged, only neither is it agreeable with their self-debasing thoughts, that seem to make the body the more considerable part of themselves, that measure good and evil by it, as if what were grateful to the body were simply good for them, and that which offends the body simply evil; that speak or think of themselves, as if they were all body, forget that there is belonging to them an *εσω ανθρωπος*, as well as an *ο εξω*, an *inner man*, and an *outer*: that the latter may be decaying, when the other is renewed day by day*; that the Father of our spirits may often see cause to let our flesh suffer (and, at last, perish) for the advantage of our spirits, Heb. xii. 9, 10. So distinct are their interests and gratifications, and sometimes inconsistent. When men make therefore this bodily brutal self their centre and end, how sordid and unchristian is their temper! And how reprobable by some more noble-minded pagans, that had better learned the precept inculcated by some of them, of reverencing themselves! Of whom we find one† speaking, with a sort of disdain, Is this body, I? Another‡ saying, he might be killed and not hurt; and upbraiding to his friends their ignorance, when they inquired how he would be buried; as if he could be buried, who, he said, should be gone far enough out of their hands. Another††; that the tyrant that made him to be beaten to death with iron mallets, might break that vessel of his, but himself he could not touch.

4. We learn, that when God removes any of our dear godly friends and relatives out of the body, though he displease us, he highly pleases them; for it is that they desire rather. And we are sure he pleases himself, for what can induce him, or make

* 2 Cor. iv. 16. † Epict. ‡ Socrat. †† Anaxarch.

it possible to him to do any thing against his own pleasure ; we are too apt to consider our own interest and satisfaction apart from theirs and God's, in such cases. And hence is that too vulgar and practical error, among many very serious christians ; that when such as are dear to them are taken away, they reckon their thoughts are to be principally employed, in considering such a thing as afflictive, or punitive to them. It is true that the affliction of that, as well as of any other kind, should put us upon very serious inquiry and search what the sin is, that may more especially have deserved it. But that ought, upon all occasions to be principally considered in any case, that is principal. As God did not make such a creature principally to please me, so nor doth he take away such a one principally to displease me. God's interest is supreme, their own next, mine comes after both the other. Therefore when the stream of thoughts and affections hath run principally, in such a case, upon our own affliction, it is time to check it, and begin to consider, with some pleasure, how the Lord and that translated soul are now pleased in one another ! He hath his end upon his own creature, and it hath its end, and rest in him.

5. We see the admirable power of divine grace, that it prevails against even the natural love of this bodily life ; not where discontent, and weariness of life contribute ; but even where there is a willingness to live too, upon a valuable consideration, as this apostle doth elsewhere express himself, namely, in the place before noted : and how easily the divine pleasure could reconcile him to life, notwithstanding what is said in the text, is sufficiently signified in the words immediately following it. And the effect is permanent, not a sudden transport ; (wherein many are induced to throw away their lives, upon much lower motives) this appears to be an habitual inclination. At distant times, we find the apostle in the same temper. That is not surely from the power of nature, that is so much against it, as the stream of nature now runs, that is, that a man should be willing to be plucked in pieces, and severed from himself ! And we see, (ver. 5.) whereto it is expressly ascribed : He that hath wrought us to the selfsame thing, is God.

6. How black is their character, and how sad their state that are more addicted to the body, and this bodily life, than to the Lord, and that holy blessed life we are to partake in with him ! Their character is black and horrid, as it is diverse from that which truly belongs to all the people of God, that ever lived on earth ; and so doth distinguish them from such, and place them among another sort of men that belong not to him ; such as have their portion in this life, their good things here, and who are to expect nothing hereafter, but woe and wailing. And

who would not be affrighted, that finds a mark upon him that severs him from the whole assembly of the just, and the blessed! Their state is also therefore sad and dismal, inasmuch as what they place their highest felicity in (their abode in the body) they know will continue but a little while. Who could ever, by their love of this bodily life, procure it to be perpetuated? or by their dread of mortality, make themselves immortal? Have not others, in all former ages, loved the body, and this world as much? and what is become of them? Hath not death still swept the stage from generation to generation? and taken all away, willing or unwilling? To have all my good bound up in what I cannot keep! and to be in a continual dread of what I cannot avoid! what can be more disconsolate? How grievous will it be to be torn out of the body! not to resign the soul, but have it drawn forth as a rusty sword out of the sheath; a thing which our utmost unwillingness will make the more painful, but cannot defer? No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, nor hath he power in death, Eccles. viii. 8. How uncomfortable, when the Lord's presence, the common joy of all good souls, is to me a dread! By the same degrees, by which an abode in the body is over desired, is that presence dreaded and disaffected. And how deplorable is the case, when this body is the best shelter I have from that presence! Would I lurk in the body and lie hid from the presence of the Lord? How easily, and how soon will my fortress be beaten down and laid in the dust! and I be left naked and exposed! and then how fearful things do ensue! But what now, doth this fearful case admit of no remedy? It can admit but of this only one, which therefore I would now recommend and press, the serious effectual endeavour of being, to a just degree, alienated from the body, and of having the undue love repressed and wrought down, of this bodily life. Mistake not, I go not about to persuade all promiscuously, out of hand and without more ado to desire death, or absence from the body. The desires of reasonable creatures should be reasonable, the product of valuable considerations, and rational inducements. The present case of too many, the Lord knows, admits not they should be willing to die; who are they that they should desire the day of the Lord? a day of such gloominess and darkness, as it is likely, should it now dawn, to prove to them? No, but let all endeavour to get into that state, and have their affairs in such a posture that they may be, upon good terms, reconciled to the grave; and that separation from the body may be the matter, with them, of a rational, and truly Christian choice. And since, as hath been said, there are two terms between which the inclination and motion of our souls, in this case, must lie, from the one to the other, namely, the body, and the Lord, life in the body, and

with the Lord; let such things be considered on both hands, as may justly tend to diminish and lessen our inclination and love to the one, and increase it towards the other. So as that all things being considered, and upon the whole, this may be the reasonable and self-justifying result, to be well pleased rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. And,

(1.) On the part of the body and this bodily life, consider, how costly it is to you! You lay out upon it (the most do) most of your time, thoughts, cares; the greater part, most or even all, of your estates. All the callings you can think of in the world, and which all help to maintain, at no little expence, are wholly for the body; what costly attendants must it have of cooks, bakers, brewers, mereers, physicians, lawyers, and what not? One only excepted that refers to the soul. And again, when all is done, how little serviceable is it! when you would employ it, sometimes it is sick, sometimes lame, sometimes lames the mind and intellect too, that it cannot do its office, merely through the distemper of bodily organs, is at all times dull, sluggish, indisposed; the spirit is willing, but the flesh weak.

Yea moreover how disserviceable! hinders your doing good, prompts to the doing much evil. What a world of mischief is done among men, merely by bodily lusts, and to serve fleshly appetite; these fill the world with confusion, and miseries of all sorts. All catch from others what they can, for the service of the body; hence is competition of interests and designs; no man's portion is enough for him to serve the body, (or the mind, as it is depraved by bodily inclinations) and so the world is torn by its inhabitants, countries wasted and laid desolate; religion itself made subservient to fleshly interest, and thence is the occasion of many a bloody contest, of oppressions, persecutions, and violences; whereby many times it so falls out, that such as are most vigorously engaged in a design of serving the body, destroy it, their own as well as other men's. And (which is most dreadful) souls are numerously lost and perish in the scuffle, yea and very oft upon the account, or pretence of religion, whose only design it is to save souls! And how many to save their bodies, destroy even their own souls! Not having learned that instruction of our Saviour's: not to fear them that can only kill the body; or being unable to suffer some lesser bodily inconveniences, apostatize, and abandon their religion, whereby that, and their souls too become sacrifices to the safety and accommodation of an idolized lump of clay! And how certainly (if a seasonable repentance do not intervene) do they, who only thus tempt the souls of other men, destroy their own! nor can it be doubted at this time of day, and after the

experience of so many ages, wherein Christianity hath been so visibly and grossly carnalized, but that it is a religion perverted to the support of the bodily and animal interest, that hath thus embroiled the Christian world. How plain is it, that they who desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, to strut in pomp, to glitter in secular grandeur and splendor, to live in unrebuked sensual ease and fulness, are the men that would constrain others to their carnal observances! men that serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies. Who can think it is pure love to souls, and zeal for the true ends of the holy peaceable religion, of our blessed Jesus, that makes them so vexatious and troublesome to all, whom their fleshly arm can reach and ruin, and whom their spirit and way cannot allure and win? Who that understands religion, and the true design of it, and the blessed end wherein it will shortly terminate, would not be glad to be rescued out of this large diffusive unquiet empire of the body, that extends itself over all things, mingling its odious impurities, even with what is most sacred! Who would not long to be from under this reign of the beast, if he might have a fair way of escape! And where religion is not in the case, what multitudes of terrene creatures, earthly-minded men, are stupidly going down to perdition daily, and destroying their souls by mere neglect, while they are driving designs for the body! Which yet in the mean time, is at the best but a prison to the soul. O how could they love God! admire and praise him! were they once out of this body! But it is not enough to a subject, wherein love is implanted and is a part of its nature, to have only the prospect of what is unlovely, or be told only what is not to be loved. There must be somewhat to invite and draw, as well as to repel and drive off. Therefore,

(2.) Consider also, on the other part, the Lord, and that life you are to transact and live with him. Little can now be said; you are not ignorant where much is, and your own thoughts may, upon much conversing with the holy oracles, suggest yet more. And you have need to use your thoughts here, the more largely, where your sense doth not instruct you, as on the other part it doth. Consider the description which you are copiously furnished with, both of him and of the state in which you are to be present with him. Recount his glorious excellencies his immense and all-sufficient fulness, his wisdom, power, holiness, and love in absolute perfection. Consider his high, equal, comely, amiable regecy over the blessed community above, that spiritual incorporeal people, the pleased joyful inhabitants of the celestial regions. And that he rules over them and communicates himself universally to them, in a state of perfect light, purity, peace, love and pleasure, that is also im-

mutable, and never to know end. There is nothing capable of attracting an intellectual nature, which is not here!

(3.) But on both parts, suffer yourselves to be directed also.

[1.] Take heed of over-indulging the body, keep it in subjection, use it, and serve it not. Primitivè nature, and the Creator's wise and holy pleasure, ordained it to serve. Lose not yourselves in it, take heed you be not buried, where you should but dwell, and that you make not your mansion your grave. Mansion do I say? Call it as this apostle doth, and another, (2 Pet. i.) your tabernacle only, a tent pitched for you, but for a little while. Every day look upon it, and without fond pity, as destined to rottenness and corruption; and as that, which when it ceases to be your cloathing, must be worms' meat. Labour to make the thoughts easy and familiar to yourselves of leaving it, think it not an uncouth thing. How doth that part of the creation, that is inferior to you, abound with like instances? of fruits springing up out of this earth, and growing to ripeness and maturity, with husks, shells, or other integuments, which then fall off; such as never ripen, they and their enfoldings rot together. Esteem it your perfection, when your shell will fall off easily, and cleaves not so close, as to put you to pain when it is to be severed from you.

Endeavour the holy and heavenly nature may grow more and more mature in you; so death will be the more also an unregretted thing to your thoughts. By all means labour to overcome the fear of it, which that you might, our Lord also took a body. Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage, (Heb. ii. 14, 15.) Reckon not much of that fear, which is only the mere regret of sensitive nature, purely involuntary; and that can no more obey the empire of the mind, or be regulated by it, than you can make straight a crooked leg by a mere act of your will, or make your body not feel pain: a fear, from which the perfection of our nature, in our blessed Lord himself, was not exempt. But it is one thing to extinguish even that fear, another to overcome it; the former is impossible to you, the latter necessary. It is overcome, when a superior principle governs you and your resolutions and course, as it did our Lord; he did not, because of it, spare himself and decline dying. You may feel perhaps somewhat of such a fear (a secret shrug) when you are to be let blood, or have a wound searched. It governs not in such a less important case, when, being convinced it is requisite, you omit not the thing notwithstanding. Labour here-

in to be hardy, and merciless to this flesh, upon the fore-thoughts of the time when God will allow you to step forth, and go out of the body : and say to it, with an obdured mind, for all thy craving, and shrinking, Thou shalt be thrown off.

Labour it may not only not be the matter of your prevailing fear, but be the matter of your hope. Look towards the approaching season, with pleasant cheerful expectation ; aspire (as it belongs to you to do, who have received the first-fruits' of the Spirit, that blessed Spirit of adoption) and groan for the adoption (the season of your being more solemnly owned for sons) namely, the redemption of the body. Rom. viii. 23. Which though it ultimately refer to thresurrection , may be allowed to have an incomplete meaning, in reference to death too ; for I see not but *απολυτρωσιν τε σωματος*, may admit such a construction, as *απολυτρωσιν των παραβασιων*, Heb. ix. 15. that is, that redemption of the body may mean redemption from it, wherein it is burdensome, a grievance and penalty, here, as well as there. The redemption of transgressions, doth truly mean liberation from the penalty of them ; from which penal evil of, and by the body, so materially, at least, it is, we are not perfectly freed, as our blessedness is not perfect till mortality be swallowed up of life, and all the adopted, the many sons, be all brought to glory together.

How happy in the mean time is your case, when death becomes the matter of your rational well grounded hope ! You have many hopes, wherein you are liable to disappointment ; you will then have one sure hope, and that will be worth them all, none can prevent you of this hope. Many other things, you justly hope for, are hindered by ill-minded men of their accomplishment ; but all the wit and power, of your most spiteful enemies, can never hinder you from dying. And how are you fenced against all the intervening troubles of life ! *Nihil metuit qui optat mori, you have nothing to fear, if you desire to die* ; nothing what, at least, death will shortly put an end to. Make this your aim, to have life for the matter of your patience, and death of your desire.

[2.] On the other part also, labour to be upon good terms with the Lord, secure it that he be yours. Your way to that is short and expedite, the same by which we become his, Ezek. xvi. 8. I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine. Solemnly and unfeignedly accept him, and surrender yourselves ; without this who can expect but to hear from him at last : Depart from me I know you not ? Know of yourselves, demand an account, are you sincerely willing to be his ? and to take him for yours, without limitation or reserves ? Matters are then agreed between him and you, and who can break or disannul the agreement ? Who can come between him and you ? I often

think of the high transport, wherewith those words are uttered: the excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. Phil. iii. 8. This is Christian religion, not in a system, but as it is a vital principle and habit in the soul, inclining us, making us propense towards our blessed Lord, addicting and subduing us to him, uniting us with him, whereby we come to know by inward sensations, to feel the transfusions of his spiritfull light and influence, and our souls thereby caught, and bound up in the bundle of life. So we have Christ formed within, his holy truth, doctrines, precepts, promises, inwrought into the temper of our spirits. And, as it follows in that context, Phil. iii. to have him, according to the states wherein he successively was, by correspondent impressions represented in us; so as that we come to bear the image of him, crucified, and dying, first; then reviving, and rising; and afterwards, ascending and glorified. To know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death; if, by any means, we might attain unto the resurrection of the dead, ver. 10, 11.

Let us not be at rest till we find it thus, in some measure, with us. If we feel ourselves, after this manner, internally and initially conformed to him, this will be both a preparative, and a pledge of our future perfect conformity, both internal, and external. It will fit us to be ever with the Lord, and assure us we shall, and can be no where else; that he and we shall not to eternity dwell asunder. We shall neither fear to be externally conformed to him in his death, to quit and lay down the body as he did; nor despair of attaining with him the resurrection of the dead, and of being present with him in glory. Or, that he shall recover for us, out of the dust, our vile abject bodies (the *το σωμα της ταπεινωσεως ημων*) the body of our humiliation, wherein we were humbled, as he was in his (as it follows in that, Phil. iii. ver. 21.) and make it like his own glorious body, (*συμμορφον*, conform, and agreeable) by that power, by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself. In the mean time, as this present state admits, converse much with him every day; be not strangers to him, often recognize, and renew your engagements to him. Revolve in your thoughts his interest in you, and yours in him; and the nearer relation which there is between him and you, than that between you and this body. Recount with yourselves the permanency and lastingness of that relation; that whereas this body, as now it is, a terrestrial body, will not be yours long; he is to be your God for ever: that, though death must shortly separate you from this body, neither life, nor death, principalities nor powers, things present, nor things to come, shall ever separate you

from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. While this body is a body of death to you, he is your life, your hope and your exceeding joy, your better, more laudable, and more excellent self, more intimate to you, than you can be to yourself, as hath been anciently, and often said, and for the obtaining whose presence, absence from the body is a very small matter.

A great prince,* in an epistle to that philosopher, tells him: I seem to myself not to be a man, as the saying is, while I am absent from Iamblicus, or while I am not conversant (*ου συνω*) with him, that we can better endure our Lord's absence, is surely a thing itself not to be endured; we should labour, that our acquaintance with him (such as is fit to be between so great a majesty, and such mean creatures as we,) should grow daily. Yea, and endeavour to make the thoughts more familiar to ourselves, of spiritual beings in the general; for we are to serve, and converse with him in a glorious community of such creatures: An innumerable company of angels, the general assembly, and the church of the first-born, and the spirits of just men made perfect, (Heb. xii. 23.) in a region where an earthly body, remaining such, can have no place. Why do we make the thoughts of a spirit, out of a body, so strange to ourselves? We meet with hundreds of spirits in bodies, and moving bodies to and fro in the streets every day, and are not startled at it. Is a body so much nearer akin to us than a spirit, that we must have so mean a thing to come between, to mediate and reconcile us to it? Why are we afraid of what we are so nearly allied unto? Can we not endure to see or think of a man at liberty (suppose it were a friend, or a brother) if we ourselves were in prison? The more easy you make the apprehension to yourselves of a disembodied spirit, that is, free, I mean, of any terrestrial body, the better we shall relish the thoughts of him who is the head of that glorious society, you are to be gathered unto; for the Lord is that Spirit, the eminent, Almighty, and all governing Spirit, (to be ever beheld too in his glorified body, as an eternal monument of his undertaking for us, and an assuring endearment of his relation to us,) the better your minds will comply with the preconceived idea we are to entertain ourselves with, of the constitution, order, employment, and delights of that vast collection of heavenly associates we shall dwell with for ever. And the more will you still incline to be absent from this body, that (among them) you may be ever present with the Lord.

* Julian Ep. ad Iamblic.

And if you thus cherish this pleasant inclination, think how grateful it will be, when it comes to be satisfied ! How natural is that rest that ends in the centre, to which a thing is carried by a natural motion ! How pleasantly doth the departed soul of that good gentlewoman, whose decease we lament, solace itself in the presence of her glorious Lord ! I shall say little concerning her, you will have her just memorial more at large ere long. I had indeed the opportunity, by an occasional abode some days under the same roof (several years before she came into that relation wherein she finished her course) to observe her strangely vivid, and great wit, and very sober conversation. But the turn and bent of her spirit towards God and heaven, more remarkably appeared a considerable time after ; which when it did, she shewed how much more she studied the interest of her soul, than the body ; and how much more she valued mental and spiritual excellencies, than worldly advantages, in the choice of her consort, whom she accepted to be the companion, and guide of her life.

She gave proof herein of the real greatness of her spirit, and how much she disdained to be guided by their vulgar measures that have not wit, and reason, and religion enough to value the accomplishments of the mind, and inner man ; and to understand that knowledge, holiness, a heavenly heart, entire devotedness to the Redeemer, a willingness to spend and be spent in the service of God, are better and more valuable things, than so many hundreds, or thousands a year. And that no external circumstances can so far dignify a drunkard, an atheist, a profane wretch ; as that (compared with one that bears such characters) he should deserve to be simply reckoned the better man. And that mere sober carnality, and ungodliness suffice not to cast the balance ; or that have so little of these qualifications for the making a true judgment, as to think that calling dishonourable and a diminution to a man, that refers immediately to the soul, and the unseen world, and that relates and sets him nearest to God.

She knew how to make her estimate of the honour of a family, and a pedigree, as things valuable in their kind ; without allowing herself so much vanity, as to reckon they were things of the most excellent kind, and to which nothing personal could be equal. And well understood, of the personal endowments of the body, and the mind, which were to have the preference. Her life might teach all those, especially of her own sex, that a life's time in the body, is for some other purposes than to indulge, and trim, and adorn the body ; which is most minded by them, who (as that shews) have, in the mean time, most neglected, and, God knows, most depraved, and deformed souls.

I hope her example, more fully and publicly represented, will more generally teach : in the mean time, this instance of our common mortality should teach us all. We see this state of life in the body, is not that we were finally made for ; yet how few seriously look beyond it ! And it is amazing to think how little the deaths of others signify, to the making us mind our own. We behave ourselves as if death were a thing only to be undergone by some few persons, here and there ; and that the most should escape, and as if we took it for granted we should be of the exempted number. How soon are impressions, from such occasions, talked, and trifled, and laughed, and jested away ! Shall we now learn more to study, and understand our own natures ? to contemplate ourselves, and our duty thereupon ? that we are a mortal, immortal sort of creatures : that we are sojourners only in a body, which we must shortly leave to dust, and worms ? that we are creatures united with bodies, but separable from them ? Let each of us think, “I am one that can live in a body, and can live out of a body. While I live in one, that body is not mine, I dwell not in mine own :” that the body must be for the Lord, as he will then be for the body : that we shall dwell comfortless and miserable in the body, if we dwell in it solitary and alone, and have not with us a better inhabitant : that our bodies are to be mansions for a Deity, houses for religion, temples of the Holy Ghost. O the venerable thoughts we should have of these bodies upon this account ! how careful should we be not to debase them, not to alienate them. If any man corrupt the temple of God, him will he destroy, 1 Cor. iii. 16. Will a man rob God ? break and violate his house ? how horrid a burglary ! Shall we agree to resign these bodies, and this bodily life ? Our meeting will have been to good purpose, might this be the united sense of this dissolving assembly : “Lord, here we surrender and disclaim (otherwise than for, and under thee) all right and title to these bodies and lives of ours. We present our bodies holy, acceptable, living sacrifices, as our reasonable service.” Let us do so, and remember we are hereafter not to live to ourselves, nor to die, at length, to ourselves, but living and dying to be the Lord’s.

THE
Christian's Triumph over Death,
A FUNERAL SERMON
ON
THE DEATH
OF
Mrs. JUDITH HAMMOND.

TO THE

REV. MR. HAMMOND:



MY offering this discourse to the eye of the world, together with your own, shews how great power our ancient friendship hath given you, over me; whereof I have the less unpleasant sense, believing you will understand it so; who, in great part, know how difficult my circumstances made it to me, to comply with your desire herein. Your opinion of the fitness of publishing so uncomposed a thing, discovers how far you were subject also to the same power; whose judgment I am little apt to distrust, where it meets not with this bias.

It will be a joy to me, if it help to mitigate your sorrow, which is in great part justified by the greatness of your loss, in being separated, after so long conversation, from so excellent a consort, that lived in this world so much above it.

I reckon it an evidence of the real greatness of her spirit, that she thought that so little a thing, wherein others place greatness; and that in almost forty years acquaintance with you both, I should never hear of her nearness to a noble family, till, occasionally, since her death. It seems the blood that filled her veins, did not swell her mind. And her heavenly birth and relation to the house and family of God, made her forget her earthly kindred, and parents' house.

Sir, though, whom God hath joined together, no man might put asunder; yet when he that made the union, makes the separation, there is no saying to him: What dost thou? we must awhile tug with the difficulties of our state, and work; wherein the hope of helping some (as God shall graciously help us) to gain this victory over death, and of being, at length through his grace, victors ourselves, will be a constant relief and support to you, and

Your very respectful brother,
and fellow-servant in the labours of the Gospel.

J. H.

A SERMON.

I Cor. xv. 54, the latter part.

—*Death is swallowed up in victory.*

THE foregoing words signify this saying to have been, before written elsewhere. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up, &c. And we find it before written, (Isa. xxv. 8.) in express words, and (Hos. xiii, 14.) in such as are equivalent. What their dependance or meaning is, in either of those places cannot be discussed, within our present, narrow limits. Only it is sufficiently manifest that sundry passages in the holy Scripture are said to be brought to pass, over and over; once and again; as that of Rachel's weeping for her children: and of God's bringing his Son out of Egypt: with divers others. This great saying may have had some partial and gradual accomplishment, within the current of time, when in reference to a people more specially related to God, and in some more notable delinquency and defection from him, he may have given a just, but limited commission to death, to make great ravage and destructions among them; so that it hath even rode in triumph, made a huge carnage, strowed their country with carcasses, turned their rich land, more enriched with human blood, into an Aceldama, and thereupon, but into a place of sepulture, and of graves; and yet, when it hath gone as far as his designed limits, and executed all his pleasure, he may have stopped it in

its career, and said : Hither thou shalt come and no further, now, cease and give over (as Hos. xiii. 14.) and so may have ransomed the residue from the power of the grave, and been the destruction of their destroyers, plaguing them who were their plagues. This in the next intention hereof may respect the people of the Jews, who being returned from their (now foreseen) captivity, might in the prophetic style be spoken of as a people, risen from the dead, and newly sprung up out of the grave ; but might have a further reference to the yet future state of the Christian church, as Isa. xxv. 6, 7, 8. seems to carry it ; when so great a death as hath long been upon it, as well as the rest of the world, it may be hoped shall be swallowed up in a very glorious victory ! But this saying is introduced here, as having its final and ultimate completion, in conjunction with what is mentioned besides, in this context, namely, when in the close and shutting up of time, the trumpet shall sound, as we are told elsewhere, it shall at the coming of our Lord, and the dead (those that died in him, first,*) be raised, the living changed, so as to bear the heavenly Adam's image, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality ; then shall be brought to pass this saying (whatever preludes thereto, as was written, there may have been before) Death is swallowed up in victory.

And according to this its fullest sense, is this saying to be the subject of our present consideration. The expression is highly rhetorical, but there is a most rational, solid sense intended under it ; for which no words can be too big, or of too great a sound. Our business must be to explain, and apply this saying. And,

I. For explication of its rational import, we shall shew,—the import, and—the reasonableness of it.

1. It imports, in general, God's determination to put a perpetual end to death, to make it cease *in perpetuum*, as a noted expositor expresses it, † shewing that the parallel Hebrew phrase is usually rendered for ever, 2 Sam. ii. 26. Jer. iii. 5. and in divers other places. But that we may give a more distinct account of its meaning, several things are to be noted ;

(1.) That death, as it is here spoken of, supposes a certain limited subject. Its being mentioned in this chapter, and elsewhere, as if it were itself a *suppositum* and an intelligent designing one, is an elegant and a usual figure. The holy Scriptures, and common speech abound with this sort of *prosopopæia*; and it hath its special usefulness, when (as in the present case) what we are more to remark, and consider with greater inten-

* 1 Thes. iv. 16 † Grot. in loc.

tion of mind, is so represented, that is, when to things of minute, or of no entity, but of great concernment (such mere privations as death, or sin) a sort of personality is ascribed, attended with terrible aspects and appearances; it tends more effectually to rouse our minds, and engage our attention, whether we are to consider, and magnify our danger by them, or our deliverance, and to behold them as attempting upon us, or as overcome. But speaking strictly, we must take things as in themselves they are. Death therefore must be considered, in reference to some subject or other. Abstractly considered, it is but a notion. As it actually hath taken place, it must be the death of this, or that person. And as it is finally to be overcome, and have an end, it must have a limited subject, and not be understood of all, absolutely and universally; for then there would be no such thing as eternal death, which hath no end. And how the subject, here supposed, is to be limited: the series of discourse, through the chapter, shews they are such as are Christ's, (ver. 23.) and to whom he is peculiarly the first-fruits, (ibid :) such as shall bear his heavenly image, (ver. 49.) and, as elsewhere, whose vile bodies shall be made like his glorious one, (Phil. iii. 21.) such as shall have spiritual, incorruptible, immortal bodies like his, and with him inherit the kingdom of God, and through him obtain this victory, ver. 50.—57.

(2.) This limitation of death to be overcome, to such a subject only, connotes the extent of it to the whole of that subject, as that is composed of an inner and an outer man, 2 Cor. iv. 16. It were frigid, and comfortless to suppose, if it were supposable, that this glorious conquest of death should extend no further than the giving us a fair specious outside; and that our mind and spirit should not partake, or be nothing the better for it. It is plain the apostle's scope through this chapter is more to assert the future subsistence of the soul, than the recomposure of the body, as his arguments shew; though what was necessary to be said concerning the future state of that also, is not neglected. But what he is now saying, in this part of the chapter, concerns not what is common to men, but what is peculiar to good and holy men. And therefore, as it respects their nobler part, must intend more than its mere subsistence in another state, which is common to good and bad, and signify the perfection of the holy divine life, which shall be at last entirely victorious, and swallow up death, in its utmost extent, and specially as it was opposite to that life. Death I mean, as it was so heavily incumbent upon the minds and spirits of good men themselves, and was their most intolerable burden; extorting from them such groans as that, Rom.

vii. 24. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death ! Nor indeed is this death sensible or grievous. or ever felt, but where the opposite life hath some place. Total death knows no grievances, makes no complaints. They that lie buried in the earth, are in their own element, where no such thing weighs upon them ; a terrene carnal mind is no burden to such souls, as are quite dead in trespasses and sins. I hope I need not tell you that though the souls of men are universally immortal in the natural sense, they are not so in the moral. Morality comprehends the means and end, virtue and felicity ; or in terms more agreeable to our Christian ethies, or that are oftener heard by them that live under the gospel, holiness and blessedness. These are signified by spiritual life, or life in the spiritually moral sense : and so are sin and misery, by the opposite death. And no man hath reason to think it strange, that life and death are estimated, by such measures ; or that a temper of spirit, habitually and fixedly good or evil, should be signified by being alive, or dead, if we consider how perfect an equivalency there is between them in the moral sense, and being naturally alive or dead. For wherein do we usually state the notion of natural life, but in a self-moving power ? Now let any ordinary understanding be appealed to in the case, and who would not say it were as good, not to be able to move at all, as to move in so perpetual disorder, as never to attain any end, such motion should serve for. The ends of a reasonable creature's motions must be duty to its Maker, and felicity to itself. If all its motions be such as import constant hostility towards God, infelicity and torment to itself ; this is to be dead, not simply and naturally, it is true, but respectively, and not in some by, and less considerable respect, but in respect of the principal and most important purposes of life. So that in full equivalency, such a one is as dead, to all valuable intents and purposes whatsoever. Therefore such are only said to be alive in a true and the most proper sense, that are alive to God through Jesus Christ, (Rom. vi. 11.) or that do yield themselves to God as those that are alive from the dead, (ver. 13.) it being the proper business of their life to serve God, and enjoy him. Others that only live in sinful pleasure, are dead while they live, 1 Tim. v. 6. Nor hath such a notion of life and death been altogether strange, even among heathens, when we find it said by one of no mean note : That a wicked man is dead, as a soul may be said to die ;* and to it, it is a death, when it is (too deeply †) plunged, immersed into the body so as to be sunk down into matter, and replete with

* Ως αν Ψυχη θανοι.

† Βεσχυπισημενη. Plotin. Enn. 1.

it. (Besides much more that might be produced from others of like import.) And how agreeable is this passage to that, Rom. viii. 6. To be carnally minded is death.

Upon the whole, I cannot indeed conceive, that since death is often taken, and that most reasonably, in so great a latitude, as to admit of comprehending this sense; and since, in these latter verses, the apostle is speaking of a final deliverance from it, as the special privilege of such as are in union with Christ, not of what is common to all men, but that victory over death in this respect, as it imports aversion from God, or indisposition towards him, must be within his meaning, and that he was far from confining it to bodily death only, or from intending, in reference to the soul, and mere natural immortality of that alone: but that death, in its utmost latitude, was now, in reference to this sort of men whom his present discourse intends, to be entirely swallowed up in victory, or in a perfect plenitude of victorious life, as 2 Cor. v. 4. So much, which was more requisite to be insisted on, being clear, we shall less need to enlarge upon what follows. As that,

(3.) This victory supposes a war: or that life and death were before in a continual struggle. So we find the case is, even this lower world is full of vitality. Yet death hath spread itself through it, and cast over it a dark and dismal shadow every where, according as sin, which introduced it, is diffused and spread. Death is therefore mentioned as an enemy, ver. 26. And so we understand it, natural death as an enemy to nature; spiritual, to grace. In the body, numerous maladies, and round about it, multitudes of adverse rencounters are striving to infer death. In and about the mind and spirit, worse diseases, and temptations have the like tendency. Temptations, I say, the mention whereof was not to be omitted, as pointing at the tempter, the wicked one, who first brought sin and death into this world of ours. And who is (though the concealed) the first and most proper seat of the enmity, which gives death the denomination of an enemy; which is so called indefinitely, the last enemy, that we might not understand it to be our enemy only but more an enemy against God than us, from whom the spiteful apostate aimed and gloried to pluck away, and bury in death and ruin, the whole race of human creatures. In the meantime nature in all, and grace in the regenerate are counterstriving. In the former, the self-preserving principle is more sensibly vigorous, but less successful; but they who are born of God, are better assisted by their divine Keeper, in subordination to whom they are enabled effectually to keep themselves, that the wicked one (mortally) touches them not, (1 John v. 18.)

but, as must be supposed, not without continual watching and striving as in war is usual.

(4.) Where such a war and striving, end not in victory, on the one side, they end in victory on the other. This is consequent upon what hath been said, of the limited subject here spoken of. Death is not universally overcome, with some it is left to be conceived therefore as a conqueror. We see how it is with the two hemispheres of our globe, when in the one, the light is chasing the darkness of the foregoing night, and we behold the morning gradually spreading itself upon the mountains, and it shines brighter and brighter unto perfect day; so in the other a feebler light doth more and more retire and yield till at length it be quite swallowed up in the victorious darkness of a black and horrid midnight. It is much after the same rate here with this difference, that vicissitudes and alternations cease; and whether darkness and the shadow of death, or the light of life be finally victorious, they are so, as hath been said, for ever. With the one sort, that is, with the righteous, a vital light arises in the midst of darkness: a type of their spiritual, and a prelude to their eternal state. They have a quickening light within, under all clouds of present ignominy and trouble, and an eternal day awaits them. Now death worketh in them, and surrounds them on every side, for awhile, and gains a temporary victory, over their bodily life; which while it is doing, and their outward man is perishing, their inward man is renewed day by day. But at length even that vanquished life revives, and that more noble life, which is hid with Christ in God, (Col. iii. 3.) and of which he says: That whosoever lives, and believes in him, shall never die, (John. xi. 26.) becomes perfect, for it is pure life; as that is said to be pure, which is *plenum sui, et minimum habet alieni, full of itself, without mixture of any thing alien from it*; having quite swallowed up whatsoever was opposite, or disagreeable. So doth life, in the several kinds and degrees of it, flourish with them, in a permanent, perpetual and most consistent state. And as regal power is often founded in just conquest, they do even reign in life, by Jesus Christ, Rom. v. 17.—21. But for the other sort, that sorry, pitiful, dying life they have, wherein they are even dead while they live will be swallowed up in a victorious, eternal, death; in which there remains to them, a perpetual night, and the blackness of darkness for ever. We are next to consider,

2. The reasonableness of the divine determination, which this saying imports. And that is to be collected, by reminding who it is that hath so determined, he that can effect all his determinations, and do all his pleasure. The reason of his intend-

ments, and performances, must be fetched from himself, and the perfection of his own nature ; unto which nothing can be more agreeable. When death, let in by sin, hath been reigning, doing the part of a king, as Rom. v. 17, over so great a part of God's creation, it can be little suitable to him, who doth all things after the counsel of his will, (Eph. i. 11.) to let it reign for ever. Sometime it must be swallowed up in victory. Otherwise,—his own glory would suffer a perpetual eclipse, and—the felicity of his redeemed should never be complete. Neither of which, as we are taught to apprehend the state of things can consist with the absolute perfection of his being.

(1.) Can we think it agreeable to him, to suffer such a perpetual solecism or incongruity within his dominion, that when death, by means of a most criminal apostacy, had made so great an inroad into the nobler part of his creation, that is, had broken in amongst creatures capable of immortality (who indeed otherwise had not been capable of sin) and thereby darkened the glory which shone more brightly in such an order of creatures ! it should be so always that is, that such a sort of creatures should be perpetually continued, to be born, and sin, and die. Sometime we must think this course of things should have an end, and not by yielding an everlasting conquest to an enemy. We can well conceive it most worthy of God, when he had made such creatures, unto whom liberty was as agreeable as holiness and felicity, to leave them to themselves a while, as probationers and candidates for that state of immortal life, whereof they were not incapable. It well became a self-sufficient Being, and an absolute Sovereign, to let them understand dependance, and subjection ; and that their state was precarious, not his : to let them feel the cost of ungovernableness, and self-will, and the disagreeableness thereof to their condition who were not self-subsistent, and had not their good in their own hands : if, being put upon this trial, they would transgress, and open a way for death to come in upon them, the real loss could only be their own, and none of his. He had no reason therefore to prevent it, by so unseasonable an interposition, as should prevent the orderly connection between duty, and felicity ; that is, the precedency of the former to the other. All this was a most unexceptionable procedure. But then, when being left to themselves, they as men, or as Adam had transgressed, (Hos. vi. 7.) and done like themselves, that is, like frail, mutable creatures, in their lapse into sin and death ; how opportune was it for him, now, to do more illustriously like himself, that is, by so surprising, unthought of methods, as the gospel reveals, to recover to himself this glory out of the cloud, and make it shine more brightly than ever. in this final victory

over death, and him that had the power of it ! So that it shall at last retain no dominion over any, but such as by their own choice, during a new state of trial, remained in an inviolable union with that prince of darkness, and death. How glorious will the triumphs of this victory be, over the grand apostate ! And how unsupposable is it, that he should have occasion left him to glory in an eternal conquest ! And,

(2.) It is not a light thing to him, whose nature is love, that without this final victory the felicity of the redeemed should never be fully accomplished. Antecedently to the gospel revelation, it would seem more agreeable to the nature of God, that some should be rescued from the power of death, than that all should lie under it for ever. But we, to whom that revelation is vouchsafed, cannot now but think it the most unlikely thing in the world, that the design of Almighty love should finally be defeated ; and that such as are in vital union with the Redeemer, should either be overcome at last by death, or remain in an eternal struggle with it. Whence nothing can be conceived, in this case, but that, as to them, death must be swallowed up in this glorious everlasting victory.

Whereupon how admirable a display will there herein be of sundry the most known attributes and excellencies of the divine nature, as his wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, justice, and truth, in the whole conduct, and in this final issue of things ! as might be distinctly shewn of each, if we were not within limits. He at first dealt with them very suitably to their natures, at length he deals with them according to his own : that it may be the theme of eternal contemplation to themselves, and the whole intelligent world, how far his ways are above their ways, and his thoughts above their thoughts, Isa. lv. 8. And that as, at first, he thought it not fit to hinder them from doing as too little became such creatures ; nothing should at last hinder him from doing, as became a God.

II. But come we now to the use, And,

1. Do we find this saying, in the sacred word of God, that death is to be swallowed up in victory ? then we are not to doubt, but so it shall be. A plenary assent is to be given to it. But what sort of assent ? Not that which arises from the sight of our eye. If that were to be our only informer, we see no such thing ; but quite the contrary. That represents death to us as the only conqueror, it visibly swallows up all in victory, wheresoever it makes a seizure. Nothing stands before it ! we behold it turning every where living men and women, like ourselves, into breathless lumps of earth ! It irresistibly introduces itself, and life is fled, and gone ! Such as conversed with us, walked to and fro amongst us, reasoned, discoursed with us,

managed business, pursued designs, delighted themselves with us, and gave us delight, become death's captives" before our eyes, are bound in its bands, and we cannot redeem them, nor save ourselves. Where then is this swallowing up of death in victory? which is itself so constantly victorious! Our reason may tell us it shall not be always and universally so, but it flutters, and hallucinates. It is the divine word that must at last put the matter out of doubt; and our faith therein, which is the substance of what we hope for, and the evidence of what we do not see. If faith be to assure our hearts in this matter, it must be as it relies upon his word, who can do this, and hath said he will. If we believe his power, that renders it possible to us; if his word, that makes it certain. Hath he said it? Who then shall gainsay it? It is one of the true and faithful sayings of God.

2. If this be a credible saying, it is certainly a very comfortable one. If we can but make that first step, and perceive this not to be a hard or incredible saying; it is very obvious to make a second, and acknowledge it to be a very consolatory saying: and that both in reference to—the past death of our friends and relatives, even such as were nearest, and most dear to us;—and in reference to our own, most certainly future and expected death. In the one case, and the other, we are to look upon it as a comfortable saying, that this mighty raging enemy shall have all his power lost, and swallowed up, in so glorious a victory, one day.

(1.) It is surely a very comfortable saying, in the former of these cases, the case of our losing friends and relations very dear unto us. And there only needs this to make it most deliciously pleasant, that is, to have a comfortable persuasion concerning such, that they are part of Christ's seed, they are some of them, in reference to whom Christ is, in the most peculiar sense, the first-fruits, so as that they have a preassurance of victory in his conquest and victory over death and the grave. And we have great reason to be so persuaded concerning that worthy gentlewoman, whose late decease is the more special occasion of this solemn assembly at this time. She was one who (as such as had most opportunity to observe, and best ability to judge, did reckon) had given abundant evidence of the work of God's saving grace upon her own spirit, and who thereupon did long walk with God in a very continued course; so indeed, as that though her comforts were observed not to be rapturous, yet they were steady and even; so as that she was rarely troubled with doubts, to give obstruction or hinderance to her in her Christian course: if any such doubt did arise, it soon vanished, and she quickly, through the mercy of God, received satisfaction, and

so went cheerfully on in her way. She was abundant in reading, especially of the Holy Book; that was her business and delight. She very little cared to concern herself in reading writings that were merely notional, or polemical and disputative; but the most practical ones she was most of all taken with, such as treated of the other state, and of the duties of christians in the mean time in reference thereto; future felicity, and present spiritual-mindedness, that has so certain connexion therewith, and so direct a tendency thereto, were, with her, the delightful subjects, which she chose to read of, and meditate upon.

Her temper was observed to be even, betwixt a freeness, and reservedness. She was not melancholy, though much inclined to solitariness; and would frequently lament, that so much of her precious time was passed away, either in necessary business or civil conversation, that was not to be avoided. It was observed that her disposition was most highly charitable, very apt to give, even to her uttermost, as occasions did occur.

In reference to her children, her care was most tender. Much of her time was spent in instructing them, while under her instruction, and within her reach; teaching them their catechism with the proofs at large, and how to apply the proofs to the answer, so as to bring them to a distinct understanding thereof. And in this way and course she passed through the world. Her last sickness did very little alter the temper of her spirit, it was calm and sedate all along. Only so much does deserve a remark that she was prepossessed with an apprehension that she should die suddenly, so much of God's secret he was pleased to impart to her, as he sometimes does to more inward friends; that discovery he vouchsafed to her, as to a favourite, to let her have some kind of pre-signification, that her passage out of this world should be very quick, whensoever it came: and so it was, that sitting in her chair, amidst familiar discourse, in a demidiated sentence, she made a full stop, and life was ended, before that could have an end.

Now certainly the decease of such a one ought not to be lamented with that bitter sorrow, as if there were no such thing as this, that death were certainly to be swallowed up in victory, in an entire and complete victory, with reference to such a one. It seems indeed, in such cases, as was said to you before, unto the judgment of our sense, that death only overcomes, we see not beyond that; it turns a living creature into a dead clod, and so it is laid among such, it is buried in the grave, our sight goes no further. But when we are persuaded, by the word of the Lord, that this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible, incorruption, and death be swallowed up in such a

victory, as you have heard ; certainly this takes away the cause of all bitter and reliefless sorrow.

I am not unapprehensive that reverend brother, whom this stroke touches more nearly, is much fitter to administer this consolation, than receive it from such a one as I. But as we may any of us put in for our share, as our ease may require and can admit, in what is so generally spoken with reference to christians dying in the Lord, and their surviving fellow-christians, that as yet live in him, 1 Thes. iv. from verse 13. onward to the end : so, we are directed to comfort one another therewith. Be patient, I pray you, while I present to you this most suitable portion of Scripture. "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even them also, which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. For this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and with the trump of God ; and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air ; and so shall we be ever with the Lord : wherefore comfort one another with these words." We shall be in a great promptitude and disposition of spirit to do so, if these words be looked upon as divine sayings, as the words of the living and immortal God. My friends, do you not find there is spirit in these words ? Is there not strong consolation in them ? How can we but think so, unless our whole religion be with us but a fable ? This concerns us all upon the common Christian account, who are but a residue, a remnant, escaped, and exempted awhile from being part of the spoils and triumphs of death ; which hath slaughtered, and thrown into the dust, probably a much greater number of our friends and relatives, than we ourselves do make, who are left behind. And it is likely we have been most of us divers times mourners, upon such occasions. This shews upon what account, and in what case, we may intermingle very reviving consolations with our sorrows, and that we ought freely, as the occasion recurs, to apply it to ourselves, and one another.

But I withal think there may be somewhat of more special import, tending to repress intemperate sorrow, on such an occasion, in that of Ezek. xxiv. 16. I think there may be somewhat, I say, collected, besides what was more peculiar and appropriate by way of signal to the prophet himself, that may teach the last mentioned case. It was a thing enjoined upon

him : that he should not mourn nor weep, nor should his tears run down, when God should take away from him the desire of his eyes with a stroke. I reckon that, as we have seen, christians should not mourn like other men ; so the Lord's prophets are not to mourn altogether like others of his people, but somewhat more of restraint they are to put upon themselves, that they may discover a higher excellency, or somewhat a greater measure of that spirit of faith ruling in them. that gives a great allay to present things, whether good or evil, as it begets clearer and more vivid apprehensions of things yet future and out of sight. And that as all believers should endeavour, in things of common concernment to all, to be exemplary to one another, and to other men ; so they who are so much nearer to God, in office and relation, should be examples to believers in conversation, spirit, faith, 1 Tim. iv. 12.

(2.) This should be very comfortable too unto them that are in union with Christ, in reference to their own future death, which they are continually to expect. Death is often saying to us repeatedly, and very sensibly, to our very bone and our flesh you shall be my prey shortly ; at least, sooner or later. It is ready to make its seizure upon us, when, we do not know ; but we are sure some time, it will.

But, my friends, it does not become christians to look upon this thing, called death, as so formidable a thing, as it is commonly reckoned ; it is ignominious to our profession, not to be endured amongst them that have life and immortality brought to light, and set in view before their eyes in the gospel ; such as profess to be united with Christ, who hath life in himself, and imparts it to all that are so united, such a life, hid with Christ in God ; and hope that when he who is their life shall appear, they shall appear with him in glory. It becomes not such to die continually, by the fear of dying, or that the very thoughts of death should be deadly to them.

This is remote from what was much observed to be the temper and character of primitive christians. A heathen prince* who thoroughly understood them not, censures them too hardly, as being in the other extreme (though he at length became kinder to them) as if they rashly threw themselves upon death. Whereas he says, the soul should rationally, and becomingly be in readiness to be loosed from the body, *Λελογισμενος, και σεμνος*. But how come we to lose our character, and our glory ! How degenerated a thing is the Christianity of our age ! To die without regret, is counted an attainment ; it should be with gladness, (psal. xvi. 9, — 11.) and upon the considerations there

* Marc, Antonin. de vit. sua lib. 11.

mentioned, as being now upon the confines of that world of perfect purity, bliss, and joy; and having so great an assurance that the intermediate death, we are to go through, is no sooner suffered, than overcome!

We should deal closely with ourselves in this. Do we think this saying a fable, or a trifle? Have these words no meaning? We should labour to come to a point, and say, If we have no reason to disbelieve them, we will believe them absolutely; and live as having gained our point, and overcome already; that is, who are as sure of victory, as of death. Some overcome by dying, as others are overcome by it. There are, who are not hurt by the second death. If death strike once, it thereby puts it out of its own power ever to strike a second time, or hurt them more. Let us once bring our case to that state as to live in continual defiance of death, let it strike when it will. Dependence, only on the grace and Spirit of Christ, must give us this confidence; not an opinion that we are ourselves strong enough to act separately, but that knowing our relation to him, we are, through him that loved us, more than conquerors, or as that *υπερνικωμεν*, Rom. viii. 37. may be understood to signify, we are a glorious triumphant sort of conquerors. We not only conquer, but triumph too, through him that loved us, being persuaded that neither death, nor life—shall separate us from his love—so a noted expositor understands that word, observing how great a delight this apostle takes, when he would heighten a matter, in the use of that particle *υπερ*.

It is elsewhere said, (Colos. iii. 3.) Ye are dead, but your life, &c. We are dead, that is, in ourselves, we are a sort of dead, or dying creatures, death hath almost got the possession of us already, has partly seized, and partly sentenced us to die, and irreversibly. This the apostle intimates, where he adds what you have heard: Ye have a life hid with Christ in God, that life is safe, and out of the reach of death, no death can touch that life. They that are born of God, have in reference to this life (though the other must be given up) a self preserving principle and power in them, 1 John v. 18. They keep themselves, that the evil one touches them not; that is, not mortally, or with any deadly touch. In having a new, holy, divine life; they have an assuring pledge also of the permanency, perpetuity, and everlastingness of it. If a man have once drank of that water which Christ gives, it shall be in him a perpetual fountain, a well of water springing up into everlasting life, John iv. 14.

Are we christians, and with the springings of this life do we not feel a lively joy springing, and exulting in our hearts! Add vital Christianity to the rational nature, and loathsomeness to die is a repugnancy, and a reproach to both. Christianity so plainly

stating our case, reason should judge upon it; and suitable affections arise in us thereupon, as they would if our Christianity were vital, and the product of the divine Spirit. Then, how should we bless God that we are mortal! and that it is not in the power of all this world to keep us from dying out of it, when we know in how glorious a victory that death will be swallowed up! But it may be said, by some: "We should very little fear death, if we did know our interest in Christ, if we were not in great uncertainty, and had not our hearts hanging in doubt within us, about this thing. And therefore,

3. This saying should be monitory to us (as it is a credible, as it is a comfortable, so it is a monitory saying also) Death shall be swallowed up in victory. This said, in reference to some (which cannot be meant as to all!) so great a thing, spoken with restriction, ought to make them of whom it is not meant look about them! With what solicitude should we concern ourselves, to be at a certainty! Am I one of them, in reference to whom death shall be swallowed up in such a victory? It should awaken us to consider, Have we made our interest sure in our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Prince and Lord of life? He that hath the Son hath life. It is eternal life that is spoken of in that context, 1 John. v. 11, 12. This is the record that God hath given us, eternal life; and this life is in his Son; that is, this eternal life. He that hath the Son, hath this life; he that hath not the Son, hath not this life. Spiritual life, and eternal life are all one, all of a piece, the same in nature and kind; the one will grow up into the other.

That life only is here meant, that will be eternal life. To the same sense is that: He that believeth in me, shall never die, John. xi. 26. These are plain words. He hath a life in him that is immortal, sacred, and not liable to be touched. It was before said: They that believe in him, if dead, shall live, ver. 25. But not only that, but it is further added: they that believe in him shall never die.* If dead, they shall live; if they live, they shall never die. What means this? That they have a life, besides this bodily one; which is continued through death. Of this line or thread, death makes no intercision. But we can never justify it to God, or our own understandings, to rest in a dubious uncertainty about a matter of so vast consequence as this. Unconcernedness here, is the most unaccountable thing in the whole world; that is, whether we have only that life in us which will end in the darkness and rottenness of a grave, and a horrid hell; or that which runs into eternal life? Things will come to this issue very shortly with us

* Vid. Ham. in loc,

that either death must, as to us, be swallowed up in victory, or we be swallowed up of victorious death; nor have we any ways to ascertain our own state, but, as was said, by uniting with the Prince of life; that is, by receiving him in all the capacities wherein we are to be concerned with him; and by resigning ourselves entirely to him. For if we must have him, that we may have life; how can we otherwise, have him but by receiving him. The gospel, under which we live, can only be a saviour of life to us, as it disposes us hereunto. Recollect yourselves then, how do your Lord's days, and other seasons of attending this gospel, pass over with you? Have you long expected life, and (which is less likely) do you meet with continual and total disappointments? And doth it cause with you no qualmish thoughts? But it is infinitely a sadder case, if you never feel yourselves begin to live, and yet are never disappointed; because you never attend upon the gospel-dispensation with any such design or hope. Is the matter thus, that if you speak the truth of your case, you must say: "I have a soul dead to all the actions, motions, sensations, enjoyments, of a divine and spiritual life." And shall it be always thus, by our own consent with any of us? We have however the rational, intellectual life, and can think; do we think it is fit for us to rest satisfied and secure, in such a state? What, satisfied in the midst of death? such a death? while we are capable of apprehending at once the horror, the danger, and the remedibleness of our case? What will this come to? It can only be holy, divine life that must be victorious over death, as the warring, opposite principle: if there be nothing to oppose it, what shall conquer? Death is in that case total, and upon such terms, till life begin to spring in thy soul, thou must reckon it likely to be eternal. Yet let none so mistake as to imagine this life an enthusiastical thing, that must discover itself in rapturous extatical motions, or go for nothing. It perfects our faculties, therefore destroys them not; and chiefly consists in a rational judgment, choice, and love of what is most worthy of us; what is fittest to be done by us, and what is with fullest satisfaction to be enjoyed; with a stedfast, most resolved adherence thereunto.

4. This saying ought to be instructive to us, in reference especially to this one thing, that is, that we abstain from rash censures of providence, that God lets death be *regnant* in so great a part of his creation, so long a time. It shall be swallowed up in victory, let that solve with us the phenomenon. It seems indeed, an untoward one, and might at first, be an amazing spectacle, even to the blessed angels themselves, to behold so great a revolt in heaven; and afterwards to take notice of an intelligent world, of creatures beneath them, successively,

through one first delinquent drawn in as accomplices, into a like defection; and death hereby spreading its horrid shadow, and extending its power, over so great and so noble a part of the universe! Committing such wastes, making such desolations, from age to age, in so great a part of the creation of God! But there are many alleviating considerations, that should compose our spirits to a rational quietude, and be satisfying and pacifying to our minds with reference to this thing. Let me but name some few to you which I shall leave with you for this purpose.

(1.) Do but consider how minute a part of the creation of God, this globe, this point, this punctilio rather of our earth is, where death has reigned, and so long had place.

(2.) Consider how much of life there is in, and about this little world of ours. When upon one single mole-hill, you see the brisk motions and efforts of so many hundred lives, you have reason to apprehend there is a great deal of vitality about this little spot of earth.

(3.) Consider and collect how probable it is, that as we go higher and higher, the nobler and finer parts of God's creation must be much more replenished with a nobler, and more excellent sort of life. It is very unreasonable to think, that this clod of earth should be so full of life; and that in higher and pure regions there should not be a richer plenitude of life, or of such inhabitants as live nobler and more excellent lives than we. And,

(4.) For ought we know, death never reaches higher than this earth of ours, and what is in a nearer vicinity to it. And that, therefore, there be vast and ample regions, incomparably beyond the range of our eye, or thought, where now no death ever comes; after the detrusion of the first revolvers, from those bright regions. When we are told, Eph. iv. 10. our Lord Jesus Christ is ascended far above all heavens, as it were a fond attempt to pretend to count them, so it were rash philosophising, to go about to describe them. But can we suppose them spacious, wild wastes? or not suppose them replenished with numberless numbers of excellent creatures that, in their confirmed state, fear no death; and continually pay a willing, joyful homage to their great preserver. For every knee must bow to him of things in heaven, Phil. ii. 10. And when we are told, Eph. i. 20, 21. God hath set him at his own right hand, in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name—&c. And I Pet. iii. 22. That he is on the right hand of God, angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject to him. Though we cannot form distinct thoughts what those dynasties, principalities and dominions are; yet we cannot but suppose those unconceivably vast

and ample regions fully peopled, with immortal inhabitants, that reign in life, in a more excellent sense. For it being said our Lord ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things, (Eph. iv. 10.) this must suppose suitable recipients. And if his influences reach down in such plenty to our minute earth (as ver. 11, 12, 13.) how copious are they here !

(5.) Consider that here, where death has made its inroad, though the apostate spirits surround us, and encompass this earth of ours, and go to and fro throwing death among us every where ; yet even here is a glorious offspring continually arising, the Redeemer's seed, in whom a divine life is gradually springing up from age to age. So that, at length, they make a great multitude, which no man can number, standing before the throne, clothed with white robes, and, as ensigns of victory, having palms in their hands, Rev. vii. 9. Here is life then disseminated through all this death, that inwraps our world, which for ought we know, is the centre of death ; it may be here, for ought we can tell, and no where else (here, or hereabouts) and yet even here, a holy divine life is insinuating and spreading itself, even among us, over whom death has reigned ; and there are great numbers, that having received abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ, Rom. v. 17. Here is supposed a kingdom, with a counter kingdom, and one head against another ; one that brought in death and condemnation upon the world, but another that brings in righteousness, and life. And that here, even in this lower region, the Redeemer should have so large a portion, (we know not how large) this very much narrows the confines of death. And let it be further considered,

(6.) That where death shall be perpetual, it is there but self-procured. They only lie under death, that loved it. All they that hate me, love death, Prov. viii. 36. They inwrap themselves in death, they make a covenant with it. That sin, which is death, which carries death, and hell in itself, that they loved: it was so, it is true, with the rest, that finally perish not ; but it was not always so. The grace of God made a difference, not to be quarrelled at, when striving with many, it is victorious with some. But of those with whom it is not so, it must be said, as their final, never-altered sense, even to the last, they would not be plucked out of the gulph, that deadly gulph, where they therefore lie, as in their most agreeable element. And let it further be considered,

(7.) That for the death that shall be perpetual, it is to be confined, and go no further. Before it was diffused and continually more and more diffusing itself. But in the future state of things, when time has run to its period, and the affairs of it are

shut up by the final judgment, death and hell are now to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Rev. xx. 14. All death is now to be gathered into death, hell into hell. It shall be contracted, gathered into itself. It is true, it will be therefore consummate, finished, perfect in its kind, or full of itself, as that which is without mixture cannot but be, (as was noted before) here will be pure death, without mixture, and which therefore will have no allay. But then, whereas formerly it ranged to and fro uncontroled, now it is confined to its own narrower circle, and can have no new subject; and shall therefore give no further trouble or disturbance to the rest of God's creation. Moreover, consider,

(8.) That this victory will not be gradual only, but total and entire. Every thing of mortality, that was hanging about these glorious victors, shall be swallowed up in perfect, and in endless life. Death is unstung first, disarmed, and then easily overcome. Its sting is said to be sin, the deadliest thing in death. A plain further proof, by the way, the intended death also, in the moral sense. And the insulting inquiry, "Where is it?" implies it is not any where to be found, and signifies a total abolition of it; and, by consequence, must infer that every thing of death besides must, as to them, for ever cease and be no more. Which also the phrase of swallowing up, doth with great emphasis express. And this completes the vindication of providence, that is, in this whole affair; and not only vindicates but magnifies the conduct of the supreme disposer of all things. For by this means, as his wisdom, power and goodness are most highly illustrated; so the trial of his people's faith, the great instrument of this their victory, as well as of that over the world, (1 John v. 4.) is found unto praise, honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. i. 7. And they find, what, by patient continuance in well-doing, they were enjoined to seek, which shews they were not vainly put upon so noble a pursuit, honour, glory, immortality, to their actual attainment of eternal life, Rom. ii. 7.

Now therefore shall this saying be made good, in its fullest sense; and if there shall be such a victory, so glorious a one won at last: surely we should be tuning our instruments, and labouring to get our hearts into a frame to sing the *επιθικιον*, the triumphant song, ver. 55, 56. and conclude it, as ver. 57. Thanks be to God, that giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

A CALM AND SOBER

INQUIRY

Concerning the possibility of a

TRINITY IN THE GODHEAD

In a Letter,

TO A PERSON OF WORTH,

●CCASIONED BY THE LATELY PUBLISHED CONSIDERATIONS ON THE
EXPLICATIONS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY: BY DR.
WALLIS, DR. SHERLOCK, DR. S—TH, DR. CUDWORTH & C.

TOGETHER

WITH CERTAIN LETTERS,

FORMERLY WRITTEN TO THE REVEREND DR. WALLIS, ON THE
SAME SUBJECT.

THE
UNIVERSITY OF
MICHIGAN

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PHYSICS 321

LECTURE 10

STATISTICAL MECHANICS

A

CALM DISCOURSE,

OF THE

TRINITY IN THE GODHEAD, &c.

SIR,

INTEND not this discourse shall be concerned in what this author hath said of the several explications given by the persons named on his title page. The only thing it is designed for, is the discoursing with him that single point which he refers to, in his twenty-ninth and thirtieth pages, and which in this controversy, is on all hands, confessed to be the cardinal one, namely,—Whether a trinity in the Godhead be possible or no?

I put not the question about three persons; both because I will not, in so short a discourse as I intend to make this, be engaged in discussing the unagreed notion of a person; and because the Scripture lays not that necessity upon me, though I do not think the use of that term, in this affair, either blamable or indefensible. But I shall inquire whether the Father, the Son, or Word, and the Holy Ghost cannot possibly admit of sufficient distinction from one another to answer the parts and purposes severally assigned them by the Scripture, in the Christian economy, and yet be each of them God, consistently with

this most inviolable and indubitable truth, that there can be but one God.

This author concludes it to be impossible in the mentioned pages of his discourse, and thereupon seems to judge it necessary that two of them be excluded the Godhead, as many others, some going the Arian, some the Photinian, more lately called the Socinian way, have done before him. He acknowledges page 30. col. 1 there may be "some secret revealed by God, because it was above human capacity to discover it; and sometimes also to comprehend how it can be," but adds, "there is a vast difference between my not being able to conceive how a thing should be, and a clear apprehension, and sight that it cannot be." What he says thus far is unexceptionable, and I heartily concur with him in it. But for what he subjoins, (wherein he might have spoken his mind of the matter in controversy with as much advantage to his cause, without reflecting upon his adversaries, as if they considered these things either with no intention, or with no sincerity, not allowing them even the never so little of the one or the other) that, "three distinct Almighty and All-knowing persons, should be but one Almighty, or but one All-knowing, or but one God, a man, who considers with never so little intention and sincerity, clearly sees that it cannot be. In short, that it is not a mystery, but, as Dr. South speaks, an absurdity and a contradiction." This is that I would consider with him, if he will affix these words of his, "a man who considers, &c. clearly sees it cannot be; and it is an absurdity and a contradiction," to the question as I have set it down above. In the mean time he cannot be ignorant that as he hath represented the matter, he hath here either not truly, or at least not fairly, given the sense of any of them whom he pretended to oppose.

For when by those words, "But that three divine persons, or that three distinct Almighty and All-knowing persons should be but one Almighty, but one All-knowing, or but one God," he would slyly insinuate to his unwary and less attentive reader that the same men held three Almighties, and but one; he well knows, and elsewhere confesses, (though he might suppose that some readers would not bear leisure to compare one place of his writings with another, but hastily run away with the apprehension, that such as were not of his mind spake nothing but nonsense and contradictions,) that not only his later opposers since P. Lombard, as he speaks, but divers much more ancient, as Athanasius, and the rest of the Nicene fathers, &c. denied three Almighties, though they affirmed each of the persons to be Almighty, understanding omnipotency, as they do omniscency, to be an attribute not of the person, as such, but of the essence

as such which they affirm to be but one, that is, that they are each of them Almighty, by communication in one and the same almighty essence. And if their sentiment be so very absurd, he needed the less to fear representing it as it is.

And the other who seems to grant three Almighty, doth never say there is but one Almighty; though such say too there is but one God, placing the *unity of the Godhead* in somewhat else, as he hath himself taken notice; which is remote from express self-contradiction also. But I shall concern myself no further about the one or the other of these ways of explaining the doctrine of the three persons. Only shall inquire concerning the possibility of such a trinity in the Godhead as was above expressed, requiring the uncharitableness of this author, in imputing carelessness or insincerity to all, that think it possible, with so much charity, as to believe he would not (against the plain tenour of Scripture) have rejected the doctrine of the trinity, as he professes to do that of the incarnation, if he had not thought it every way impossible. And here I premise,

First. That the present undertaking is not to shew that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three, and but one, in the same respect, which I would adventure, in this author's words, to say, no man that considers with never so little intention and sincerity, would offer at. But when they are supposed to be but one, in respect of Deity, they are thought to be three in some other respect.

Secondly. That what I now design is only to represent this matter as possible to be some way, and in the way here proposed for ought we know, not as definitely certain, to be this way or that. The former is enough to our present purpose, that is, if any way it can be conceived, without absurdity or contradiction, that these may be three with sufficient distinction to found the distinct attributes which the Scriptures do severally give them, so as some things may be affirmed of some one, and not be affirmed of the other of them, and yet their *unity in Godhead* be conserved, our point is gained; and the clamour of this and every other, opposer ought to cease, for our asserting what—every one that considers clearly sees cannot be.

Now, so much being forelaid, that we may proceed with clearness and satisfaction of mind—If we would understand whether it be possible that these three may be sufficiently distinguished for the mentioned purpose, and yet be one in Godhead, or in divine being; we are to recollect ourselves and consider what we are wont and find ourselves indispensibly obliged to conceive of that ever blessed Being, and what is with less certainty or evidence said or thought of it—Therefore,

I. We cannot but acknowledge that whereas we do with greatest certainty and clearness conceive of it as an intellectual Being, comprehensive, with that, of infinite and universal perfection, so we do, most expressly, though this be implied in universal perfection, conclude it a Being most necessarily existent; which God hath himself been pleased to signify to us by the appropriated name I am, or I am what I am.

Hereby is this most excellent of Beings infinitely distinguished from all creatures, or from the whole creation. All created being is merely contingent, that is, (according to the true notion of contingency) dependant upon will and pleasure. So he hath himself taught us to distinguish; and with such distinction to conceive of the creation, Rev. 4. 11. Thou hast made all things, and for, (or by, *δια*) thy pleasure (or will *θειλημα σου*) they are, or were created. Whatsoever being is necessarily existent, the excellency of its nature being such, as that it was necessary to it to exist, or impossible not to exist, is God, or is Divine Being. Notwithstanding what some have imagined of necessary matter, we might adventure to affirm this universally of all necessary being, that it is divine, taking it to be plainly demonstrable, and to have been demonstrated beyond all contradiction, by the learned Dr. Cudworth, and many others long before him. And doubt not to evince (though that is not the present business) that supposing the imagination of necessary matter were true, this sensible world could never possibly have been made of it, by any power whatsoever; the only pretence for which it is imagined. But if any have a mind to make this a dispute, to avoid being unseasonably involved in it at this time, it will serve my present purpose to assert only, whatsoever intellectual being is necessarily existent is divine.

And on the other hand, whatsoever being is contingent, that is, such as that it depended on a mere intervening act of will, (namely, even the sovereign and supreme will) whether it should be or not be, is created, or is creature.

II. Whatsoever simplicity the ever blessed God hath by any express revelation claimed to himself, or can by evident and irrefragable reason be demonstrated to belong to him, as a perfection, we ought humbly and with all possible reverence and adoration, to ascribe to him. But such simplicity as he hath not claimed, as is arbitrarily ascribed to him by over-bold, and adventurous intruders into the deep and most profound arcana of the divine nature, such as can never be proved to belong to him, or to be any real perfection, such as would prove an imperfection, and a blemish, would render the divine nature less intelligible, more impossible to be so far conceived as is requi-

site, as would discompose and disturb our minds, confound our conceptions, make our apprehensions of his other known perfections less distinct or inconsistent, render him less adorable, or less an object of religion, or such as is manifestly unreconcilable with his plain affirmations concerning himself, we ought not to impose it upon ourselves, or be so far imposed upon, as to ascribe to him such simplicity.

It would be an over-officious and too meanly servile religiousness to be awed by the sophistry of presumptuous scholastic wits, into a subscription to their confident determinations concerning the being of God, that such and such things are necessary or impossible thereto, beyond what the plain undisguised reason of things, or his own express word do evince: to imagine a sacredness in their rash conclusions, so as to be afraid of searching into them, or of examining whether they have any firm and solid ground or bottom: to allow the schools the making of our Bible, or the forming of our creed, who license (and even sport) themselves to philosophize upon the nature of God with as petulant, and irreverent a liberty, as they would upon a worm, or any, the meanest insect, while yet they can pronounce little with certainty even concerning that, hath nothing in it either of the christian or the man. It will become as well as concern us, to disencumber our minds, and release them from the entanglements of their unproved dictates; whatsoever authority they may have acquired, only by having been long, and commonly, taken for granted. The more reverence we have of God, the less we are to have for such men, as have themselves expressed little.

III. Such as have thought themselves obliged by the plain word of God to acknowledge a *trinity* in the Godhead, namely of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but withal to diminish the distinction of the one from the other, so as even to make it next to nothing, by reason of the straits into which unexamined maxims have cast their minds, concerning the divine simplicity; have yet not thought that to be *absolute* or *omnimodous*. For the allowing of *three somewhats* in the divine nature (and what less could have been said?) cannot consist with absolute simplicity in all respects, inasmuch as they cannot be *three* without differing, in *some respect*, from one another.

Since therefore there is a necessity apprehended of acknowledging three such *somewhats* in the Godhead, both because the word of God (who best understands his own nature) doth speak of three in it so plainly, that without notorious violence, it cannot be understood otherwise, and because it affirms some things of one or other of them, which it affirms not of the rest; it will therefore be *necessary* to admit a true distinction between

them, otherwise they cannot be three : and *safe* to say there is so much, as is requisite to found the distinct affirmations, which we find in God's word, concerning this or that, apart from the other ; otherwise we shall, in effect, deny what God affirms ; and *modest* to confess that how great the distinction is, with precise and particular limitation, we do not know nor dare be curious to determine or inquire : only that as it cannot be less, than is sufficient to sustain distinct predicates or attributions ; so it cannot be so great, as to intrench upon the unity of the Godhead. Which limits, on the one hand, and the other, God hath himself plainly set us.

IV. Therefore since we may offend very highly by an arrogant pretence to the knowledge we have not, but shall not offend by confessing the ignorance which we cannot (and therefore need not) remedy, we should abstain from confident conclusions in the dark, and at random, especially concerning the nature of God ; and for instance from saying, We clearly see a sufficient distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit, in the Godhead cannot be, or is impossible. It expresses too little reverence of God, as if his being had any, or so narrow, limits as to be presently seen through ; an over-magnifying opinion of ourselves, as if our eye could penetrate that vast and sacred darkness, or the glorious light (equally impervious to us) wherein God dwells ; too great rudeness to the rest of men, more than implicitly representing all mankind besides as stark blind, who can discern nothing of what we pretend clearly to see.

And it is manifest this cannot be said to be impossible, upon any other pretence, but that it consists not with the *unity of the Godhead*, in opposition to the multiplication thereof, or with *that simplicity*, which stands in opposition to the concurrence in all perfections therein, with distinction greater than hath been commonly thought to belong to the divine nature. For the former, we are at a certainty : but for the latter, how do we know what the original, natural state of the Divine Being is, in this respect ? or what simplicity belongs to it ? or what it may contain or comprehend in it, consistently with the unity thereof ; or so, but that it may still be but one Divine Being ? What distinction, and unity (conserved together) we can have, otherwise, an idea of, without any apprehended inconsistency, absurdity or contradiction, we shall rashly pronounce to be impossible (or somewhat imperfectly resembled thereby) in the Divine Being, unless we understood it better than we do. Some prints and characters of that most perfect Being may be apprehended in the creatures, especially that are intelligent ; such being expressly said to have been made in the image of God. And if here we find *oneness*, with *distinction*, meeting

together in the same created intelligent being, this may assist our understandings in conceiving what is possible to be (in much higher perfection) though not to the concluding what certainly is, in the uncreated.

V. Waving the many artificial unions of distinct things, that united, and continuing distinct, make one thing under one name, I shall only consider what is *natural*, and give instance in what is nearest us, *our very selves*; though the truth is, we know so little of our own nature, that it is a strange assuming when we confidently determine what is impossible to be in the divine nature, besides what he hath told us, or made our own faculties plainly tell us is so; and what he hath made any man's faculties to tell him, he hath made all men's that can use them.

But so much we manifestly find in ourselves, that we have three natures in us very sufficiently distinguishable, and that are intimately united, the *vegetative*, *sensitive*, and the *intellective*. So that notwithstanding their manifest distinction, no one scruples when they are united, to call the whole *the human nature*. Or if any make a difficulty, or would raise a dispute about the distinction of these three natures, I for the present content myself with what is more obvious, not doubting to reach any mark by degrees, namely, that we are made up of a mind, and a body, somewhat that can think, and somewhat that cannot; sufficiently distinct, yet so united, that not only every one, without hesitation, calls that thing made up of them one man; but also every one that considers deeply, will be transported with wonder by what more than magical knot or tye, two things so little akin, should be so held together, that the one that hath the power of will and choice cannot sever itself, and return into the same union with the other at pleasure. But,

VI. Since we find this is a thing actually done, the making up of two things of so different natures into one thing, that puts the matter out of doubt that this was a thing possible to be done, it was what God could do, for he hath done it. And if that were possible to him, to unite two things of so very different natures into one thing; let any colourable reason be assigned me, why it should not be as possible to him, to unite two things of a like nature, that is, if it were possible to him, to unite a *spirit* and a *body*, why is it less possible to him to have united *two spirits*? And then I further inquire, if it were possible to him to unite *two*, would it not be as possible to unite *three*? Let reason here be put upon its utmost stretch, and tell me what in all this is less possible than what we see is actually done! Will any man say two or three spirits united, being of

the same nature, will mingle, be confounded, run into one another, and lose their distinction? I ask, supposing them to pre-exist apart, antecedently to their union; are they not now distinguished by their own individual essences, let them be as much united as our souls and bodies are, why should they not as much remain distinct by their singular essences? There is no more hazard of their losing their distinction, by the similitude of their natures, than of our soul and body, transmuting one another by their dissimilitude.

I know not but the dictates of so vogued an author with many in this age, as Spinoza, may signify somewhat with some into whose hands this may fall; who, with design bad enough, says, that from whence one might collect the remaining distinction of two things of the same nature in such a supposed union, were the more easily conceivable of the two, that is, than of two things of different natures. For in his Posthumous Ethics, de Deo, He lays this down in explication of his second definition, *Cogitatio alia cogitatione terminatur. At corpus non terminatur cogitatione, nec cogitatio corpore, one thought is terminated by another: but the body is not terminated by thought, nor thought by the body.* Some may regard nothing in this, and it would do our business. For my part, I care not to be so much beholden to him; for it would at the long run, overdo it; and I know his meaning. But I see not but two congenerous natures are equally capable of being united, retaining their distinction, as two of a different kind, and that sufficiently serves the present purpose.

However, let any man tell me, why it should be impossible to God so to unite three spirits, as by his own power to fix their limits also, and by a perpetual law inwrought in their distinct beings to keep them distinct, so that they shall remain everlastingly united, but not identified; and by virtue of that union, be some one thing, which must, yet, want a name, as much, and as truly, as our soul and body united do constitute one man. Nor is it now the question, whether such a union would be convenient or inconvenient, apt or inapt; but all the question is, whether it be possible or impossible; which is as much as we are concerned in at this time. But you will say, Suppose it be possible, to what purpose is all this? how remote is it from the supposed Trinity in the Godhead? You will see to what purpose it is by and bye. I therefore add,

VII. That if such a union of three things, whether of like or of different natures, so as that they shall be truly one thing, and yet remain distinct, though united, can be effected, as one may with certainty pronounce, there is nothing more impossible, or

unconceivable in it, than we find is actually done, then it is not intrinsically impossible, or objectively; it is not impossible in itself. No power can effect what is simply, and in itself impossible. There is therefore no contradiction, no repugnancy, or inconsistency, as to the thing, nor consequently any shadow of absurdity in the conception hereof. Whereupon,

VIII. If such a union with such distinction be not impossible in itself, so that by a competent power it is sufficiently possible to be effected, or made; we are to consider whether it will appear more impossible, or whether I shall have a conception in my own mind any thing more incongruous if I conceive such a union, with such distinction, unmade, or that is original and eternal, in an unmade, or uncreated Being. For we are first to consider the thing in itself, abstractly from made or unmade, created or uncreated being. And if it pass clear of contradiction or absurdity, in its abstract notion, we are so far safe, and are not liable to be charged as having the conception in our minds of an impossible, absurd, or self-repugnant thing. So that clamour and cry of the adversary must cease, or be itself absurd, and without pretence. This now supposed union with such distinction, must if it be judged impossible, as it is in our thoughts introduced into unmade being, can no longer be judged impossible, as it is *a union* of distinct things, but only as it is *unmade*, or is supposed to have place in the unmade eternal Being.

IX. This is that then we have further to consider, whether, supposing it possible that three spiritual beings might as well be made or created in a state of so near union with continuing distinction, as to admit of becoming *one spiritual being*, to be called by some fit *name*, which might easily be found out, if the thing were produced, as that a spiritual being, and a corporeal being may be made and created in a state of so near union with continuing distinction, as to become one spiritual-corporeal being, called by the name of *man*; I say, whether supposing the former of these to be as possible to be done, or created, as the latter, which we see done already: we may not as well suppose somewhat like it, but infinitely more perfect to be original, and eternal in the uncreated Being? If the first be possible, the next actual, what pretence is there to think the last impossible?

X. I might add, as that which may be expected to be significant with such as do seriously believe the doctrines both of the incarnation, and the trinity, though I know it will signify nothing with them, who with equal contempt reject both, that the union of the two natures, the human, made up of a human body and a human soul, which are two exceedingly different natures, with the divine, which is a third and infinitely more different

from both the other, in one person, namely, of the Son of God, cannot certainly appear to any considering person, more conceivable or possible, than that which we now suppose, but assert not, of three distinct essences united in the *One Godhead*, upon any account, but this only, that this is supposed to be an unmade, eternal union, the other made and temporal; which renders not the one less conceivable than the other, as it is union, but only as in the several terms of this union it is supposed eternally to have place in the Being of God; whereas that other union, in respect of one of its terms is acknowledged *de novo* to have place there.

In short, here is a spiritual created being, a human soul, setting aside for the present the consideration of the human body, which united therewith made up the man, Christ, confessed to be in hypostatical union with the uncreated spiritual being of God, not as that being is in the person of the Father, nor is in the person of the Holy Ghost, for then they should have become man too; but as it was in the person of the Son only; why shall it be thought less possible that three uncreated spiritual beings may be in so near a union with each other as to be *one God*, as that a created spirit, and body too, should be in so near a union with one of the persons in the Godhead only, as therewith to be *one person*? will it not hereby be much more easily apprehensible how *one* of the persons (as the common way of speaking is) should be incarnate, and not the other two? Will not the notion of person itself be much more unexceptionable, when it shall be supposed to have its own individual nature? And why is a natural, eternal union of uncreated natures with continual distinction, or without confusion sufficient unto the unity of the Godhead, less supposable, than a temporal contracted union with created natures without confusion too, that shall be sufficient to the *unity* of a person? will it be any thing more contrary to *such simplicity* of the divine nature as is necessarily to be ascribed thereto? or will it be *tritheism*, and inconsistent with the acknowledged inviolable *unity* of the Godhead?

XI. That we may proceed to speak to both, let these things be considered with seriousness and sobriety of mind, as to ourselves; with all possible reverence towards the blessed God, and with just candour and equanimity towards other men. And first we must leave it to any one's future representation (not being hitherto able to discern any thing) what there is in all this that is here supposed any way repugnant to such simplicity, as God any where claims to his own being, or that plain reason will constrain us to ascribe to him, or that is really in itself any perfection. We are sure God hath not by his word taught us to ascribe to him universal absolute simplicity; or suggested 'o us any such notices as directly and evidently infer

it to belong to him : nor hath seemed at all intent upon cautioning of us lest we should not ascribe it. The *word* we find not among his *Attributes* mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. The thing, so far as it signifies any general perfection, we are sure belongs to him ; but the Scriptures are not written with visible design to obviate any danger of our misconceiving his nature, by not apprehending it to be in every respect most absolutely simple. It doth teach us to conceive of him as most powerful, most wise, most gracious ; and doth not teach us to conceive all these in the abstract, namely, power, wisdom and goodness to be the same thing. Yet we easily apprehend by reflecting upon ourselves, that, without multiplying the subject, these may all reside together in the same man. But our difficulty is greater to conceive what is commonly taught, that these without real distinction, or with formal only, as contradistinguished to the difference of thing from thing, are in the abstract affirmable of God, that he is power, wisdom, goodness : that to his being belongs so absolute simplicity, that we must not look upon these as things really distinguishable, *there*, from one another, but as different conceptions of the same thing. We must conceive of things as we can, not as we cannot ; and are only concerned to take heed of unrevealed, and undemonstrable, and peremptory conceptions concerning that glorious most incomprehensible and ever blessed Being ; to beware of too curious prying into the nature of God, when it was so penal to look unduly into, or even to touch that only-hallowed symbol of his presence, his ark ! beyond what he hath revealed expressly or we can most clearly, by generally received light, apprehend. When we know there is a knowledge of him so reserved from us, whereof our minds are so little receptive, that it seemed all one, whether he told us, he did dwell in thick darkness, or in inaccessible light. It will be a reproach to us, if we shall need to be taught reverence of him by pagans ; or that such a document should need to be given us for our admonition, as that very ancient inscription in one of their temples imported, “ I am whatsoever was, is, or shall be, and who is he that shall draw aside my vail ? ”

XII. If we should suppose three spiritual necessary beings, the one whereof were mere power (or furious might) destitute of either wisdom, or goodness ; another mere wisdom (or craft rather) destitute of either goodness or power ; a third mere goodness (or fond and fruitless kindness) destitute of either power or wisdom, existing separately and apart from each other : this triple conception would overthrow itself, and must certainly allow little ease to any considering mind. Nor could any of these be God. But if we conceive essential power, wis-

dom, and goodness concurring in one spiritual necessarily existent Being, in which are each of these, not only, by the *περιζωσθεις* *mutual penetration* usually acknowledged in the three persons, totally *permeating* one another (which signifying but mere presence, as we may express it, is in comparison, a small thing) but really and vitally united, by so much a nearer, and more perfect union than hath ever come under our notice among created beings, of partly corporeal, partly incorporeal natures, by how much beings of *purest spirituality* may be apter to the most intimate union, than when one is quite of a different nature from the other, and as whatsoever union is supposable to be, originally, eternally, and by natural necessity, in the most *perfect being*, may be thought inexpressibly *more perfect* than any other. And if, hereupon, we further conceive the most entire, perpetual, everlasting intercourse and communion of these three, so originally united, that what is conceivable of perfection, or excellency in any one of these, is as much the others, for whatsoever exercises or operations, as his own; I cannot apprehend what there is of repugnancy, contraction, or absurdity in this supposition; nor any thing that, by any measures he hath given us to govern our conceptions of him, appears unbecoming or unworthy of God. There is, it is true, less simplicity, but more perfection ascribed hereby to the divine Being, entirely considered; and more intelligibly, than if you go about to impose upon yourself the notion of most absolute omnimodous simplicity therein. There would be yet more absolute simplicity ascribed unto an eternal Being, if you should conceive in it mere power exclusive of wisdom, and goodness—and so of the rest; but infinitely less perfection. And, if that would avail any thing, I could easily produce more school-men, than one, of no small note, concurring in this sentiment that *simplicitas, si sumatur in tota sua amplitudine, non dicit perfectionem simpliciter, simplicity if it be taken in its whole extent, does not describe absolute perfection*. But I count it not worth the while.

XIII. And let it be here again observed, I speak not of this, as any certain determination, that thus things are in the Deity; but as a possible supposition of what, for ought we know, may be. If any say this gives us the notion of a compounded Deity, or of a composition in it; I only say the term, *composition*, seems to imply a pre-existing *component* that brings such things together, and supposes such and such more simple things to have pre-existed apart or separate, and to be brought afterwards together into a *united state*. Whereupon I peremptorily deny any composition in the being of God. And let any man from what hath been hitherto said, or supposed, infer it, if he can. Im-

agine this of the Godhead, and you shall, we acknowledge, conceive most untruly, most unworthily, most injuriously of God; and what is most absolutely impossible to agree to the Divine Being. And for this reason only, that I know of, that carries any shadow of importance in it, many have been so apt, without the least warrant from any revelation God hath given of himself, to ascribe to him an unintelligible *simplicity*; apprehending they must otherwise admit a *composition* in his most sacred essence, that is, the putting of things together that were separate, to make it up; which must suppose it a new production, that once was not, and from an imperfect state by the coalition of things once severed, to have arrived to the perfection we ascribe to the Divine Being; which sort of being cannot, without the most absurd and blasphemous contradiction, ever admit to be called God. But if we suppose most perfect, essential power, wisdom, love, by original, eternal and most natural necessity to have co-existed in that being most intimately *united*, though *distinct*; that seemingly important reason, will appear but a shadow, and accordingly vanish as such.

And indeed this is no more than what, in effect, such as discourse upon this subject do commonly say (though perhaps some may less consider the ducture and sequel of their own professed sentiments) when they speak of the incomprehensibility of God's essence, and how impossible it is a finite mind should form or receive a full and complete idea of it; or when they therefore say, that any conceptions we can have of the wisdom, goodness, or any other attribute of the Divine Being, are still but inadequate conceptions; whereby they must mean, when we consider for instance the wisdom of God that we not only fall infinitely short of conceiving all that belongs to the Divine Being, in that kind, but that there is also infinitely more belonging thereto, in other kinds, than it is possible that conception can contain or express. And when we have the conception in our minds of the divine wisdom, do we not apprehend there is really somewhat else in the Divine Being, whereof that term hath no signification? or will we say his wisdom and his power are really the same thing? as they must either be the same, or divers things: if we say they are the same, we must, I doubt, confess ourselves to say what we do not understand, especially when, in the abstract, we affirm them of one another, and of God; and accordingly say that wisdom is power, and power is wisdom, and the one of these is God, and the other, God. I know a formal distinction is commonly admitted, that is, that the conception of the one is not included in the conception of the other. But are these different conceptions true or false? If false, why are they admitted? if true, there must be

somewhat in the nature of the thing corresponding to them. But if we say they are distinct, but most intimately, and eternally united in the Divine Being, by a necessary, natural union, or that it is not impossible so to be, what we say will, I think, agree with itself, and not disagree with any other conception we are obliged to have concerning the blessed God.

In the mean time, I profess not to judge, we are under the precise notions of power, wisdom and goodness, to conceive of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost: nor that the notions we have of those, or any other divine perfections, do exactly correspond to what, in God, is signified by these names; but I reckon, that what relief and ease is given our minds by their being disentangled from any apprehended necessity of thinking these to be the very same things, may facilitate to us our apprehending the Father, Son and Spirit to be sufficiently distinct, for our affirming, or understanding the affirmation, of some things concerning some one, without including the other of them.

XIV. But some perhaps will say, while we thus amplify the distinction of these glorious three, we shall seem to have too friendly a look towards, or shall say in effect, what Dr. Sherlock is so highly blamed for saying, and make three Gods. I answer, that if with sincere minds we inquire after truth, for its own sake, we shall little regard the friendship or enmity, honour or dishonour of this or that man. If this were indeed so; doth what was true become false, because such a man hath said it? But it is remote from being so. There is no more, here positively asserted than generally so much distinction between the Father, Son, and Spirit, as is in itself necessary to the founding the distinct attributions, which in the Scriptures are severally given them—that when the word or wisdom was said to be with God (understanding it, as the case requires with God the Father) in the creation of all things, we may not think, nothing more is said than that he was with himself; that when the Word is said to be made flesh, it is equally said the Father was made flesh, or the Holy Ghost; that when the Holy Ghost is said to have proceeded from, or have been sent by the Father, or the Son, he is said to have proceeded from himself, or have sent himself.—But, in the mean time this is offered without determining precisely, how great distinction is necessary to this purpose. It is not here positively said these three are three distinct substances, three infinite minds or spirits. We again and again insist, and inculcate, how becoming, and necessary it is to abstain from over-bold inquiries, or positive determinations concerning the limits, or the extent of this distinction, beyond what the Scriptures have, in general, made necessary to the mentioned purpose; that we may not throw

ourselves into guilt, nor cast our minds into unnecessary straits, by affirming this or that to be necessary, or impossible in these matters.

XV. The case is only thus, that since we are plainly led by the express revelation God hath made of himself to us in his word, to admit a *trinal conception* of him, or to conceive this threefold distinction in his being, of Father, Son, and Spirit; since we have so much to greatness that distinction, divers things being said of each of these, that must not be understood of either of the other; since we have nothing to limit it on the other hand, but the *unity* of the Godhead, which we are sure can be but One, both from the plain word of God, and the nature of the thing itself; since we are assured both these may consist, namely, this *trinity*, and this *unity*, by being told there are three, (1 John 5.7) and these three (that is plainly, continuing three) are *ev, one thing*; which one thing, can mean nothing else but Godhead; as is also said concerning two of them, elsewhere, (there being no occasion, then, to mention the third) I and my Father are one thing John 10.30. We are hereupon unavoidably put upon it to cast in our own minds (and are concerned to do it with the most religious reverence and profoundest humility) what sort of thing this most sacred Godhead may be, unto which this *oneness* is ascribed, with *three-fold distinction*. And manifestly finding there are in the creation *made unions*, with sufficient remaining *distinction*, particularly in ourselves, that we are a soul and a body (things of so very different natures) that often the soul is called the man, (not excluding the body) and the body, or our flesh called the man (not excluding the soul) we are plainly led to apprehend that it is rather more easily possible there might be *two spirits* (so much more agreeing in nature) so united, as to be *one thing*, and yet continuing distinct; and if *two*, there might as well be *three*, if the Creator pleased. And hence we are led further to apprehend, that if such a made union, with continuing distinction be possible in created being, it is for ought we know, not impossible in the uncreated; that there may be such an eternal *unmade union*, with *continuing distinction*. And all this being only represented as *possible* to be thus, without concluding that *thus it certainly is*; sufficiently serves our purpose, that no pretence might remain of excluding the eternal Word; and the eternal Spirit, the Godhead, as if a *trinity* therein were contradictory and impossible, repugnant to reason, and common sense. Were now is the coincidence?

XVI. Nor is there, hereupon, so great a remaining difficulty to salve the unity of the Godhead; when the supposition is

taken in, of the natural, eternal, necessary union of these three that hath been mentioned.

And it shall be considered, that the Godhead is not supposed more necessarily to exist, than these three are to coexist in the nearest and most intimate union with each other therein. That Spiritual Being which exists necessarily, and is every way absolutely perfect, whether it consist of three in one, or of only one, is God. We could never have known, it is true, that there are such three coexisting in this one God, if he himself had not told us. What man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth but the Spirit of God. 1 Cor. 2. 11. In telling us this he hath told us no impossible, no unconceivable thing. It is absurd, and very irreligious presumption to say this cannot be. If a worm were so far capable of thought, as to determine this or that concerning our nature; and that such a thing were impossible to belong to it, which we find to be in it, we should trample upon it! More admirable divine patience spares us! He hath only let us know that this is the state of his essence, whereof we should have been otherwise ignorant. This is its constitution, (as if it were said *ita se habet comparatam*) *thus it is in, and of itself*, that there are *three* in it to be conceived, under the distinct notions of Father, Son, and Spirit, without telling us expressly how far they are distinct, in terms of art, or in scholastic forms of speech. But he considered us as men, reasonable creatures; and that when he tells us there are *three* existing in his being, of each of which some things are said, that must not be understood spoken of the other, and yet that there is but one God: we are not incapable of understanding, that these *three* must agree *in Godhead*; and yet that they must be *sufficiently distinct*, unto this purpose, that we may distinctly conceive of, apply ourselves to, and expect from, the one and the other of them. And the frame of our religion is therefore ordered for us accordingly, that is, for us to whom he hath revealed so much. Others, to whom such notices are not given, he expects should deport themselves towards him, according to the light which they have, not which they have not.

XVII. But an hypothesis in this affair, which leaves out the *very nexus*, that *natural, eternal union*, or leaves it out of its proper place, and insists upon *mutual consciousness*, which, at the most, is but a consequence thereof, wants the principal thing requisite to the salving the unity of the Godhead. If two or three created spirits had never so perfect a mutual perfection of one another, that would not constitute them one thing, though it *probably* argue them to be so; and but *proba-*

lly; for God might, no doubt, give them a mutual insight into one another, without making them one; but if he should create them in as near a union, as our soul and body are in with one another (and it is very apprehensible they might be created in a much nearer, and more permanent one, both being of the same nature, and neither subject to decay) they would as truly, admit to be called *one something* (as such a creature might well enough be called, till a fitter name were found out) notwithstanding their supposed continuing distinction, as fitly, as our soul and body *united*, are, notwithstanding their continuing distinction, called *one man*. And I do sincerely profess such a union, with perpetual distinction, seems to me every whit as conceivable, being supposed unmade, uncreated, and eternal, as any union is among creatures, that must therefore be a made thing, or a temporal production.

And whereas the necessity of existence (most unquestionably of an intellectual being) is a most certain, and fundamental attribute of Deity: the Father, Son, and Spirit being supposed necessarily existent, in this *united state*, they cannot but be God; and the Godhead by reason of this necessary union cannot but be one; yet so, as that when you predicate Godhead, or the name of God of any one of them, you herein express a true, but an inadequate conception of God; that is, the Father is God, not excluding the Son, and Holy Ghost; the Son is God, not excluding the Father and the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost is God, not excluding the Father and the Son. Thus our body is the man, not excluding the soul; our soul is the man; not excluding the body. Therefore their union in Godhead being so strict and close, notwithstanding their distinction, to say that any one of them is God, in exclusion of the other two, would not be a true predication. It is indeed said, the Father is the only true God; but that neither excludes the Son, nor the Holy Ghost from being the true God also; (John 17. 3.) each of them communicating in that Godhead which only is true. It had been quite another thing, if it had been said, Thou Father only, art the true God.

XVIII. The order moreover, in this way also very clearly preserved and fitly complied with, of priority and posteriority (not of time, as every one sees, but nature) which the names Father, Son, and Spirit do more than intimate. For the Father (usually called by divines the *fons trinitatis*, *fountain of the trinity*) being by this appellation plainly signified to be first in this sacred triad; the Son, as that title imports, to be of the Father; and the Spirit to be of, or from, both the other: let these two latter be considered as being of, or from the first, not by any intervening act of will, by which it might have been possible they

should not have been so; but by natural, necessary, eternal *promanation*; so as that necessity of existence is hereby made as truly to agree to them as to the first, which is acknowledged the most fundamental attribute of Deity. This *promanation* is hereby sufficiently distinguished from creation; and these two set infinitely above all creatures, or the whole universe of created beings. Nor is there hereby any place left for that unapt application of a son and a grandson deriving themselves from the grandfather, or two brothers from one father. p. 17. of these considerations.

And although it be also true, and readily acknowledged, that there are numerous instances of involuntary productions among the creatures, and which are therefore to be deemed a sort of natural and necessary productions; yet that necessity not being absolute, but *ex hypothesi* only, that is, upon supposition of their productive causes, and all things requisite to those productions, being so, and so, aptly posited in order thereto, all which depended upon one sovereign will at first, so that all might have been otherwise, this signifies nothing to exempt them out of the state and rank of creatures, or invalidate this most unalterable distinction between created being, and uncreated.

XIX. But if here it shall be urged to me that one individual necessarily existent Spiritual Being alone is God, and is all that is signified by the name of God; and therefore that three distinct individual, necessarily existent, spiritual Beings must unavoidably be three distinct Gods:

I would say, if by one individual, necessarily existent, Spiritual Being, you mean one such Being, comprehending Father, Son and Holy Ghost taken together, I grant it. But if by one individual, necessarily existent, spiritual being, you mean either the Father, Son or Holy Ghost, taken sejunctly, I deny it; for both the other are truly signified by the name of God too, as well as that one.

I therefore say, the term individual, must in this case now supposed (as possible, not as certain) admit of a twofold application; either to the distinct essence of the Father, or of the Son, or of the Holy Ghost; or to the entire essence of the Godhead, in which these three do concur. Each of these conceived by itself are (according to this supposition) individual essences, but conceived together, they are the entire individual essence of God. For there is but one such essence, and no more, and it can never be multiplied, nor divided into more of the same name and nature: as the body and soul of a man, are one individual body, and one individual soul, but both together are but one individual man: and the case would be the same, if a man

did consist of two, or three spirits so (or more nearly) united, together, as his soul and body are. Especially if you should suppose, which is the supposition of no impossible or unconceivable thing, that these three spirits which together, as we now do suppose, do constitute a man, were created with an aptitude to this united coexistence, but with an impossibility of existing separately, except to the divine power which created them conjunct, and might separate them so as to make them exist apart: which yet cannot be the case in respect of three such uncreated spiritual beings, whose union is supposed to be by natural, eternal necessity, as their essences are; and are therefore most absolutely inseparable.

XX. Or if it should be said, I make the notion of God to comprehend Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and a Godhead besides common to these three:

I answer; nothing I have said or supposed, implies any such thing; or that the notion of God imports any thing more of real being, than is contained in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, taken together, and most intimately, naturally, and vitally, by eternal necessity, united with one another. As in a created being, consisting of more things than one taken together and united; a man for instance, there is nothing more of real entity, besides what is contained in his body and his soul *united* and taken together. It is true that this term, a man, speaks somewhat very diverse from a human body taken alone or a human soul taken alone, or from both, separately taken; but nothing divers from both united, and taken together. And for what this may be unjustly collected to imply of composition, repugnant to divine perfection, it is before obviated. Sect. 13.

If therefore it be asked, "What do we conceive under the notion of God, but a necessary, spiritual Being?" I answer, that this is a *true* notion of God, and may be passable enough, among pagans, for a *full* one. But we christians are taught to conceive under the notion of God, a necessary spiritual Being, in which Father, Son, and Spirit, do so necessarily coexist, as to constitute that Being; and that when we conceive any one of them to be God, that is but an inadequate, not an entire and full conception of the Godhead. Nor will any place remain for that trivial evil, that if each of these have Godhead in him, *he* therefore hath a *trinity* in him; but that he is one of the three who together are the One God, by necessary, natural, eternal union.

Which union is also quite of another kind than that of *three men* (as for instance, of Peter, James and John) partaking in the same kind of nature; who notwithstanding, exist separately, and apart from each other. These three are supposed

to coexist in natural, necessary, eternal, and most intimate union, so as to be one Divine Being.

Nor is it any prejudice against our thus stating the notion of the Godhead, that we know of no such union in all the creation, that may assist our conception of this union. What incongruity is there in supposing, in this respect, as well as in many others, somewhat most peculiarly appropriate to the being of God? If there be no such actual union in the creation, it is enough to our purpose, if such a one were possible to have been. And we do know of the actual union of two things of very different natures so as to be one thing, and have no reason to think the union of two or more things of the same sort of nature, with sufficient remaining distinction, less possible or less intelligible.

XXI. Upon the whole, let such a union be conceived in the being of God, with such distinction, and one would think (though the complexions of men's minds do strangely and unaccountably differ) the absolute perfection of the Deity, and especially the perfect felicity thereof, should be much the more apprehensible with us. When we consider the most delicious society which would hence ensue, among the so entirely consentient Father, Son, and Spirit, with whom there is so perfect rectitude, everlasting harmony, mutual complacency, unto highest delectation; according to our way of conceiving things, who are taught by our own nature (which also hath in it the divine image) to reckon no enjoyment pleasant, without the consociation of some other with us therein; we for our parts cannot but hereby have in our minds a more gustful idea of a blessed state, than we can conceive in mere eternal solitude.

God speaks to us, as men, and will not blame us for conceiving things so infinitely above us, according to the capacity of our natures; provided we do not assume to ourselves to be a measure for our conceptions of him; further than as he is himself pleased to warrant, and direct us herein. Some likeness we may (taught by himself) apprehend between him and us, but with infinite (not inequality only, but) unlikeness. And for this case of delectation in society, we must suppose an immense difference between him an all-sufficient, self-sufficient Being, comprehending in himself the infinite fulness of whatsoever is most excellent and delectable, and ourselves, who have in us but a very minute portion of being, goodness, or felicity, and whom he hath made to stand much in need of one another, and most of all of him.

But when, looking into ourselves, we find there is in us a disposition, often upon no necessity, but sometimes, from some sort of benignity of temper, unto conversation with others;

we have no reason, when other things concur, and do fairly induce, and lead our thoughts this way, to apprehend any incongruity in supposing he may have some distinct object of the same sort of propension in his own most perfect Being too, and therewith such a propension itself also.

XXII. As to what concerns ourselves, the observation is not altogether unapposite, what Cicero treating of friendship, discourses of perpetual solitude, “that the afflictation of it must signify the worst of ill humour, and the most savage nature in the world. And supposing one of so sour and morose a humour, as to shun and hate the conversation of men, he would not endure it, to be without some one or other to whom he might disgorge the virulency of that his malignant humour. Or that supposing such a thing could happen, that God should take a man quite out of the society of men, and place him in absolute solitude, supplied with the abundance of whatsoever nature could covet besides ; Who, saith he, is so made of iron, as to endure that kind of life ?” And he introduces Architas Tarentinus reported to speak to this purpose,—“ that if one could ascend into heaven, behold the frame of the world, and the beauty of every star, his admiration would be unpleasant to him alone, which would be most delicious, if he had some one to whom to express his sense of the whole.”

We are not, I say, strictly to measure God by ourselves in this ; further than as he himself prompts and leads us. But if we so form our conception of divine bliss, as not to exclude from it somewhat, whereof that delight in society, which we find in ourselves may be an imperfect faint resemblance ; it seems not altogether disagreeable to what the Scriptures also teach us to conceive concerning him, when they bring in the eternal wisdom, saying, as one distinct from the prime Author, and Parent of all things, Then was I by him, as one brought up with him, and daily his delight. Prov. 8. 30.

XXIII. However, let the whole of what hath been hitherto proposed be taken together, and to me, it appears our conception of the *sacred trinity* will be so remote from any shadow of inconsistency or repugnancy, that no necessity can remain upon us of torturing wit, and racking invention to the uttermost, to do a laboured and artificial violence (by I know not what screws and engines) to so numerous plain texts of Scripture, only to undeify our glorious Redeemer, and do the utmost despite to the Spirit of grace. We may be content to let the word of God (or what we pretend to own for a divine revelation) stand as it is, and undistorted, speak its own sense. And when we find the Former of all things speaking as *We* or *Us*.

(Gen. 1. 26.) when we find another (Prov. 8. 22.) *I*, possessed by the Lord, in the beginning of his way, before his works of old; so as that he says of himself (as distinct from the other) I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was—and, When he prepared the heavens I was there, &c. (ver. 27.) when we find the child born for us, the Son given to us, called also the mighty God, and (as in reference to us he fitly might) the everlasting Father. (Isa. ix. 6.) when we are told of the ruler that was to come out of Bethlehem-Ephrata, that his goings forth were from everlasting: (Mic. 5. 2.) that, The word was in the beginning with God, and was God—that all things were made by him, and without him nothing was made, that was made—that this word was made flesh—that his glory was beheld as the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth: (John 1. 11.) even that same *he* that above was said to have been in the beginning with God, and to be God:—that when he who was said to have come down from heaven, (John 3. 13.) was, even while he was on earth, at that time, said to be in heaven:—that we are told by himself, he and his Father are *one* thing: (John 10. 30.) —that he is not only said to know the heart, but to know all things: (John 21. 17.)—that even he who according to the flesh came of the Israelites, (Rom. 9. 5.) is yet expressly said to be over all, God blessed for ever:—that when he was in the form of God, he humbled himself to the taking on him the form of a servant, and to be found in fashion as a man: (Phil. 2. 6.)—that it is said, all things were created by him, that are in heaven, and on earth, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers,—and that all things were created by him, and for him; (Col. 1. 16.) than which nothing could have been said more peculiar or appropriate to Deity,—that even of the Son of God it is said, he is the true God and eternal life: (1. John 5. 20.)—that we are so plainly told, he is Alpha and Omega, (Rev. 1. 8.) the first and the last, he that was, and is, and is to come, the Lord Almighty, (chap. 2. 23.) the beginning of the creation of God: the searcher of hearts: (chap. 3. 14.)—that the Spirit of God is said to search all things, even the deep things of God: (1 Cor. 2. 10.)—that lying to him is said to be lying to God: (Acts. 5. 3.)—that the great Christian solemnity baptism, is directed to be in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost:—that it is so distinctly said, there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and that these three are one thing. 1 John 5. 7.

I cannot imagine what should oblige us so studiously to wire-draw all this to quite other meanings.

XXIV. And for the leaving out of this last mentioned text

in some copies, what hath been said (not to mention divers others) by the famously learned Dr. Hammond upon that place, is so reasonable, so moderate, so charitable to the opposite party, and so apt to satisfy impartial and unprejudiced minds, that one would scarce think, after the reading of it, any real doubt can remain concerning the authentieness of that 7th verse in 1 John. 5.

Wherefore now taking all these texts together ; with many more that might have been mentioned, I must indeed profess to wonder, that with men of so good sense, as our socinian adversaries are accounted, this consideration should not have more place and weight, namely, That it being so obvious to any reader of the Scriptures to apprehend from so numerous texts, that Deity must belong to the Son of God, and that there wants not sufficient inducement to conceive so of the Holy Ghost also ; there should be no more caution given in the Scriptures themselves to prevent mistake (if there were any) in apprehending the matter accordingly : and to obviate the unspeakable consequent danger of erring in a case of so vast importance. How unagreeable it is to all our notions of God ; and to his usual procedure in cases of less consequence ! How little doth it consist with his being so wise and so compassionate a lover of the souls of men, to let them be so fatally exposed unto so inevitable, and so destructive a delusion ! that the whole Christian church should through so many centuries of years, be even trained into so horrid and continued idolatry by himself who so severely forbids it ! I cannot allow myself to think men of that persuasion insincere in their professing to believe the divine authority of the holy Scriptures, when the leader and head of their party, wrote a book, that is not without nerves in defence of it. But I confess I cannot devise, with what design they can think those Scriptures were written ! or why they should count it a thing worthy of infinite wisdom to vouchsafe such a revelation to men, allowing them to treat and use it as they do ! And that till some great socinian wits should arise fifteen hundred years after, to rectify their notions in these things, men should generally be in so great hazard of being deceived into damnation, by those very Scriptures, which were professedly written to make them wise to salvation !

XXV. Nor is it of so weighty importance in this controversy, to cast the balance the other way, that a noted critic (upon what introduction needs not be determined) changed his judgment, or that his posthumous interpretations of some texts (if they were his interpretations) carry an appearance of his having changed it ; because he thought such texts might possibly admit to be interpreted otherwise, than they usually

were, by such as alleged them for the *trinity*, or the (disputed) Deity of the Son or Spirit, or that the cause must be lost, upon his deserting it, or that he was still to be reckoned of the opposite party (as the author calls it) and that such texts as we most relied upon, were therefore given up by some of our own.

And it is really a great assuming, when a man shall adventure to pronounce so peremptorily, against the so common judgment of the Christian church, without any colour or proof, that our copies, are false copies, our translations, our explanations false, and the generality of the wisest, the most inquisitive, most pious, and most judicious assertors of the Christian cause, for so many continued ages, fools, or cheats for owning and avowing them; for no other imaginable reason, but only because they make against him! How will he prove any copies we rely upon to be false? Is it because he is pleased to suspect them? And is an interpretation false, because the words can possibly be tortured unto some other sense? Let him name me the text, wherein any doctrine is supposed to be delivered that is of merely supernatural revelation, of which it is not possible to devise some other meaning, not more remote, alien, or unimaginable, than theirs, of most of the disputed texts.

Nor indeed do we need to except that natural sentiment in itself, that there is but one God, (which this author takes such pains to prove, as if he thought, or would make other men think we denied it.) For though it is so generally acknowledged, doth he not know it is not so generally understood in the same sense? Against whom doth he write? Doth he not know they understand this *oneness* in one sense, he, in another? *they* in such a sense as admits a *trinity*, *he* in a sense that excludes it?

But (for such things as did need a superadded verbal revelation) how easy is it to an inventive, perversicacious wit, to wrest words this way, or that.

XXVI. The Scriptures were written for the instruction of sober learners; not for the pastime of contentious wits, that affect only to play tricks upon them. At their rate of interpreting, among whom he ranks himself, it is impossible any doctrine can with certainty, be founded upon them. Take the first chapter of St. John's gospel for instance, and what doctrine can be asserted in plainer words, than the Deity of Christ, in the three first verses of that chapter? Set any man of an ordinary, unprepossessed understanding, to read them, and when he finds that by the word is meant Jesus Christ (which themselves admit) see if he will not judge it plainly taught, that Jesus Christ is God, in the most eminent, known sense: especially when he shall take

notice of so many other texts, that, according to their most obvious appearance, carry the same sense. But it is first, through mere shortness of discourse, taken for granted, and rashly concluded on, that it is absolutely impossible, if the Father be God, the Son can be God too (or the Holy Ghost) upon a presumption, that we can know every thing that belongs to the divine nature; and what is possible to be in it, and what not; and next, there is hereupon not only a license imagined, but an obligation. and necessity, to shake heaven and earth, or tear that divine word that is more stable, into a thousand pieces, or expound it to nothing, to make it comply with that forelaid presumptuous determination. Whereas if we could but bend our minds so far to comply with the plain ducture of that revelation God hath made unto us of himself; as to apprehend that in the most only Godhead there may be distinctions, which we particularly understand not, sufficient to found the doctrine of a trinity therein, and very consistent with the *unity* of it; we should save the divine word, and our own minds, from unjust torture, both at once. And our task, herein will be the easier, that we are neither concerned nor allowed to determine, that things are precisely so, or so; but only to suppose it possible that so they may be, for ought that we know. Which will I am certain not be so hard, nor so bold an undertaking, as his, who shall take upon him to prove, that any thing here supposed is impossible.

Indeed if any one would run the discourse into the abyss of infinity, he may soon create such difficulties to himself, as it ought not to be thought strange, if they be greater than any human understanding can expedite. But not greater than any man will be entangled in, that shall set himself to consider infinity upon other accounts; which yet he will find it imposed upon him unavoidably to admit whether he will or no: not greater than this author will be equally concerned in, upon his doing that right to truth, in opposition to the former leaders of his own party, as to acknowledge the omnipresence of the divine essence, (p. 23.) which he will find, let him try it when he will: nor yet so great, nor accompanied with so gross, so palpable and horrid absurdities, as he will soon be encountered with, should he retract his grant, or entertain the monstrously maimed, and most deformed, impious, conceit of a finite, or limited Deity!

XXVII. Yet also in this present case, the impossibility to our narrow minds of comprehending infinity, is most rationally improvable to our very just advantage. It ought to be upbraided to none as a pretext, or a cover to sloth, or dulness. It is no reproach to us that we are creatures, and have not infinite

capacities. And it ought to quiet our minds, that they may so certainly know they have limits ; within which, we are to content ourselves with such notions, about indemonstrable, and unrevealed things, as they can, with greatest ease to themselves, find room for.

I can reflect upon nothing in what is here proposed, but what is intelligible without much toil, or much metaphysics. As matters, of so common concernment, ought, to our uttermost, to be represented in such a way that they may be so : we need not be concerned in scholastic disquisitions about union ; or by what peculiar name to call that which is here supposed. It is enough for us to know there may be a real, natural, vital, and very intimate union, of things that shall, notwithstanding it, continue distinct, and that shall, by it, be truly one. Nor do we need to be anxiously curious in stating the notions of *person* and *personality*, of *suppositum* and *suppositivity*, though I think not the term person disallowable in the present case. Nor will I say what that noted man (so noted that I need not name him, and who was as much acquainted with metaphysics as most in his age) published to the world above twenty years ago, that he counted the notion of the schools about *suppositum* a foolery. For I do well know, the thing itself, which our Christian metaphysicians intended, to be of no small importance in our religion, and especially to the doctrine of redemption, and of our Redeemer.

XXVIII. But I reckon they that go the more metaphysical way, and content themselves with the *modal* distinction of three persons in the Godhead, say nothing herein that can be proved absurd or contradictory. As to what is commonly urged, that if there be three persons in the Deity, each person must have its distinct *individual essence*, as well as its distinct *personality*, I would deny the consequence, and say, that though this be true in *created* persons (taking person in the strict metaphysical sense) it is not necessary to be so in *uncreated*. That the reason is not the same between finite things and infinite ; and would put them to prove, if they can, that the same infinite essence cannot be whole and undivided in three several persons ; knowing there can be nothing more difficult urged in the case, than may against the divine omnipresence ; which irrefragable reasons, as well as the plainest testimony of Scripture will oblige us to acknowledge.

But I think, though this hypothesis abstractly considered, and by itself, is not indefensible ; it doth not altogether so well square with the Christian economy, nor so easily allow that distinction to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which seems

requisite to found the distinct attributions that are severally given them in the Holy Scriptures.

XXIX. To conclude, I only wish these things might be considered, and discoursed with less confidence, and peremptory determination; with a greater awe of what is divine and sacred; and that we may more confine ourselves to the plain words of Scripture in this matter, and be content therewith. I generally blame it in the socinians (who appear otherwise rational and considering men) that they seem to have formed their belief of things, not possible to be known but by the Scriptures, without them; and then think they are by all imaginable arts, and they care not what violence, (as Socinus himself hath in effect confessed) to mould and form them according to their preconceived sense. Common modesty, and civility, one would have thought, should have made Schlictingius abstain from prefixing, and continuing that as a running title to a long chapter: *Articulus Evangelicorum de Trinitate cum sensu communi pugnat; the doctrine of the orthodox respecting the trinity is inconsistent with common sense*; engrossing common sense to himself and his party, and reproaching the generality of christians, as not understanding common sense. They should take upon them less, and not vaunt, as if they were the men, and wisdom must die with them.

For this author, I congratulate his nearer approach to us, from those who were formerly leaders of his party, in the doctrines of God's omnipresence, and the perceptiveness, and activity of separate souls. He writes with sprightliness and vigour. And, I doubt not, believes really, what he writes with so little seeming doubt. And because his spirit appears to be of a more generous, exalted pitch, than to comport with any thing against his judgment, for secular interest and advantage. I reckon it the greater pity it should want the addition of what would be very ornamental to it, and which he wishes to two of the persons, to whom he makes himself an antagonist, more of the tenderness and catholic charity of genuine Christianity, (p. 12. col. 2.) to accompany those his abilities and learning, which would not thereby be the less (as he speaks) nor the less conspicuous.

I believe few would have thought him to see the less clearly, if he had been content to see for himself, not for mankind. And if he had not talked at that rate, as if he carried the eyes of all the world in his pocket, they would have been less apt to think he carried his own there. Nor had his performance, in this writing of his, lost any thing of real value, if in a discourse upon so grave a subject, some *lepidities* had been left out, as that of *Dulcinea del Toboso*, &c.

And to allude to what he says of Dr. Cudworth, his displeasure will not hurt so rough an author as Arnobius, so many ages after he is dead, if he should happen to offend him, by having once said, *Dissoluti—est pectoris in rebus seriis quærere voluptatem—&c. it is the mark of a depraved mind to seek for amusement in serious subjects.*

But for all of us, I hope we may say without offence to any, common human frailty should be more considered, and that we know but in part, and in how small a part! We should, hereupon, be more equal to one another. And when it is obvious to every one, how we are straitened in this matter, and that we ought to suppose one another intently aiming to reconcile the Scripture-discovery with natural sentiments, should not uncharitably censure, or labour to expose one another, that any seem more satisfied with their own method than with ours. What an odd and almost ludicrous spectacle do we give to the blessed angels that supervise us (if their benignity did not more prompt them to compassion) when they behold us fighting in the dark; about things we so little understand; or, when we all labour under a gradual blindness, objecting it to one another, and one accusing another that he abandons not his own too weak sight, to see only by his (perhaps) blinder eye.

Thus, Sir, you have my sense what I think safe, and enough to be said in this weighty matter. To you, these thoughts are not new, with whom they have been communicated and discoursed heretofore, long ago. And I believe you may so far recollect yourself, as to remember the principal ground was suggested to you, upon which this discourse now rests; namely necessity of existence, and contingency; emanations absolutely independent upon any will at all; and the arbitrary productions of the divine will,—as the sufficient and most fundamental difference between what is uncreated and what is created; and upon this very account, as that which might give scope and room to our thoughts, to conceive the doctrine of the *trinity*, consistently with the *unity* of the Godhead; and so, as that the Son, though truly from the Father, and the Holy Ghost, though truly from both, shall yet appear infinitely distinguished from all created beings whatsoever.

So much you know was under consideration with us above twenty years ago; and was afterwards imparted to many more; long before there was any mention or forethought, within our notice, of such a revival of former controversies, upon this subject, as we have lately seen.

This occasion, now given, hath put me upon revolving

anew these former thoughts; and upon digesting them into some order, such as it is, for public view. If they shall prove to be of any use, it appears they will not be out of season; and it will be grateful to me to be any way serviceable to so worthy a cause. If they shall be found altogether useless; being evicted either of impertinency, or untruth, it shall not be ungrateful; for I thank God, I find not a disposition in my mind to be fond of any notions of mine, as they are such, nor to be more adventurous, or confident, in determining of things hid, not only in so profound, but in most sacred darkness, than I have all along expressed myself. I ought indeed to be the more cautious of offending in this kind, that being the thing I blame, the positive asserting this or that to be impossible, or not possibly competent to the nature of God, which by his own word, or the manifest reason of things doth not plainly appear to be so: much more which his word doth as plainly as it is possible any thing can be expressed by words, ascribe to him. The only thing I assert is, that a trinity in the Godhead may be possible, for ought we know, in the way that I have proposed: at least it is so, for any thing that I do as yet know. And so confident I am of the truth, and true meaning of his word, revealing a trinity in his eternal Godhead, that I strongly hope, if ever it shall be proved to be impossible upon these terms that I have here set down; by the same, or by equal light, the possibility of it some other way, will appear too, that is, that not only a *trinity* in the *unity* of the Godhead is a possible thing; but that it is also possible that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost may be sufficiently distinguished to answer the frame and design of Christianity: and that will equally serve my purpose. For so however, will the scandal be removed, that may seem to lie upon our holy religion, through the industrious misrepresentation which is made of it, by sceptics, deists, or atheists, as if it were made up of inconsistencies and absurdities, and were fitter to be entertained with laughter than faith: and being effectually vindicated, it will be the more successfully propagated, and more cheerfully practised; which is all that is coveted and sought by

SIR,

Your very respectful,

humble servant, &c.

POSTSCRIPT.

HAVING the copies of some letters by me, which I wrote to Dr. Wallis between two and three years ago, upon this subject; I think, Sir, it is not improper, and perhaps it may be some way useful, to let them accompany this to yourself. And here I shall freely tell you my principal inducement, (taking notice in some of the doctor's printed letters; of others to him, contained in them) to send him *incognito* one also; but with that reason against printing it, which you find towards the end of the first letter.

It was really the apprehension, which had long remained with me, that the *simplicity*, which (if the notion of it were stretched too far) not the Scriptures, but the schools have taught us to ascribe to the being of God, was that alone which hath given us difficulty, in conceiving a trinity in the only one God.

It is not the *unity*, or *oneliness* of the Godhead; but the *simplicity* of it, as the school-men have stated it, that hath created the matter of dispute. Unity, you know, denies more of the same; simplicity denies more in it. Concerning the former that there could be no more Gods than one, we are at a point; the reason of the thing itself, and the holy Scriptures so expressly asserting it, leave it out of dispute.

All the doubt is about the latter. Not whether such a thing belongs to the nature of God; but concerning the just explication of it. As it is a real excellency, not a blemish; and not merely a moral, but a natural excellency, there can be no

doubt of its belonging to the divine nature ; but if you understand it as exclusive of all variety therein, you find not any express mention of such an attribute of God in the Scriptures. They are silent in the matter. It hath no authority, but of the schools. That and the reason that can be brought for it must give it its whole and only support. It is the only thing that must open, and give way, to admit the doctrine of the trinity ; and it is the only thing that needs to do so. For we none of us assert a trinity of Gods ; but a trinity in the Godhead. It is the only thing that can to the adversaries of the trinity with any colourable pretence seem opposite to it. And which therefore I thought the only thing that remained to be sifted and examined, if they will state it in an opposition thereto. And consider, what so mighty and invincible strength of reason it had, whence alone either to shock the authority, or pervert the plain meaning of the holy Scriptures, discompose the whole frame of Christian religion, disturb the peace of the church, perplex very thinking minds, subvert the faith of some, and turn it into ridicule with too many.

I reckoned the Dr. (as I still do, notwithstanding the contempt this author hath of him) a person of a very clear, unmuddled understanding. I found him, by what he expressed in his first letter of the trinity, not apt to be awed by the authority of the schools, nor any bigot to them, as having declined their notion of a person, and fixing upon another, (less answering, as I apprehend, the scheme and design of Christianity) I thought it easy, and reputable enough to him to add, what might be requisite in this matter, without contradicting (directly, or discernibly) any thing he had said. I gave him the opportunity of doing it, as from himself, without seeming to have the least thing to that purpose suggested to him by any other. I had myself, I think, seen and considered the main strength of the schoolmen's reasonings concerning that *simplicity*, which they will have to be divine ; and, for ought I do yet know, have competently occurred to it in this foregoing letter, and partly in what you will now find I wrote to him. But what there is of real infirmity, or impertinency to this case (as it is, and ought to be represented) in their arguings, I reckoned he would both see and evince more clearly than I.

Therefore I greatly desired to have engaged him upon this point ; but I could not prevail. And am therefore willing that what I wrote then with design of the greatest privacy, should now become public. Not that I think it hath so great value in itself ; but that perhaps it may further serve to excite some others more able and more at leisure to search and inquire into this matter ; and either to improve, or disprove what I have es-

sayed. And which of the two it is, it is all one to me. For I have no interest or design, but that of truth, and the service of the Christian cause.

I was so little apprehensive of any such future use to be made of these letters, that I kept no account of the dates, except that one of the two latter (which both only refer to the first) I find, by the copy I have in my hands, to have been sent December, 19th. 1691. I remember it was a long time, and guess it might be six or eight weeks, before I heard any thing of the first, after I had sent it. Probably it might have been sent in October, or the beginning of November before. I at length heard of it very casually, being in a house in London, whither the doctor's eighth letter was newly arrived (then no secret) in order to impression. I then found this my first letter was lightly touched, but mistaken; which occasioned (it being a post-night) my second. That was followed by the third, the next post after, when I had a little more time wherein to express my mind, though I still concealed my name, as it is yet fittest to do, my main business in my letter to you lying with a person, who (blamelessly enough) conceals his.

These two latter of my letters to the Dr. produced some alteration in that paragraph of his eighth letter, which relates to my first. But yet no way answering the design for which I wrote it. You have them now together exactly according to the copies I have by me, excepting one or two circumstantial things fitly enough left out, or somewhat altered. And they had all slept long enough, if this occasion had not brought them to light.

But before I give them to you, let me suggest some things further to you concerning the foregoing letter to yourself. You may apprehend that some will think it strange (if not an inconsistency) that I should suppose it possible an absolute omnimodous simplicity may not belong to the Divine Being, when yet I absolutely deny all composition in it.

And I apprehend too some may think so, at least awhile; but such as have considered well, will not think so, and such as shall, I presume will not long. For,

I. If I had denied the simplicity of the divine nature, had the inference been just, that therefore I must grant a composition? How many instances might be given of one opposite not agreeing to this or that thing, when also the other doth as little agree! And most of all doth the transcendent excellency of the divine nature, exempt it from the limiting by-partitions to which creatures are subject.

Take reason in the proper sense for arriving gradually by argumentation from the knowledge of more evident, to the know-

ledge of obscure things, and so we cannot say the divine nature is rational. But is it therefore to be called irrational? Faith and hope agree not to it. Are we therefore to think infidelity or despair do not disagree?

It is indeed more generally apprehended, we can scarce have the notion of any thing that strictly, or otherwise than by some very defective analogy, agrees to him, and to us. Some pagans, and some christians from them (not in derogation, but) in great reverence to the high excellency of the Deity, not excepting the most common notion of all other, even that of being itself; make his being and substance to be superessential, and supersubstantial. It is out of doubt that whatsoever perfection is in us, is not the same thing in him formally, but in an unconceivable transcendent eminency only. Do therefore their contraries agree to him?

2. I am far from denying the simplicity of the blessed nature of God, which I ascribe to him in the highest perfection which it is capable of signifying. I most peremptorily affirm not only all the simplicity which he expressly affirms of himself; but all that can by just consequence be inferred from any affirmation of his; or that can by plain reason be evinced any other way. Whatsoever is any real perfection. &c. Sect. 11.

It is true while I affirm such a simplicity as excludes all composition, in the sense already given, I affirm not such as excludes all variety: not such as excludes a trinity, which he so plainly affirms, and with such distinction, as his affirmations concerning it imply, and make requisite.

I further judge that though the Scriptures do not expressly ascribe simplicity to the being of God, as a natural excellency, they say that which implies it, as such, to belong to him; as when they bring him in saying of himself, "I am what I am." This must imply his nature to exclude every thing that is alien from itself. I take it, as it signifies (besides a moral) a mere natural excellency, to import a most perfect purity of essence. And I understand that to be *purum, pure*, which is *plenum sui, full of itself*, and *quod nihil habet alieni, which contains nothing foreign from itself*. I do therefore take the natural simplicity of the Divine Being to exclude the ingrediency of any thing that can infer in it, conflict, decay, chance, disturbance or infelicity in the least degree; and to include whatsoever infers the contraries of all these; serenity, tranquility, harmony, stability, delight and joy, in highest perfection; as necessity of existence also doth; and that for all this, it by no means needs to exclude a trinity, but to include it rather.

But I judge human (and even all created) minds very incompetent judges of the divine simplicity, We know not what the

divine nature may include consistently with its own perfection, nor what it must, as necessary thereto. Our eye is no judge of corporeal simplicity. In darkness it discerns nothing but simplicity, without distinction of things : in more dusky light the whole horizon appears most simple, and every where like itself : in brighter light, we perceive great varieties, and much greater if a microscope assist our eye. But of all the aerial people that replenish the region (except rare appearances to very few) we see none. Here want not objects, but a finer eye.

It is much at this rate with our minds in beholding the spiritual sphere of beings, most of all the uncreated, which is remotest, and furthest above, out of our sight. We behold simplicity ! and what do we make of that ? vast undistinguished vacuity ! sad, immense solitude ! only this at first view. If we draw nearer, and fix our eye, we think we apprehend somewhat, but dubiously hallucinate, as the half-cured blind man did, when he thought he saw men like trees.

But if a voice which we acknowledge divine, speak to us out of the profound abyss, and tell us of grateful varieties and distinctions in it ; Good God ! shall we not believe it ? Or shall we say we clearly see *that* is not, which *only we* do not see ? This seems like somewhat worse than blindness !

Now follow the Letters.

LETTERS TO DR. WALLIS

SENT IN 1691.

LETTER I.

SIR,

I Could much please myself in revolving in my own mind the very respectful thoughts and veneration I have long had for you, and in conversing with the grateful and entertaining idea which I have not abitrarily, but by your irresistible imposition received; and retained of you many years, on the account of your former most useful and acceptable performances, and which is both renewed and heightened greatly by your late, clear, prudent, and piously modest discourses (both letters and sermons) of that awful mystery, the trinity in the Godhead. But as I can neither satisfy myself of the fitness of making an encomium of you the matter of a letter to yourself; so nor can I hope to please you by doing a thing in itself so inept, and so insignificant to you. I shall better do both, if I shall offer any thing to you concerning this mentioned subject, your further consideration whereof may prove a further benefit to the world.

In what you have already said concerning it, you have used that great caution, and so well guarded yourself, as not so far as I can apprehend, to give an adversary in this single point, the least advantage. That which I would in the general, humbly offer, is, whether you have said so much as with safety.

might be said, and as the case may require, for the gaining of a just advantage to the common Christian cause.

We design, in fight, not only to keep ourselves safe, but to overcome, and not *in prælio, in battle* only, but *in bello, in war*. In wars indeed of this sort, both our own safety and victory, are less to be valued than truth. Which, being of a piece, can be injured in no part, without some damage to the whole frame of congenerous truth. And as it is very possible, while an enemy is withstood attacking some one fort, a greater loss may not be provided against elsewhere; it may so fall out in affairs of this kind too, that the care of defending some one truth may be accompanied with a present not attending to the jeopardy of divers others. The nearer we approach an adversary (within just limits) in these rational decertations, the less he can have to say against us. But being well resolved ourselves about the main point of disagreement, we then take care not to come so near, as to fall in with him, pass into his tents, and give away our main cause.

I am, worthiest Sir, far from assuming so much to myself, or detracting so much from you, as to give a judgment that this really is done in your discourses about the trinity. I only submit it to your own most penetrating judgment, what may be further requisite and possible in this matter, to take away any appearances hereof, and prevent ill consequences that may too easily ensue. I have, for my own part, long imposed it upon myself to abstain from any positive conceptions concerning the Godhead, beyond what I find expressly contained in the divine revelation, or what the reason of things, either antecedently thereto, or consequentially thereupon, doth most evidently persuade and require; and do greatly approve the same caution, which I cannot but observe with you: but desire it may be weighed whether such measures may not, and must not lead us further.

As for the word *person*, you prudently profess not to be fond of it, the thing being agreed, though you also truly judge it a good word, and sufficiently warranted. For the *notion* signified by it, you all along seem to decline that of the schools, or the metaphysical one, which, you know, makes it to be a rational, or intelligent *suppositum*; and to take up with (what I think I may, wanting a fitter that is a more comprehensive word, call) the *civil notion* of it; which will allow the same man to be capable of sustaining three or more persons, supposing his circumstances or qualifications to be such or such, as to that purpose you speak both in your letters and sermons.

Now whereas you have also told us, letter the first, that by *personality* you mean that distinction (whatever it be) by which

the three persons are distinguished each from other ; that which with great submission, and most profound respect to you, I propose to your further consideration, will be capable of being resolved into these two inquiries—Whether only such a distinction of the divine persons, as this amounts to, will be sufficient to found the several attributions which the holy Scriptures give distinctly and severally to them, and to preserve the scheme of Christian religion entire, which is wont to be deduced from these sacred writings, and—Whether some further distinction may not be admitted as possible, consistently with the solved unity of the Godhead.

1. As to the former of these.

(1.) Whereas you think the word person to be a good word, and sufficiently warranted by Scripture, as (Heb. 1. 3.) where the Son is called the express image of his Father's Person ; alleging that so we render the word *hypostasis* which is there used, and do mean by it what you think to be there meant ; I desire you would please to consider whether the word *hypostasis*, according to the common use of it will admit to be so taken, as you explain yourself to mean by the word person, for though the latin word *persona*, as you say, according to the true and ancient sense, may well enough admit to be so taken, as that the *same man* might sustain *three persons*, I offer it to your re-consideration, whether ever you have observed the word *hypostasis*, in any sort of authors, when it signifies any person at all (for I know that it frequently signifies somewhat else than a person) to be taken in that sense. And whether one *hypostasis* so taken as it uses to be when it signifies a person, may not be capable of sustaining three of those persons which you here describe. And whether, according to this sense you mean not God to be only *one* such *hypostasis*.

(2.) Be pleased further hereupon to consider how well it agrees with this supposition of God's being but one *hypostasis* or intelligent *suppositum*, so frequently to speak, as the Holy Scriptures do of the Father, Son or Word, the Spirit or Holy Ghost, as three distinct I's or He's. The Lord possessed me (as the divine word or wisdom is brought in speaking) in the beginning of his way—I was set up from everlasting, (Prov. 8. 22, 23.) when he prepared the heavens I was there, (ver. 27.)—Then was I by him, (ver. 30, &c.) The Word—was with God, (John 1. 1.) He was in the world, (ver. 10.) we beheld his glory, (ver. 14.) and of the Spirit, He dwelleth with you, (John 14. 17.) The Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, (ver. 26) And whom I will send you from the Father, he shall testify of me, (chap. 15. 26.) And when he is come, he will reprove the

world——(chap. 16. 8.) And the observation seems to me as weighty, as it is usual, that, in some of the mentioned chapters, the somewhat hard *synthesis* of constructing *εκείνος* with *πνευμα* even where *παροκλήσιος* is not the nearer *suppositum*, but, in one place, a very remote one, (and one would think too remote to be referred to, ver. 13, 14. is rather chosen to be used than that the Spirit should not be spoken of as a distinct *he*, or rather than he should be called *it*, which could not so fitly notify a person. If the same man were a king, a general, and a father, I doubt whether that would give sufficient ground to his being called *he*, and *he*, and *he*.

(2) But the distinct predicates spoken of the three sacred persons in the Godhead seem much more to challenge a greater distinction of the persons than your notion of a *person* doth seem to admit: that of *sending* and being *sent*, spoken so often of the *first* in reference to the *second* and of the *first* and *second* in reference to the *third*, as not to need the quoting of places. If the same man were a king, a general, and a judge, methinks it would not well square with the usual forms of speaking among men (and God speaks to men as men) to say, that, as the first, he sends the two latter, that is himself.

And one would think our being required to be baptized in the distinct names of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost should signify some greater distinction.

As also that three are said to bear witness in heaven. I doubt that in a cause wherein our law requires two or more witnesses, the same man that should be a father, a brother, and a son, would scarce thereupon be admitted for three witnesses.

And how the *incarnation* of the Son can be understood according to your notion of person, without the Father's and Holy Ghost's incarnation also, I confess I cannot apprehend. Your notion of a *person* contradistinct to the scholastic notion, as was said before, seems to leave the Godhead to be but *one hypostasis*, or *person* in the latter sense. How then are we to conceive of the hypostatical union? The assumed nature will be as much hypostatically united with the Father, or the Spirit, as with the Son.

(3.) And doth not this civil, or merely respective notion of a person, the other being left, fall in with the Antitrinitarian? Will it not make us Unitarians only, as they affect to call themselves? Would any of them (as you are pleased to take notice, letter 6. p. 1, 2.) say, none but a mad-man would deny there may be three persons in one God, have been so mad (not yet professing themselves converts) as to say so, if they had not supposed their cause not hurt by this notion of a person? For, (as you well say, letter 1.) we need not be fond of words, so the

thing be agreed, so have they equal reason to say, we need not be afraid of words, if in the sense you agree with us. And with one sort of them I only desire you to consider how great an appearance the asserting only of three persons, in the one sense, quitting the other, will carry off an agreement.

And have they not all the advantage left them which they seek in arguing against the satisfaction made by our Saviour from the necessity of an *alterity*, that in the business of making satisfaction there must be *alter atque alter, one who satisfies, and another who is satisfied*. I do very well know, what instances are brought of human rulers making satisfaction for delinquents, but there is no parity in the cases, they being themselves debtors to the governed community, as God is not, who hath with most undoubted righteousness made all things for himself.

(4.) And consider whether by your notion of a person you forsake not the generality of them, who have gone, as to this point, under the repute of orthodox? who no doubt have understood by three persons, three intelligent *hypostases*; though they have differed in thinking, some of them that only a *τροπος υπαρξεως* *a mode of subsistence* was the *genitum* or *spiratum* as to the two latter: a notion that is either too fine, or too little solid, for some minds to grasp, or take any hold of: others that the divine nature might itself be some way said to be communicated to them. But I pass to the

2. Inquiry: Whether some further distinction may not be admitted as possible? The only thing that straitens us here, is the most unquestionable *unity* or *unicity* (as we may call it) of the Godhead. Which, if it cannot be otherwise defended, I must yet for my part, notwithstanding these hardships (and I know no man with whom I could do it with more inclination) fall in with you. But I must crave it of you so far to fall in with you know not who, as to apply your clearer mind, as, I do my more cloudy one, to consider whether it can or no. You will here say, Further than what? and what would I have further?

To the former of these, I only say, further than the asserting, in very deed, but one *hypostasis*, in the Godhead, distinguished no otherwise into three, than by certain relative capacities, like those which may among men be sustained by one and the same man; and which distinction, as you after add, is analogous to what, in created beings, is called *distinctio modalis*: *a modal distinction*.

To the latter, I desire you to observe what I generally propose, not that we may positively assert any further determinate distinction as certain and known; but only whether we

may not admit some further distinction to be possible, in consistency with the unity of the Godhead. I do equally detest and dread to speak with rash and peremptory confidence about things both so mysterious and so sacred. But may we not modestly say, that if to that economy which God hath represented himself in his word, to bear, and keep afoot, towards his creatures, any further distinction than hath been assigned is *necessary*, it is also *possible*, and may be, for ought we know; if indeed we know nothing to the contrary. What is *impossible* we are sure cannot be *necessary*. But God himself best, and only knows his own nature, and what his own meaning is in the representation he hath made to us. If we sincerely aim to understand his meaning, that we may bear ourselves towards him accordingly, he will with merciful indulgence consider our short, or mis-apprehensions. But we need not say there is not this or that distinction, if really we do not know there is not. While we know so little of natures inferior to our own, and even of our own nature, and how things are distinguished that belong to ourselves, we have little reason to be shy of confessing ignorance about the nature of God.

Therefore I most entirely agree to the two conclusions of the ingenious W. J. wherewith he concludes his letter. But in the mean time (and pursuantly enough thereto) cannot but doubt the concludingness of his very acute reasonings against, at least, some of the expressions of that learned person (Dr. Sherlock.) which he animadverts upon, as, I perceive you also do (p. 16.) of your seventh letter. And even W. J. himself; for with a pious modesty he tells us—concerning infinite natures he presumes not to determine. Letter, (p. 8.)

What he objects against that authors having said the divine persons are three beings really distinct (wherein I instance, not intending to run through that elaborate letter) that then there must be three distinct essences—seems to me a *παραεργον, an unnecessary labour*. I doubt not the author will easily admit it. But what will be the consequence? That therefore there are three Deities? That cannot be his meaning, nor be consequent from it, if he only mean that the Deity comprehends in it three such essences. If indeed he think those three beings are as distinct as Peter, James, and John; what is said by W. J. against him, I think irrefragable, that then they are no otherwise one, than Peter, James, and John; and by him against himself; for Peter, James, and John are not mutually self-conscious, as they are asserted to be, which mutual self-consciousness, since it is supposed to make the three divine persons one, cannot be supposed to leave them so distinct, as they are with whom it is not found.

As to what is observed of the defective expression of this unitive principle by the word consciousness, that bare consciousness, without consent, is no more than bare omniscieny. Sure it is not so much. For consciousness doth not signify omniscieny. We are conscious to ourselves, yet are not omniscient. But I reckon, (as I find he also doth) that even consent added to consciousness, would yet leave the expression defective, and still want the unifying power which is sought after. For it would infer no more than a sort of moral union, which in the kind of it, may be found among men, between whom there is so little of natural union (speaking of the numerical nature) that they are actually separate.

But now may we not suppose (as that which is possible, and actually is, for ought we know) what may be fundamental to both consciousness and consent, a natural union even of the numerical natures? Such a union would not infer a unity, or identity of these natures, essences, substances, or beings themselves. For as W. J. hath well argued, (Letter, p. 5, 6.) "Substances upon union are not confounded or identified, or brought to unity of substance, but continuing numerically distinct substances acquire some mutual community or communication of operations, &c." And deferring the consideration awhile what this would signify towards the unity, notwithstanding, of the Godhead, we shall take notice how accommodately to our present purpose W. J. speaks in what follows, where instancing in the chief unions that are known to us, he says, "Our soul and body are two substances really distinct, and in close union with one another. But notwithstanding this, they continue distinct substances under that union. In like manner the human soul of Christ is in union with the *Logos*, or second person of the trinity, which we call an hypostatical union. But neither doth this union make a unity of substance. For the two substances of the divine and human natures continue distinct under that union." It is true, he adds, "which must not be allowed in the unity of the Godhead, where there can be no plurality or multiplicity of substances." Nor do I say that it must, I only say, Do we know, or are we sure there is no sort of plurality?

But if we are sure that there are temporal unions (that is begun in time) as in ourselves for instance, of two substances that make but one man, and in our Saviour a human nature and divine that make but one Immanuel. How do we know but that there may be three in the Godhead that make but one God? And the rather, because this being supposed, it must also be supposed that they are necessarily and eternally united, and with a conjunct natural impossibility of ever being, or having

been otherwise, whereof the absolute immutability of God must upon that supposition most certainly assure us. And such a supposed union will be most remote from making the Deity an aggregate. And for any thing of composition, I reckon we are most strictly bound to believe every thing of the most perfect simplicity of the Divine Being which his word informs us of, and to assent to every thing that is with plain evidence demonstrable of it. But not every thing which the schools would impose upon us, without such testimony or evidence. For as none can "know the things of a man, but the spirit of a man which is in him, so nor can any know the things of God, but the Spirit of God." Nor can I think the argument concluding from the imperfection of a being, in which distinct things concur that were separate, or are *de novo* united, to the imperfection of a being, in which things some way distinct are necessarily and eternally self-united. Nor can therefore agree with W. J. that we are to look (universally) upon real distinction as a mark of separability; or that clear and distinct conception is to us the rule of partibility. For though I will not affirm that to be the state of all created spirits; yet I cannot deny it to be possible that God might have created such a being, as should have in it distinct (assignable) parts, all of them essential to it, and not separable from it without the cessation of the whole. But now, as the accession of the human nature to the divine in the hypostatical union infers no imperfection to the divine, so much less would what things we may suppose naturally, necessarily, and eternally united in the Godhead infer any imperfection therein.

I easily admit what is said by W. J. letter, page 8. That we have no better definition of God, than that he is—a Spirit infinitely perfect—But then, being so far taught by himself my conception of him, I must include in it, this trinal distinction, or a triple somewhat which he affirms of himself, and without which, or any one whereof, he were not infinitely perfect, and consequently not God, and that all together do make one God. As you most aptly say of your resemblance of him, a cube, there are in it three dimensions truly distinct from each other, yet all these are but one cube, and if any one of the three were wanting, it were not a cube.

Set this down then for the notion of God, that he is a Spirit infinitely perfect, comprehending in that omnimodous perfection a trinal distinction, or three persons truly distinct, each whereof is God. What will be the consequence? that therefore there are three Gods? Not at all, but that each of these partaking divine nature give us an inadequate, and all together a most perfectly adequate and entire notion of God. Nor

would the language of this hypothesis being pressed to speak out (as he says in his letter) be this—these are not fit to be called three Gods; but not possible (with any truth) to be so called.

And whereas he after tells us, these three being united by similitude of nature, mutual consciousness, consent, co-operation under the greatest union possible; and in that state of union do constitute the *το θεϊον*, the entire all-comprehensive Godhead, and adds, this looks somewhat like a conceivable thing. To this I note two things:

First, That he makes it not look like so conceivable a thing, as it really may do. For he leaves out the most important thing that was as supposable as any of the rest, and prior to a mere similitude, namely, a natural union of these (supposed) distinct essences, without which they are not under the greatest union possible; and which, being supposed necessary, and eternal, cannot admit these should be more than one God.

Secondly, I note that what he opposes to it (so defectively represented) is as defective, that the Christian trinity doth not use to be represented thus, &c. What hurt is there in it, if it can be more intelligibly represented than hath been used? But his gentle treatment of this hypothesis, which he thought, as he represents it, not altogether unintelligible, and which with some help may be more intelligible, became one inquiring what might most safely, and with least torture to our own minds, be said, or thought in so awful a mystery. It however seems not proper to call this an hypostatical union—much less to say it amounts to no more. It amounts not to so much. For an hypostatical or personal union would make the terms united (the *unita*, the things or somewhats under this union) become by it one hypostasis or person; whereas this union must leave them distinct persons or hypostases, but makes them one God. In the use of the phrase *hypostatical* or personal union the denomination is not taken from the subject of the union, as if the design were to signify that to be divers *hypostases*, or persons, but from the effect or result of the mentioned union, to signify that which results to be one person or *hypostasis*. As the matter is plain in the instance wherein it is of most noted use, the case of the two natures united in the one person of the Son of God; where the things united are not supposed to be two persons, but two natures so conjoined, as yet to make but one person, which therefore is the negative result or effect of the union, namely, that the person is not multiplied by the accession of another nature, but remains still only one. But this were a union quite of another kind, namely, of the three *hypostases*; still remaining distinct, and concurring in

one Godhead. And may not this be supposed without prejudice to its perfection.

For the schools themselves suppose themselves not to admit a composition prejudicial to the perfection of the Godhead, when they admit three modes of subsistence, which are distinct from one another, and from the Godhead, which they must admit. For if each of them were the very Godhead, each of them (as is urged against us by you know who) must have three persons belonging to it, as the Godhead hath. And yourself acknowledge three somewhats in the Godhead distinct, or else they could not be three. I will not here urge that if they be three somewhats, they must be three things, not three nothings; for however uneasy it is to assign a medium between something and nothing, I shall wave that metaphysical contest. But yet collect, that *simplicity* in the very strictest sense that can be conceived, is not, in your account, to be ascribed to God, either according to his own word, or the reason of things.

It may here be urged, How can we conceive this natural union (as I have adventured to phrase it) of the three persons, supposing them distinct things, substances, or spirits? Is such a union conceivable, as shall make them be but one God, and not be such, as shall make them cease to be three distinct things, substances, or spirits? We find indeed the mentioned unions of soul and body in ourselves, and of the two natures in Christ consistent enough with manifest distinction; but then the things united are in themselves of most different natures. But if things of so congenerous a nature be united, will not their distinction be lost in their union?

I answer, First. That a spirit and a spirit are numerically as distinct, as a body and a spirit. And, Secondly, that we may certainly conceive it as possible to God to have united two or three created spirits, and by as strict union as is between our souls and bodies, without confounding them; and I reckon the union between our souls and bodies much more wonderful than that would have been. Why then is an unmade, uncreated union of three spirits less conceivable as that which is to be presupposed to their mutual consciousness?

I shall not move, or meddle with, any controversy about the infinity of these three supposed substances or spirits, it being acknowledged on all hands that contemplations of that kind cannot but be above our measure. And well knowing how much easier it is to puzzle oneself upon that question, *An possit dari infinitum infinito infinitius, whether one infinite can be added to another so as to increase its infinity*, than to speak satisfyingly, and unexceptionably about it to another.

And though I will not use the expressions, as signifying my

formed judgment, that there are three things, substances, or spirits in the Godhead (as you, that there are three somewhats) yet, as I have many years thought, I do still think that what the learned W. J. doth but more lightly touch of the Son, and the Holy Ghost being produced (which term I use, but reciting it, as he doth) not by a voluntary external, but by an internal, necessary, and emanative act, hath great weight in it.

In short my sense hath long lain thus, and I submit it to your searching and candid judgment, namely, That though we need not have determinate thoughts, how far the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are distinguished; yet we must conceive them in the general to be so far distinguished, as is really necessary to the founding the distinct attributions which the Scriptures do distinctly give them. And that whatever distinction is truly necessary to that purpose, will yet not hinder the participation of the two *latter* with the *first* in the Godhead, which can be but one, because that though we are led by plain Scripture, and the very import of that word, to conceive of the Father as the Fountain, yet the Son being from him, and the Holy Ghost from them both, not contingently, or dependently on will and pleasure; but by eternal, natural, necessary promanation, these two latter are infinitely distinguished from the whole creation: inasmuch as all creatures are contingent beings, or dependent upon will and pleasure, as the character is given us of created things, (Rev. 4. 11.) Thou hast made all things; and for thy pleasure they are and were created. But that whatever is what it is necessarily, is God. For I have no doubt but the dreams of some, more anciently, and of late, concerning necessary matter, and the sophisms of Spinoza and some others, tending to prove the necessity and identity of all substance are (with what they aim to evince) demonstrably false. The sum of all will be this,

(1.) That we can be more certain of nothing than that there is but one God.

(2.) We are most sure the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are sufficiently distinguished to give a just ground to the distinct attributions, which are in the Scripture severally given to them.

(3.) We are not sure what that sufficient distinction is: (wherein I find you saying with me over and over) but whereas you rightly make the word *person* applicable to God, but in a sense analogous to that which obtains of it with men; why may it not be said it may be fitly applicable, for ought we know, in a sense analogous to that notion of it among men, which makes a *person* signify an intelligent *hypostasis*, and so three distinct persons, three distinct intelligent *hypostases*.

(4.) But if that sufficient distinction can be no less, than that there be in the Godhead, three distinct intelligent *hypostases*, each having its own distinct singular intelligent nature, with its proper personality belonging to it, we know nothing to the contrary, but that the necessary eternal nature of the Godhead may admit thereof. If any can from plain Scripture testimony, or cogent reason evince the contrary, let the evidence be produced. In the mean time we need not impose upon ourselves any formal denial of it.

(5.) If the contrary can be evidenced, and that hereupon it be designed to conclude that there can be but one intelligent hypostasis in the Godhead, and therefore that the Son, and the Holy Ghost are but creatures, the last refuge must be to deny the former consequence, and to allege that though the same finite singular nature cannot well be understood to remain entirely to one, and be communicated entirely to another, and another, the case will not be the same speaking of an infinite nature.

SIR,

If what is here said shall occasion to you any new thoughts that you shall judge may be of common use, I conceive there will be no need of publishing my letter, but only that you be pleased to communicate your own sentiments, as from yourself, which will have so much the more of authority and usefulness with them. The most considerable thing that I have hinted, is the necessary promanation of the Son, and Holy Ghost, that must distinguish them from contingent beings, and so from creatures; which if you think improveable to any good purpose, as it hath been with me a thought many years old, so I suppose it not new to you, and being now resumed by you, upon this occasion, you will easily cultivate it to better advantage than any words of mine can give it.

But if you think it adviseable that any part of my letter be published, if you please to signify your mind to that purpose in one line — marked — it will come sealed to my view, and will give opportunity of offering my thoughts to you, what parts I would have suppressed, which will be such only, as shall leave the rest the fuller testimony of my being,

SIR,

Your most sincere honourer and most
respectful humble servant,

Anonymous.

Poiret's method of proving a trinity in the Godhead, though it call itself mathematical or geometrical, is with me much less convictive, than the plain scriptural way.

LETTER. II.

SIR,

YOUR eighth letter happening to come to my view before it was printed off, I have the opportunity of taking notice to you that it quite misrepresents the intent of the letter to you subscribed Anonymous, which it makes to be the defending or excusing some expressions of Dr. Sherlock's; which indeed was the least considerable thing, if it were any thing at all in the design of that letter, and not altogether accidental to it. The true design of it was, that there might be a clearer foundation asserted (as possible at least) to the doctrine of the incarnation and satisfaction of the Son of God. Nor can the *forte quod sic* here be solved by the *forte quod non*, the exigency of the case being such, as that *if more be possible* it will be *highly requisite*; and that it cannot well be avoided to assert more, unless it can be clearly evinced that more is impossible. Nor yet is it necessary to determine how much more is necessary. But not only the commonly received frame of Christian doctrine, doth seem to require somewhat beyond what the mere civil or respective notion of the word *person* imports; but also the plain letter of Scripture, which says (Heb. 1.3.) that the Son of God is the express image of the Father's *hypostasis*, which seems to signify there are two *hypostases*, and other Scriptures seem to say enough, whence we may with parity of reason collect a third. Now that letter intimates, I think, sufficient matter of doubt, whether *hypostasis* doth not signify much more than *person*, in your sense.

The principal thing, that letter humbly offered to consideration that is,—whether supposing a greater distinction than you have assigned be necessary, it may not be defended, by the just supposal that the promanation of the second or third persons (or *hypostases* rather) howsoever diverse they are, is by natural eternal necessity, not contingent, or depending upon will and pleasure, as all created being is and doth—is altogether waved. That letter was written with design of giving you the occasion of considering what might be further requisite and possible to be asserted for the serving of the truth, and with that sincerity and plenitude of respect to you that it might be wholly in your own power to do it in such a way, as wherein not at all to disserve yourself. Which temper of mind is still the same with

Rev. Sir,

Your most unfeigned honourer,
and humble servant,

Anonymous.

December, 16, 91.

LETTER III.

Worthy Sir,

I Am loath troublesomely to importune you. But the very little time I had for the view of your eighth letter, before I wrote mine by the last post not allowing me fully to write my sense as to that part which concerned my former letter, I take leave now to add, that my design in it (as well as the professed design of the letter itself) was to offer you the occasion of employing that clear understanding, wherewith God hath blest you, above most, in considering whether a greater latitude cannot be allowed us in conceiving the *distinction* of the three in the Godhead consistently with the *unity* thereof, than your notion of a *person* will extend to. And if it can, whether it ought not to be represented (at least as possible) to give a less exceptionable ground to the doctrines of the incarnation and satisfaction of the second person, in order whereto it seems to me highly requisite. This was that I really intended, and not the vindicating the sentiments of that author, which you might observe that letter animadverts upon. The Scripture seems to allow a greater latitude, by the ground it gives us to apprehend *three hypostases*; which so much differ from the notion you give of *persons*, that one *hypostasis* may sustain three such persons as you describe. The only thing that seems to straiten us in this matter, is the usual doctrine of the schools about the divine *simplicity*. I confess I greatly coveted to have had your thoughts engaged in sifting and examining that doctrine;

so far as to consider whether there be really any thing in it, cogent and demonstrable that will be repugnant to what is overturned in that letter. And I the rather desired more room might be gained in this matter, apprehending the unitarians (as they more lately affect to call themselves) might upon the whole, think you more theirs, than ours ; and while they agree with you concerning the possibility of such a trinity as you assert, may judge their advantage against the other mentioned doctrines, no less than it was.

My desiring that letter of mine might not be printed, was most agreeable to what I intended in writing it ; that was, only to suggest to you somewhat (very loosely) that I reckoned you more capable than any man I knew, to cultivate, and improve, to the great service of the common Christian cause. And that you might seem to say, what you might, upon your own search, find safe and fit to be said, as merely from yourself, without taking notice what occasion was given you by any such letter at all. Had I designed it for public view, it would have been written with more care, and with more (expressed) respect to you. But if upon the whole, you judge there is nothing in it considerable to the purposes it mentions, my further request is, you will please rather to suppress that part of your letter which concerns it (for which I suppose there is yet opportunity) and take no notice any such letter came to your hands. I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your most respectful,

Humble servant,

Anonymous.

December, 19. 91.

Summary Propositions.

COLLECTED OUT OF

THE FOREGOING DISCOURSES,

MORE BRIEFLY OFFERING TO VIEW THE SUBSTANCE
OF WHAT IS CONTAINED IN THEM.

1. Of the *unity* of the Godhead there can be no doubt, it being in reason demonstrable and most expressly, often, asserted in Scripture.

2. That there is a *trinity* in the Godhead, of Father, Son, or Word, and Holy Ghost is the plain, obvious sense of so many scriptures, that it apparently tends to frustrate the design of the whole Scripture-revelation, and to make it useless, not to admit this *trinity*, or otherwise to understand such scriptures.

3. That therefore the devising any other sense of such scriptures ought by no means to be attempted, unless this *trinity* in the Godhead can be evidently demonstrated to be impossible.

4. That the impossibility of it can never be demonstrated from the mere *unity* of the Godhead, which may be such, as to admit these distinctions in it, for ought we know.

5. Nothing is more appropriate to the Godhead than to be a necessarily existent, intelligent Being; since all creatures whether intelligent, or unintelligent, are contingent, depending upon the will of the necessary, intelligent, Being.

6. If therefore the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost do coexist in the Godhead necessarily, they cannot but be God.

7. And if the first be conceived as the *fountain*, the second as by natural, necessary (not voluntary) promanation from the first, the third by natural, necessary (not voluntary) spiration, so

that neither of these latter, could have been otherwise; This aptly agrees with the notions of Father, Son, and Spirit distinctly put upon them, and infinitely distinguishes the two latter from all creatures that depend upon will and pleasure.

8. Whatever distinction there be of these three among themselves, yet the first being the Original, the second being by that promanation necessarily and eternally united with the first, the third by such spiration united necessarily and eternally with both the other, inasmuch as eternity, and necessity of existence admit no change, this union must be inviolable, and everlasting, and thereupon the Godhead which they constitute, can be but one.

9. We have among the creatures, and even in ourselves, instances of very different natures, continuing distinct, but so united, as to be one thing; and it were more easily supposable of congenerous natures.

10. If such union with distinction be impossible in the Godhead, it must not be from any repugnancy in the thing itself, since very intimate union, with continuing distinction, is in itself no impossible thing; but from somewhat peculiar to the Divine Being.

11. That peculiarity, since it cannot be unity (which because it may admit distinctions in one and the same thing, we are not sure it cannot be so in the Godhead) must be that simplicity commonly wont to be ascribed to the divine nature.

12. Such simplicity as shall exclude that distinction, which shall appear necessary in the present case, is not by express Scripture any where ascribed to God; and therefore must be rationally demonstrated of him, if it shall be judged to belong at all to him.

13. Absolute simplicity is not a perfection, nor is by any ascribed to God. Not by the socinians themselves, who ascribe to him the several intellectual and moral excellencies, that are attributed to him in the Scripture, of which they give very different definitions, as may be seen in their own Volkelius at large, which should signify them not to be counted, in all respects, the same thing.

14. That is not a just consequence, which is the most plausible one that seems capable of being alleged for such absolute simplicity, that otherwise there would be a composition admitted in the divine nature, which would import an imperfection inconsistent with Deity. For the several excellencies that concur in it, howsoever distinguished, being never put together, nor having ever existed apart, but in eternal, necessary union, though they may make some sort of variety, import no proper composition, and carry with them more apparent perfection,

than absolute omnimodous simplicity can be conceived to do.

15. Such a supposed possible variety even of individual natures in the Deity, some way differing from each other, infers not an unbounded liberty of conceiving what pluralities therein we please or can imagine. The divine revelation, which could only justify, doth also limit us, herein, mentioning three distinct I's or He's, and no more.

16. The several attributes which are common to these three, do to our apprehension, and way of conceiving things, require less distinction ; no more, for ought we know, than may arise from their being variously modified, according to the distinction of objects, or other extrinsical things, to which they may be referred.

We that so little know how our own souls, and the powers and principles that belong to them do differ from one another, and from them, must be supposed more ignorant, and should be less curious, in this.

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LETTER TO A FRIEND

CONCERNING

A POSTSCRIPT

To the Defence of Dr. SHERLOCK's Notion

OF THE

Trinity in Unity,

RELATING TO THE CALM AND SOBER INQUIRY UPON THE
SAME SUBJECT.

A

LETTER TO A FRIEND &c.

SIR,

I find a postscript to the newly published defence of Dr Sherlock's notion of the *Trinity in Unity*, takes notice of the inquiry concerning the possibility of a trinity in the Godhead. He that writes it seems somewhat out of humour, or not in such as it is decent to hope is more usual with him: and I cannot guess for what, unless that one, whom he imagines a dissenter, hath adventured to cast his eyes, that way that he did his. But for the imagination he may have as little ground, as I to think the dean's defender is the dean: and as little as he had to say the inquirer took great care that no man should suspect that he favours the dean in his notions. Here he is quite out in his guess; for the inquirer took no such care at all, but nakedly to represent his own sentiments as they were, whether they agreed with the dean's, or wherein they differed: and really cares not who knows that he hath not so little kindness either for the truth or for him, as to abandon or decline what he thinks to be true for his sake, or (as he expressed himself p. 311 of that discourse) because he said it.

But the defender represents the dean as much of another temper, and that he will thank him for not favouring him in his notions. But yet he says, that though the inquirer doth not in every particular say what the dean says, yet he says what will justify him against the charge of tritheism. And is there any hurt to him in that? What a strange man doth he make the

dean ! as if he could not be pleased unless he alone did engross truth ! will he thank a man for not favouring his notions, and yet would blame him for not saying in every particular what he says, though he say what will justify him against the heaviest charge framed against him ! may one neither be allowed to agree with him, nor disagree ?

But Sir, the defender's discourse hath no design (nor I believe he himself) to disprove the possibility of a trinity in the ever blessed Godhead. Therefore the inquirer is safe from him as to the principal design he is concerned for, it is all one to him if it still appear possible in what way it be so represented, that is intelligible, consistent with itself, and with other truth; so that it is hardly worth the while to him, further to inquire whether the dean's hypothesis or his be better, if either be found unexceptionably, safe and good. But because the defender hath, to give preference to the one, misrepresented both with some appearing disadvantage to the cause itself, what he says ought to be considered. And the whole matter will be reduced to this twofold inquiry :—whether the inquirer hath said more than the dean, or more than is defensible, of the distinction of the sacred three in the Godhead : and—whether the dean hath said so much as the inquirer, or so much as was requisite of their union.

1. For the former, the defender, p. 103. mentions the dean's notion of three infinite minds or spirits : and makes the inquirer to have been proving three spirits, three distinct essences, three individual natures, in the Godhead ; and then adds "for my part, I cannot tell where the difference is, unless it be in the term infinite." It is indeed strange the inquirer should have said more than the dean, if there were no difference, unless in the term infinite, wherein he must have said infinitely less.

But he at length, apprehends another difference, though he after labours to make it none, namely, that the inquirer disputes, but asserts nothing, and he fancies he doth so to shelter himself from the animadverter, of whom he says he seems to be terribly afraid. Here he puts the dean into a fit of kindness and good nature, allowing the inquirer to partake with him in his fears, though not in his notions, as more sacred. But he herein understands not the inquirer, who if he had been so terribly afraid, could very easily have said nothing : and who was really afraid of a greater animadverter, thinking it too great boldness, under his eye, to speak confidently of his own peculiarities, and that lie folded up in so venerable darkness. He thought it enough, in opposition to the daring person (whosoever he was) with whom he was concerned that so perempto-

rily pronounced the trinity an absurdity, a contradiction, nonsense, and an impossibility, to represent what he proposed as possible for ought he knew.

And now the defender will have the dean to have done no more. And with all my heart let him have done no more, if he and his animadverter, and the rest of the world will so agree it: but he will have the inquirer to have done more, and to be much more exposed to the charge of tritheism, by asserting three distinct essences, three individual natures, and three spiritual beings in the Godhead. This is indeed very marvellous, that the inquirer should expose himself to the charge of tritheism by asserting all this, when but a few lines before upon the same page, he is said to have asserted nothing! But he may as well make the inquirer in asserting nothing to have asserted all this, as the dean in asserting all this to have asserted nothing.

And where the inquirer hath said in express words that the sacred three are three distinct substances I cannot find. And we must in great part alter the common notion of substance to make it affirmable of God at all, namely, that it doth *substare accidentibus, subsist in accidents*, which I believe the dean will no more than the inquirer suppose the Divine Being to admit. But it is true, that there is somewhat more considerable in the notion of substance, according whereto, if the dean can make a shift to avoid the having of any inconvenient thing proved upon him by consequence, I hope the inquirer may find a way to escape as well.

But whereas he says, the dean allows but one divine essence, and one individual nature in the Godhead repeated in three persons, but without multiplication, as he says he had already explained it. This hath occasioned me to look back to that explanation, and if he think the allowing but one divine essence, and one individual nature in the Godhead, will agree with what the dean hath said in his vindication, I shall not envy him, nor *now* go about to disprove it. But I confess I see not how it can agree with what the defender says in this his explanation itself, when p. 23. he tells us, the Son is the living subsisting image of the Father, and the image and the prototype cannot be the same, but must be two. No man is his own image, nor is an image, the image of itself. And he adds, this is so self-evident &c. But whereas the distinction all this while might be understood to be but modal, and that appears to be the defender's present (whatever was the dean's former) meaning, that the three subsistences differ only in their different manner of subsisting, yet with this meaning his other words do little agree, for he plainly asserts a real distinction of three in the same in-

dividual numerical nature. And who did ever make a real distinction to be but modal? More expressly he had said before, (p. 18,) the divine nature is one individual nature, but not one single nature, for one single nature can be but one person whether in God or man.

I shall not here discuss with him the criticism upon which he lays so mighty stress of one individual nature and one single nature but take the terms he chooses, and if the divine nature be not one single nature, it must be double. it must be triple. And what doth this come to less than three natures? unless all ordinary forms of speech must be quite abandoned and forsaken. And wherein doth it come short of what is said by the inquirer? p. 318. "This term *individual* must (in the case now supposed, as *possible* not as *certain*) admit of a twofold application either to the distinct essence of the Father, or of the Son; or of the Holy Ghost; or to the entire essence of the Godhead, in which these three do concur. Each of these conceived by itself, are (according to this supposition) individual essences, but conceived together they are the entire individual essence of God, for there is but one such essence and no more, and it can never be multiplied nor divided into more of the same name and nature." Duplicity, triplicity, are admitted; simplicity rejected. If simple and single be of the same signification where is the difference, but that the one thinks absolute omnimodous simplicity is not to be affirmed of the divine nature, as he often speaks: the other says downright, it is not single or simple without limitation. The one denies multiplication of it, so doth the other. The one indeed speaks positively, the other doth but suppose what he says as possible, not certain. And there is indeed some difference between supposing a thing as possible for ought one knows; and affirming it so positively, as to impute heresy, and nonsense, to all gainsayers. But both bring for proof, the same thing, the incarnation; as in the postscript, the defender takes notice the inquirer doth, p. 102. And so doth he himself in his letter, p. 102, "The divine nature was incarnate in Christ, he was perfect God and perfect man, and if there was but one single divine nature in all three persons; this one single divine nature was incarnate, and therefore the Father and the Holy Ghost who are this single divine nature, as well as the Son, must be as much incarnate as the Son was." He makes the contrary absurd. And brings in (fitly enough) Victorinus Afer teaching, that we ought not to say, nor is it lawful to say, there is but one substance, that is, as he paraphrases it, one single subsisting nature (therefore there must be three single subsisting natures) and three persons. For if this

same substance did and suffered all (*patri-passiani et nos*) we must be Patripassians, which God forbid.

And what the defender alleges from the ancients, (Letter p. 24. 25.) against the sabellians, allowing only a trinity of names and his taking the *τροποι υπαρξεως* in the *concrete* not in *abstract*, fully enough speaks the inquirer's sense, his accounting the contrary too fine and metaphysical for him was what was written to Dr. Wallis, (Calm Discourse, p. 339.) too fine or too little solid, &c.

In short, till it can be effectually proved, that mind and spirit do not signify somewhat as absolute as nature or essence (or rather more than the former, which signifies the principle of operation as of the other being,) and till it can be as well proved, that asserting a thing as certain, so as to pronounce it heresy and nonsense to think otherwise, is less than only to propose it as possible, or inquire whether it be so or no, the dean must be judged by every one that understands common sense, to have heightened the distinction of three persons at least as much as the inquirer. And whether the inquirer have supposed more than is defensible against the defender's objections, will be considered by and by in its proper place. In the mean time let it,

2. Be examined whether the dean has said as much for salving the unity of the Godhead as the inquirer, or as much as is requisite to that purpose. And here our business will be short, for it all turns upon that one single point, whether mutual consciousness be that union which must be acknowledged, or suppose it only. For which we need only appeal to common reason, whether being do not in the natural order precede even the power of working, and consequently whether being united vitally, precede not the possibility of acting agreeably to that united state, whereupon the inquiry is not concerning actual conscience only, but (as he speaks) consciousness. Is it possible any three persons or intelligent subsistences, should naturally have vital perception of each other's internal motions and sensations, without being vitally preunited? I say *naturally*, for that God might give to three created spirits a *temporary perception* of each other without bringing them into a *stated union* each with other, is little to be doubted; as a spirit may assume a body and animate it *pro tempore* without being substantially united with it. And if that body were also a spirit they might *pro tempore* for ought we know by extraordinary divine disposition (for within the ordinary course of nature we know of no such intimacy of created spirits to another) be *quasi animæ*, the cause of life to one another. But if naturally they were so to mingle and transfuse sensations mutually into each other,

they must be naturally, first, in vital union with one another. Nor therefore did the inquirer mistake the dean's notion as the defender fancies in the passage he quotes p. 104. as if he took mutual consciousness for mere mutual perspection. For though *scire, to know*, abstractly taken, doth not signify more than *perspicere, to look through*, yet the inquirer in that passage speaking of a never so perfect mutual perspection properly enough expressed thereby as great a feeling such spirits were supposed to have of each other, in themselves, as mutual consciousness is apt to signify, or as the dean can yet be supposed to have meant, that perspection being more perfect which produces gusts and relishes suitable to the object, than that which stays in mere speculation only.

And upon the whole, it seems very strange the defender should say, "if such an internal, vital sensation, be not an essential union, he believes no man can tell what it is." For how can such *actual sensation* be imagined to be *union*? As well might the use of sense itself (speaking of any thing singly to which it belongs) be said to be its constituent form, or (consequently) the doing any thing that proceeds from reason, be the form of a man. So the writing a book, should be the author. And whereas he says "it is certain the dean took it to be so, and therefore he did not leave out a natural eternal union;" it follows, indeed, that he did not leave it out, in his mind and design, but he nevertheless left it out of his book, and therefore said not enough there, to salve the unity of the Godhead, but ought to have insisted upon somewhat prior to mutual consciousness, as constituent of that unity, and which might make the three one, and not merely argue them to be so.

But now (p. 105.) he comes to find as great fault with the inquirer's way of maintaining this unity, and because he is resolved to dislike it, if he cannot find it faulty, sets himself to make it so. The temper of mind wherewith he writes (p. 105.) and onwards to the end, so soon, and so constantly shews itself, that no man whose mind is not in the same disorder will upon trial apprehend any thing in it, but such heat as dwells in darkness. And he himself hath given the document which may be a measure to any apprehensive reader. "True divine wisdom rests not on an illnatured, and perverse spirit;" (See his letter, p. 1.) I understand it, "while the ill fit lasts." But it is strange he could write those words without any self-reflection.

The thing to be revenged is, that the inquirer did freely speak his thoughts, wherein he judged the dean's *hypothesis* defective, his not taking notice of what he reckoned naturally antecedent and fundamental to mutual consciousness: a most

intimate, natural, necessary, eternal union of the sacred three. If the inquirer spake sincerely, as he understood the matter, and him; and it evidently appear the defender did not so, I only say the wronged person hath much the advantage and wishes him no other harm, than such gentle regrets, as are necessary to set him right with himself, and his higher Judge. He says, he (the inquirer) represents this *unity* by the union of soul and body, and by the union of the divine and human nature, &c.

It is true, he partly doth so. but more fully by the (supposed union of) three created spirits (to which he that will may see, he only makes that a lower step) and he says, (with respect especially to the former of these) "That a union supposable to be originally, eternally, and by natural necessity in the most perfect Being, is to be thought unexpressibly more perfect than any other." But (he adds) "these are personal unions, and therefore cannot be the unity of the Godhead." And he very well knew (for he had but little before cited the passage) that the inquirer never intended them so, but only to represent that the union of the three in the Godhead, could not be reasonably thought less possible.

What he further adds is much stranger (and yet herein I am resolved to put charity towards him to the utmost stretch, as he professes to have done his understanding) for he says—as far as he can possibly understand and that he should be glad to be better informed, though there is some reason to apprehend that former displeasure darkened his understanding, (and even dimmed his eye-sight) which yet I hope hath its more lucid intervals, and that this distemper is not a fixed habit with him. And what is it now that he cannot possibly understand otherwise? that no other union will satisfy him (namely, the inquirer) but such a union of three spiritual beings and individual natures as by their composition constitute the Godhead, as the composition of soul and body do the man, that is, he cannot understand but he means what he expressly denies. Who can help so cross an understanding? If he had not had his very finger upon the place where the inquirer says in express words "I peremptorily deny all composition in the being of God," (Calm Discourse p. 312.) this had been more excusable (besides much said to the same purpose elsewhere. (Calm Discourse p. 332.) It had been ingenuous in any man not to impute that to another, as his meaning, which in the plainest terms he disavows, as none of his meaning: And it had been prudent in the dean (or his defender) of all mankind not to have done so in the present case, as will further be seen in due time. But he takes it for an affront, when he fancies a man to come too near him.

He adds, "for this reason he disputes earnestly against the universal, absolute, omnimodous simplicity of the divine nature, and will not allow that wisdom, power, and goodness, are the same thing in God, and distinguished into different conceptions by us, only through the weakness of our understandings, which cannot comprehend an infinite Being in one thought, and therefore must, as well as we can, contemplate him by parts." I know not what he means by earnestly, the matter was weighty, and it is true, he was in writing about it in no disposition to jest. But it is said "he disputed against the universal, absolute, omnimodous simplicity of the divine nature." I hope the defender in this means honestly, but he speaks very improperly, for it supposes him to think that the universal, absolute, omnimodous simplicity, so earnestly disputed against, did really belong to the divine nature, but I can scarce believe him to think so, and therefore he should have said, his disputation tended to prove it not to belong. If he (namely, the defender, or the dean) did really think it did, *they*, or *he*, must be very singular in that sentiment. I would have them name me the man that ever laid down and asserted such a position. Some I know have said of that sacred Being, that it is *summe simplex*, *simple in the highest sense*, or more simple than any thing else, but that imports not universal, absolute, omnimodous simplicity, which is impossible to be a perfection, or therefore to belong to the divine nature. No man that ever acknowledged a trinity of persons even modally distinguished, could ever pretend it, for such simplicity excludes all modes. Nay, the antitrinitarians themselves can never be for it, as the calm discourse hath shewn. p. 352. And if the dean be, he is gone into the remotest extreme from what he held (and plainly enough seems still to hold) that ever man of sense did.

But for what is added, that he "will not allow that wisdom, power and goodness, are the same thing in God:" this is not fairly said, civility allows me not to say, untruly. There is no word in the place he cites, nor any where in that book, that signifies not allowing, it is intimated we are not instructed "by the Scripture to conceive of the divine nature, as, in every respect, most absolutely simple," or that power, wisdom, goodness in the abstract, are the same thing, and that our difficulty is great to apprehend them really undistinguishable. And let me seriously ask himself, doth he in good earnest think it is only through the weakness of our understandings that we distinguish the notions of the divine wisdom, power and goodness? certainly it were great weakness of understanding to define them alike. I believe he never met with the writer yet that distinguished them less, than *ratione ratiocinata*, *reason in*

its subject in contradistinction to *ratiocinante, reason in its exercise*: which implies somewhat corresponding to our distinct notions of them (eminently and not formally) in *natura rei, the nature of the thing*.

And whereas he further says, "This prepared his way to make goodness, wisdom, power,—a natural trinity in unity," herein the defender is mistaken. This is not the *trinity* which the inquirer's discourse was ever intended to terminate in, as he himself hath expressly said, and the defender takes notice of it, which makes me wonder how he could think it was so intended, citing the very passage, (vide page 314.) where the inquirer "professes, not to judge, that we are under the precise notions of power, wisdom and goodness, to conceive of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost." But why then were these three so much discoursed of before? They are three most celebrated divine attributes, wherein we have our most immediate and very principal concern. And some have thought the trinity was most fitly to be conceived by them: the inquirer did not think so; but he thought first, it would be requisite to have our minds disentangled from any apprehended necessity of conceiving them to be in all respects the very same things, nor are they the very same, if they be so distinguished, as is expressed in the sixteenth of the summary propositions; (Calm Discourse vide page 353.) where also they are each of them said to be common to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, whence therefore it is impossible they should be thought to distinguish Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But that some distinction being admitted even of them, this might facilitate to us our conception of the greater distinction which must be, of Father, Son and Spirit, as is expressed p. 314. Indeed he did not think fit to interrupt his discourse by staying to shew reasons why he did not rest in that account alone of the trinity, though it might seem plausible, or not absurd, but proceeded further to what was more satisfying to himself, and might be so to other men. And (as the intervening series of his discourse leads thereto) this is more directly done page 317. &c. especially where he comes to speak of the necessary coexistence, and the (as necessary and natural) order of the Father, Son and Spirit, towards each other. The second being, not by any intervening act of will, but by necessary, eternal promanation, from the first, and the third from them both. And the true reason why power, wisdom and goodness, were not thought expressive of the distinction of Father, Son and Spirit, but common to each of them (as is said, summary Propositions 16.) was, that the two latter cannot but be necessary emanations, most connatural to their original, as is truly suggested by the defender, p. 111.

If you object (as the defender brings in the inquirer, saying) That this gives us the notion of a compounded Deity, &c. this, that is, the supposition, that absolute omnimodous simplicity, belongs not to it, is the thing which may be thought to give us this notion. And he tells us, he (the inquirer) answers this difficulty, by giving us a new notion of a *compositum*. And what is that which he calls a new notion? that a *compositum* seems to imply a pre-existing component, that brings such things together, and supposes such and such more simple things to have pre-existed apart, or separate, and to be brought afterwards together into a united state.

And indeed is this a new notion? as new as the creation? Let him shew me an instance through the whole created universe of beings (and for the uncreated being the defender (now at this time) disputes against any composition there, and the inquirer denies any) first, where there hath been a *compositum* without a pre-existing component, or next the compounded parts whereof, if substantial did not in order of nature pre-exist separate; that is, whether *esse simpliciter*, *simply to be*; do not naturally precede *esse tale*, *to be in a particular form*, or which is all one, to our present purpose, whether they were not capable hereof if the Creator pleased. Let any man, I say, tell me where was there ever a *compositum* made by substantial union, that did not consist of once separate or of separable parts.

But note his admirable following supposition, “that is to say, that if a man, suppose, who consists of body and soul, had been from eternity, without a maker, and his soul, and body had never subsisted apart, he could not have been said to have been a compounded creature?” This is said with design most groundlessly (as we shall see) to fasten an absurd consequence upon the inquirer, and see how it lucks: Did ever any man undertake to reprove an absurdity with greater absurdity? a creature without a Maker! what sort of creature must this be! we have a pretty saying quoted in the defender’s letter; “He that writes lies down;” and we are apt enough too, when we write to trip and fall down, and ought in such cases to be merciful to one another, even though he that falls should be in no danger of hurting his forehead, much more if he be. What was another man’s turn now, may be mine next.

But let the supposition proceed, and put we being instead of creature, which no doubt was the defender’s meaning, for creature he must needs know it could not be that had no Maker. And what then? “why he should not” (says he) “have been said to be compounded, though he would have had the same parts that he has now:” We have here a self-confounding

supposition, which having done that first, cannot hurt him whom it was designed to confound, being taken in season. Grant one, and you grant a thousand. A being made up of a soul and a body, is so imperfect an entity, as could not be of itself. Nothing is of itself which is not absolutely perfect. If he mind to disprove this, let him try his faculty when he pleases against it, and (which I sincerely believe he never intends) together with it, against all religion. But besides, he hath destroyed his own supposition himself (to put us out of that danger) by saying in plain words, p. 107. "We have no notion of an eternal and necessary existence, but in an absolute perfect and infinite nature." Now say I, what is so perfect, and hath whatever belongs to it necessarily, though distinguishable things belong to it, hath no parts, for what are parts, but such things as can be parted? such things as never were parted, and never can be, (as it is nonsense to talk of those things being parted that are united necessarily, and of themselves) are no parts, if *partiri*, whence they are so called, must not (and herein he cannot so fool the whole Christian world as to make it concur with him) lose its signification to serve a turn. Though the things be real, their partibility is not real. If any indeed will call them *parts*, because they may be conceived or contemplated apart, as *parts* merely conceivable are no prejudice to the perfection of the Divine Being, so are such conceivable parts acknowledged by this author himself in express words; "we cannot comprehend an infinite Being in one thought, and therefore must as well as we can contemplate him by parts." His letter, p. 105. God can as little admit to be a part of any thing, as to have any thing a part of him. And yet it is no prejudice to the dignity and perfection of his being, to conceive of him conjunctly with other things, as when we make him a *part* (subject or predicate) of a proposition. All his disputation therefore against parts and composition in the Deity, is against a figment, or no present adversary. For my part I am of his mind, and I should be obliged to thank him that this once he vouchsafes to let me be on his side, when he knows I am, if he did not take so vast pains to make others not know it. How hard a thing is it for an angry man (especially when he knows not why) to write with a sincere mind.

But hath he in all this fervent bluster a present concern at this time for the honour of the Divine Being? (as God forbid I should think he never hath) what is that he supposes injurious to it? Is it the words, parts and compounds? or is it the things supposed to be united in the Divine Being? The words he knows to be his own, and let him dispose of them more ineptly if he can tell how: parts that were never put together,

never parted, nor ever shall be the one or other; that is, that never were or will be parts: and a compound of such parts! But now for the things upon which he would obtrude these words,—three essences, natures, (or if you please, infinite minds or spirits) signified by the names of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in eternal union, but distinct in the Being of God.—Let us consider his disputation against them united, or in union, according to its double aspect: First, upon the hypothesis or supposition of them: Secondly, upon himself.

First, Consider his disputation as levelled against the hypothesis or supposition of such distinct essences, natures, minds, spirits, in necessary, eternal union in the Divine Being. And one of his arguments against it, is in those words of his one principal argument against it (here put out parts and composition which are his own, and we have no more to do with them) is, that God is eternal and unmade, and whatsoever (hath parts, says he) hath such essences in it, must have a maker. And here let him prove his consequence, and his business is done, namely, both ways, as will be seen by and by. But let him shew the inconsistency between a thing's having such distinct essences naturally and necessarily united in it, (as the supposition to be argued against is, and before ought to have been justly stated) and it is being eternal and unmade. But how that is to be evinced I cannot so much as guess; confident affirmation, against the most obvious tenour of God's own word, is of little account, Who shall ascend into the heavens? or fathom the depths? or can have that perspection of God's incomprehensible nature, as without (and visibly against) his own revelation to be able, without great rashness, to pronounce so concerning him? But so toyish an argument as here follows, is worse than the position; that is, when one shall say, that for ought we know there may be three distinct essences by an eternal unmade union, united into one, in the being of God; any man should say, and be so vain as to expect to be regarded, that because they are united by an eternal and unmade union, therefore they are not united by an eternal and unmade union! If there be not a contradiction in the terms to disprove a thing, by itself, is to say nothing, or is all one with proving a thing by itself. He proceeds, to what hath nothing in it like an argument, but against his own conceit of parts, and that very trifling too. "There can be but one eternal nature in God: but if there be three—there must be three." This it is now come to, proving his point by itself. Here he makes sure work to have nothing denied, but then nothing is proved, no advance is made; if there be three, there must be three. But if there be three what? eternal *parts*: there must

be three different natures, or else they——would be the same. (What ! though distinct ?) But this supposes somebody said the first : and who ? himself ; therefore he is disproving himself. If I had said so, I would have denied his consequence, for there may be similar parts : whereas by different, he seems to mean dissimilar. He says “not only distinct, but different natures.” Now you have that wonderful thing talked of sometimes, but never brought to view before, a distinction without a difference. It is strange how any things should be distinct, and no way different. What distinguishes them if they differ by nothing ? This different, applied to this present case, is his own word, coined to introduce a notion that is not new to christians only, but to all mankind. If by different natures he means (as he seems) of a different kind, who thought of such a difference ? But I trow, things that differ in number, do as truly differ (however essentially cohereing) though not so widely.

His next is, that though we have a natural notion of an eternal Being, we have no notion of three eternal essences (which again I put instead of his parts) which necessarily coexist in an eternal union. Doth he mean we are to disbelieve every thing of God whereof we have not a natural notion ? Then to what purpose is a divine revelation ? Is this notion of God pretended to be natural ? It is enough, if such a notion be most favoured by his own revelation, who best understands his own nature, and there be no evident natural notion against it. He forgot that he had said, (Defence, p. 5.) “If every thing which we have no positive idea of must be allowed to contradict reason, we shall find contradictions enough ;” adding, “We must confess a great many things to be true, which we have no idea of, &c.” He adds, “once more we have no notion of an eternal and necessary existence, but in an absolutely perfect and infinite nature, but if there be” (I here again leave out his three parts, because I design to consider if there be any thing of strength brought against what was supposed possible by the inquirer, not against his fiction, which I trouble not myself any further with) “three spiritual Beings—neither of them can be absolutely perfect and infinite,” (I would rather have said none, or no one, than neither, since the discourse is of more than two. I thought the meaning of *uter* and *nueter* had been agreed long ago,) “though we could suppose their union to make such a perfect Being, because they are not the same, and (neither) no one of them is the whole,”—&c.

This is the only thing that ever came under my notice among the school-men, that hath any appearing strength in it, against the hypothesis which I have proposed as possible for ought I knew. They generally dispute against many sorts of composi-

tions in the being of God, which I am not concerned in : that of matter and form, which is alien from this affair, of quantitative parts, which is as alien : of subject and accident, which touches us not : of act and power, which doth it as little : each subsistent, being eternally in utmost actuality. And by sundry sorts and methods of argument, whereof only this can seem to signify any thing against the present supposition. And it wholly resolves into the notion of infinity, about which I generally spoke my sense in that first Letter to Dr. Wallis. (See *Calm Discourse*. p. 344.) And as I there intimated how much easier it is to puzzle another upon that subject than to satisfy oneself, so I here say, that I doubt not to give any man as much trouble about it in respect of quantitative extension, as he can me, in this. I think it demonstrable that one Infinite can never be from another by voluntary production, that it cannot by necessary emanation, I think not so. In the mean time when we are told so plainly by the divine oracles, of a *sacred three*, that are each of them God, and of some one whereof some things are spoken that are not, nor can be of the others ; I think it easier to count three than to determine of infiniteness : and accordingly to form one's belief. But of this more when we come to compare him with himself. And for what he discourses of the aspect this supposition hath upon the Trinity, and the Homo-ousion : (p. 108. 109. 110.) it all proceeds still upon his own fiction of parts, and upon the invidious straining of that similitude of the union of soul and body, as he himself doth *tantum non* confess ; except that he lessens it by saying most untruly that he (the inquirer) doth expressly own the consequence. Therefore if he do not own the consequence, then the defender confesses himself to have invidiously devised it ; and what is it ? That if all three by this composition are but one God, neither of them by himself is true and perfect God. The divinity is like the english. But both his own. The inquirer denies both antecedent (which he knows) and consequent too. Leave out by this composition, (his own figment) and his argument as much disproves any trinity at all as it doth the present *hypothesis*.

But wherein doth the inquirer own it ? because such a similitude is used (as it is often in that discourse) of the union between soul and body (declared elsewhere to be unexpressibly defective) that therefore the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are each of them by himself no more truly Lord or God, according to the Athanasian creed, or otherwise than in as improper a sense, as the body of a man, excluding the soul, is a man, or a human person. Or as if Deity were no more in one of the persons, than humanity in a carcass ! who that looks upon all

this with equal eyes, but will rather choose as doubtful a notion, than so apparently ill a spirit! Are similitudes ever wont to be alike throughout, to what they are brought to illustrate? It might as well be said, because he mentions with approbation such as illustrate the doctrine of the trinity by a tree and its branches, that, therefore, there we are to expect leaves and blossoms. Is it strange the created universe should not afford us an exact representation of uncreated Being? How could he but think of that; "To whom do ye liken me?" At least one would have thought he should not have forgot what he had so lately said himself. "We must grant we have no perfect example of any such union in nature." Letter. p. 5. What appetite in him is it, that now seeks what nature doth not afford? A very unnatural one, we may conclude. It were trifling to repeat what was said, and was so plain, before, that the union between soul and body was never brought to illustrate personal union but essential. The former is here imagined without pretence, there being no mention or occasion for the mentioning of *persons* in the place he alleges. (Calm Discourse p. 317.) But to make out his violent consequence he foists in a supposition, that never came into any man's imagination but a socinian's and his own:—(Which I say, contradistinguishing him to them, that the matter may (as it ought) appear the more strange. His Letter p. 110.) If God be a person, he can be but one. Is God the appropriate name of a person? then indeed there will be but one person; but who here says so but himself? The name God is the name of the essence, not the distinguishing name of a person. But if three intelligent natures be united in one Deity, each will be persons, and each will be God, and all will be one God; not by parts, other than conceptible, undivided, and inseparable, as the soul and body of a man are not. Which sufficiently conserves the Christian trinity from such furious and impotent *attaques* as these. And the *homo-ousiotes* is most entirely conserved too. For what are three spiritual natures no more the same, than (as he grossly speaks) the soul and body are? no more than an intelligent mind, and a piece of clay? by what consequence is this said, from any thing in the inquirer's hypothesis? Whereas also he expressly insists, that the Father, as *Fons trinitatis*, is first, (Calm Discourse p. 316.) the Son of the Father, the Holy Ghost from both. Is not the water in the streams, the same that was in the fountain? and are not the several attributes expressly spoken of as common to these three? (Calm Discourse p. 353.) Essential power, wisdom, goodness, (which are denied to be the precise notions of Father, Son, and Spirit) said by more than a *πρῆξιωσῆσις*, as that may be understood to

signify, mere presence, (how intimate soever) but by real vital union, as much each one's as any one's? and all other conceivable perfections besides? Why were these words read with eyes refusing their office, to let them into the reader's mind? whence also how fabulous is the talk of power begetting wisdom, &c. (Postscript to his Letter p. 111.) against what is so plainly said of the order of *priority* and *posteriority*, &c. (Calm Discourse p. 317.)

There had been some prudence seen in all this conduct, if the defender could have taken effectual care, that every thing should have been blotted out of all the copies of that discourse, but what he would have thought fit to be permitted to the view of other eyes than his own. For then, though in so gross prevarication he had not preserved his innocency, he might have saved in some degree his reputation. Yet also he should have taken some heed that anger might not so have discoloured his eye, as to make so injudicious a choice what to confess and what to conceal. For had he not himself blabbed, that it was said, we are not under the precise notions of power, wisdom and goodness, to conceive of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; he might more plausibly have formed his odd births, and fathered them where he doth. But wrath indulged will show its governing power. And all this fury and vengeance (upon the inquirer, and the dean too) he reckoned was due, only because it was so presumptuously thought, that somewhat in his hypothesis (or which he defends) might have been better, and that he (probably) sees it might; so much a greater thing (in some ill fits) is the gratifying a humour than the Christian cause!

But let us now see how all this turns upon himself. And how directly his ill polished (not to say envenomed) darts, missing their designed mark, strike into that very breast which he undertakes to defend. Whereas there are two things, principally to be designed in a discourse of this subject. Namely,

1. The explaining the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, so as that though they are some way three, they may yet be concluded to be in Godhead but one.

2. The evincing notwithstanding that unity, the possibility of their sufficient distinction, to admit the distinct predicates that are severally spoken of them in the Holy Scriptures.

The inquirer's discourse chiefly insists upon these two things.

1. That necessity of existence is the most fundamental attribute of Deity. And that therefore the Father, as the Fountain, being necessarily of himself: the Son, necessarily of the Father: the Holy Ghost, necessarily from them both, each cannot but be God, and the same, one God. (In reference to the former purpose.)

2. That absolute omnimodous simplicity, being never asserted, in Scripture, of the Divine Being, nor capable of being, otherwise, demonstrated of it, and it being impossible, either from Scripture, or rational evidence, accurately to assign the limits thereof, and determine what simplicity belongs to that ever blessed Being, and what not: if it be necessary to our apprehending how such distinct *predicates* and *attributions* may severally belong, to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that we conceive three distinct essences necessarily coexisting, in an eternal, vital, inseparable union in the Divine Being; the thing may be in itself possible for ought we know. And this is propounded to serve the latter purpose.

The defender of the dean seems to think otherwise of these two things, namely, of necessity of existence, common to the sacred three, which will prove each of them to be God, and, belonging to them in the mentioned order, as Father, Son, and Spirit, will prove them, necessarily, to be one God.

And of what is said of simplicity, which might admit their sufficient distinction; of both these, I say, he seems to think otherwise by neglecting both, lest that discourse should be thought any way pertinent, or useful to its end. And disputes vehemently against the latter, how strongly and successfully, he does it, in respect of the truth of the thing, we have seen. But whether weakly or strongly, that his disputation tends to wound the dean's cause, all that it can, shall now be made appear.

It is notorious the dean hath asserted, so positively, three infinite Minds or Spirits, that the benign interpretation wherewith this defender would salve the matter, (a new vocabulary being to be made for him on purpose, and the reason of things quite altered) will to any man of sense seem rather ludicrous, than sufficient, without express retractation. For which the inquirer thinks he is upon somewhat better terms, than he. if there were occasion for it, both by the tenour of his whole discourse, and by what he hath particularly said in the 28 sec. Calm Discourse p. 326. But after the interpretation offered, see whether such things are not said over and over in the defence, as make the defender (and the dean if he speak his sense) most obnoxious to the whole argumentation in the postscript. So as, if a part was acted, it was carried so untowardly, that it seemed to be quite forgotten what part it was, and all the blows (for it was come now to offending instead of defending) fall directly upon him, whom the actor had undertaken to defend.

It hath been noted already, that the defender says expressly, (Defence p. 16. p. 18.) "the divine nature is one individual nature," (and so says the inquirer, Calm Discourse p. 318.)—

but not one single nature; (then it must be double and triple, not absolutely simple, as also the inquirer says) to which he (namely, the defender) adds, "one single nature can be but one person, whether in God or man." Now let any man judge whether all his reasonings are not most directly applicable against him, (if they signify any thing) which are contained in his postscript, p. 106, 107, 108. &c.

How furiously doth he exagitate that saying, "When you predicate Godhead, or the name of God, of any one of them, (namely, Father, Son, or Holy Ghost) you herein express a true but inadequate conception of God," &c. insisting that the whole "undivided divine nature" (no doubt it is everlastingly undivided wherever it is) "subsists entirely, in three distinct persons" This the inquirer never denied, though he charges it upon him, that he makes no one of the persons to be true and perfect God. Postscript p. 108. But how well doth that agree with what he had himself said, (defence, p. 26) Though God be the most absolute, complete, independent Being, yet neither the Son, nor the Holy Ghost, can be said to be, an absolute, complete, independent God. He falsely charges it upon the inquirer that he makes the persons severally not perfect God, and he denies two of them to be complete God. To say not perfect, is criminal (as indeed it is) to say not complete is innocent! But his saying the Son and Holy Ghost are not complete God; how doth it consist with what is said, postscript p. 109. "The same whole entire divinity distinctly and inseparably subsists in the person of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." What is wanting to make him complete God, in whom "the whole, entire divinity subsists?" No wonder if he quarrel with all the world who so little agree with him, whose defence he undertakes, or with himself. In the mean time the inquirer hath the less reason to complain, when he manifestly treats himself as ill as him.

I only add, that for his Discourse concerning "the one Divinity, or one Divine Nature, subsisting wholly and entirely, three times," (whereas I had thought the three persons had subsisted at all times, and all at once) Defence p. 26, &c. And the persons of the Son and Holy Spirit, not being emanations p. 28. Not the Son, because he is the Father's image: and an image is not an emanation, but a reflection: (but how should there be a reflected image without an emanation?) "nor the Holy Ghost being *προερχων*, something proceeding not in the sense of *emanation*, but of the *mysterious procession*" I shall make no guesses about it (for it concerns not the inquirer) only I think it very secure against the formidable objection which he mentions p. 35. of its being too intelligible.

Upon the whole matter I see not what service it can do him, to put intelligent person instead of mind. For I thought every person had been intelligent. Boethius's definition which he alleges plainly implies so much, and one would think he must know that it is the usual notion of person to understand by it *suppositum rationale* or *intelligens*. Therefore methinks he should not reckon it necessary to distinguish persons (as he doth by this addition of intelligent) into such as are persons and such as are no persons.

But since he expressly says (and I think for the most part truly, Defence p. 30.) "that the three persons or subsistences, in the ever blessed trinity are three real, substantial subsistences, each of which hath entirely, all the perfections of the divine nature, divine wisdom, power, and goodness; and therefore each of them is eternal, infinite mind, as distinct from each other as any other three persons; and this he believes, the dean will no more recant, than he will renounce a trinity; for all the wit of man, cannot find a medium, between a substantial trinity, and a trinity of names, or a trinity of mere modes, respects and relations in the same single essence, which is no trinity at all." As also he had said much to the same purpose before, "that to talk of three subsistences in the abstract, without three that subsist, or of one single nature which hath three subsistences, when it is impossible that in singularity there can be more than one subsistence, &c." I believe he will find no small difficulty to name what it is, that with the peculiar distinct manner of subsistence makes a person; not the very same common nature, for the persons cannot be distinguished from each other by that which is common to them all. Therefore the divine nature which is common to the three, must according to him comprehend three single natures, and not be absolutely simple. Hither must be his resort at last, after all his earnest disputation against it. And these he will have to be parts, which because they are undivided, impartible, inseparable, everlastingly and necessarily united, I do reckon the inquirer did with very sufficient reason, and with just decency (and doth still continue very peremptorily to) deny.

And whereas he contends that the whole divine nature is entirely in each subsistence, (as he does again and again) I think the term whole, improper, where there are no proper parts. And I doubt not, when he gives place to cooler thoughts, he will see cause to qualify that assertion. For if he strictly mean that every thing that belongs to the Godhead is in each person; I see not how he will fetch himself from the socinian consequence, that then each person must have a trinity subsisting in

it, and be Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. For I doubt not he will acknowledge that the entire divinity includes in it the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And therefore he must be beholden to an inadequate notion in this very case, when all is done, how much soever he hath contended against it. I do however think it safe and free from any other difficulty, than what we unavoidably have, in conceiving infinities, to say, That all perfection is in each subsistent (which I like better than subsistence, as more expressive of the concrete) as far as their natural, necessary, eternal order, towards one another, as the first is the fountain or radix, the second from that, and the third from both, can possibly admit. All must be originally in the Father, with whom, the other two have that intimate, vital, eternal union, that what is in him the other communicate therein, in as full perfection as is inconceivable, and more than it is possible for us, or for any finite mind to conceive. Therefore since that difference which only proceeds from that natural, eternal order, is conjecturable only, but is really unknown, unrevealed and inscrutable; it is better, herein, to confess the imperfection of that knowledge which we have, than to boast that which we have not, or aspire to that which we cannot have.

A
V I E W

OF THAT PART OF

THE LATE CONSIDERATIONS

Addressed to H. H. about the TRINITY.

WHICH CONCERNS THE

SOBER INQUIRY,


ON THAT SUBJECT.

In a Letter to the former Friend.



A VIEW OF
THE LATE CONSIDERATIONS

Addressed to H. H. about the Trinity.



YOU see, Sir, I make no haste to tell you my thoughts of what hath been published since my last to you, against my sentiments touching the Holy Trinity. I saw the matter less required my time and thoughts, than my other affairs: and so little, that I was almost indifferent whether I took any notice thereof or no. There is really nothing of argument in what I have seen, but what I had suggested before, and objected to myself, in those very discourses of mine, now animadverted on: which not having prevented, with me, the opinion I am of, can as little alter it, and should as little any man's else. But a little leisure, as it can, without extortion, be gained from other occasions, I do not much grudge to bestow on this.

I find myself concerned in the late considerations on the explications of the doctrine of the trinity—in a letter to H. H. The author is pleased to give me the honour of a name, a lank, unvocal one. It is so contrived, that one may easily guess whom he means; but the reason of his doing so I cannot guess. Is it because he knew himself, what he would have others believe?

But I suppose he as well knew his own name. If he knew not the former, he ran the hazard of injuring either the suppos-

ed author, or the true, or both. I could, I believe, make as shrewd a guess at his name, and express it as plainly. But I think it not civil to do so; because I apprehend he hath some reason to conceal it, whereof I think he hath a right to be the judge. But I will not prescribe to him rules of civility, of which that he is a great judge, I will not allow myself to doubt.

Yet I will not suppose him to have so very diminishing thoughts of our Saviour, as not to acknowledge and reverence the authority of that great rule of his, which he knows gained reverence with some who called not themselves christians, "Whatsoever you would that men should do to you—&c." Nor can divine what greater reason he should have to hide his own name, than to expose mine, or make the person he indigates, be thought the author of the discourse he intended to expose; since no man can imagine how, as the Christian world is constituted, any one can be more obnoxious for denying three persons, than for asserting three Gods: which latter his impotent attempt aims to make that author do.

For his censures of that author's style, and difficulty to be understood, they offend me not. But so I have known some pretend deafness, to what they were unwilling to hear. There is indeed one place *Sober Inquiry*, p. 309. in the end of sect: 8. were *must* should have been left out, upon the adding afterwards of *can*; that might give one some trouble. In which yet, the supposal of an (not unusual) *asyndeton*, would, without the help of magic, have relieved a considering reader. And for his compliments, as they do me no real good, so, I thank God, they hurt me not. I dwell at home, and better know my own furniture, than another can. For himself, I discern, and readily acknowledge in him, those excellent accomplishments, for which I most heartily wish him an advocate in a better cause, without despair he will yet prove so; when I take notice of some passages which look like indications of a serious temper of mind, as of choosing God, and the honour of his name, for our portion and design; and that he lives in vain, who knows not his Maker, and his God, with the like.

But on the other hand, I was as heartily sorry to meet with an expression of so different a strain, on so awful a subject, of "making a coat for the moon." That precept which Josephus inserts among those given the Jews, doth for the reason it hath in it, abstracting from its authority, deserve to be considered. *Βλασφημειο δε μηδεις θεος, ως πολεως αλλασι νομιζησι; Let no one blaspheme the gods which other nations worship.** It seems to import a decency to the rest of mankind, whose notions of a Deity did not argue them sunk into the lowest degrees of sottishness and stupidity. Good Sir, what needed (think you) so

adventurous boldness, in so lubricous a case ! It gains nothing to a man's cause either of strength or reputation with wise and good men. A sound argument will be as sound without it. Nor should I much value having them on my side, whom I can hope to make laugh at so hazardous a jest. I can never indeed have any great veneration for a morose sourness, whatsoever affected appearance it may have with it, of a simulated sanctimony or religiousness ; but I should think it no hardship upon me to repress that levity, as to attempt dancing upon the brink of so tremendous a precipice. And would always express myself with suspicion, and a supposed possibility of being mistaken, in a case wherein I find many of noted judgment and integrity, in the succession of several ages, differing from me. But go we on to the cause itself, where he pretends,—First to give a view of the sober inquirer's hypothesis : And then to argue against it.

As to the former. He doth it, I am loath to say, with less fairness than from a person of his (otherwise) appearing ingenuity, one would expect. For he really makes me to have said more than I ever did, in divers instances ; and much less than I have expressly said ; and that he cannot have so little understanding as not to know was most material to the cause in hand.

He represents me, p. 40. col. 1. saying the persons are distinct essences, numerical natures, beings, substances ; and col. 2. That I hold them to be three spirits ; when in the close of one of those paragraphs, namely, *Calm Discourse*, p. 341. I recite the words of W. J. "In the unity of the Godhead there must be no plurality or multiplicity of substances allowed : " and do add, Nor do I say that there must. And p. 314. "I do not positively say there are three distinct substances, minds, or spirits." I would ask this my learned antagonist, Have *saying*, and *not saying*, the same signification ? And again, when (*Calm Discourse*, p. 345.) my words are, "I will not use the expressions, as signifying my formed judgment, that there are three things, substances or spirits in the Godhead ; how could he say, I hold the three persons to be three spirits ? Is any man, according to the ordinary way of speaking, said to hold what is not his formed judgment ? If he only propose things whereof he doubts, to be considered and discussed by others, in order to the forming of it, and by gentle ventilation to sift out truth, it the rather argues him not to hold this or that.

And I think much service might be done to the common interest of religion, by such a free mutual communication of even more doubtful thoughts, if such disquisitions were pursued with

more candour, and with less confidence and prepossession of mind, or addictedness to the interest of any party whatsoever. If it were rather endeavoured, to reason one another into, or out of, this or that opinion, than either by sophistical collusions to cheat, or to hector by great words, one that is not of my mind. Or if the design were less to expose an adversary, than to clear the matter in controversy.

Besides, that if such equanimity did more generally appear, and govern, in transactions of this nature, it would produce a greater liberty in communicating our thoughts, about some of the more vogued and fashionable opinions, by exempting each other from the fear of ill treatment, in the most sensible kind. It being too manifest, that the same confident insulting genius, which makes a man think himself competent to be a standard to mankind, would also make him impatient of dissent, and tempt him to do worse, than reproach one that differs from him, if it were in his power. And the club or faggot-arguments must be expected to take place, where what he thinks rational ones, did not do the business. This only on the by.

In the mean time that there is a trinity in the Godhead, is no matter of doubt with me; but only whether this be the best way of explaining and defending it. If this be not the best, or sufficient, some other will, I believe, or hath been found out by some other. Of which I have spoken my sense not only indefinitely, (*Calm Discourse* p. 329.) but particularly of the more common way; not that I did then, or have yet thought it the best, but not indefensible, p. 326.

And I must now sincerely profess, That the perusal of these very considerations gives me more confidence about this hypothesis, than I allowed myself before; finding that the very sagacious author of them, of whose abilities and industry together, I really have that opinion, as to count him the most likely to confute it of all the modern antitrinitarians, hath no other way to deal with it, than first, both partially and invidiously to represent it, and then, rather to trifle than argue against it. He first paints it out in false and ugly colours, before he comes to reasoning. And then, when he should reason, he says nothing that hath so much as a colour. It seems to me an argument of a suspected ill cause on his side, that he thought it needful to prepossess the reader with the imagination of I know not (and I believe he knows not) what gross ideas, as he romances, belonging to this hypothesis. Because from those words, (*Prov. 8. 30.*) Then was I by him, as one brought up with him, and daily his delight; the author speaks of the delicious society, which these words intimate, the eternal wis-

dom, and the prime Author and Parent of all things, to have each with other

For my part, I have little doubt but this ingenious writer is so well acquainted with the gust and relish of intellectual delight, that he chose to expose his adversary by using that odd expression of gross idea so causelessly, in accommodation only to the genius of some other men, whom he thought fit to humour, rather than his own. Nor can he be so little acquainted with the paganish theology, as not to apprehend a vast disagreement between this and that, and a much greater agreement between the paganish notion of the Deity, and his own.

For the questions which he supposes me to put, and makes me answer as he thinks fit, by misapplied passages of that discourse, I hope it will appear they were either prevented, or answered at another rate. At length he says, "The butt-end of this hypothesis, &c." I like not that phrase the worse for the author's sake, of whom it seems borrowed, whose memory greater things will make live, when we are forgot. But let him proceed—The butt-end of this hypothesis is the true strength of it. But that true strength he hath either had the hap not to observe, or taken the care not to represent, that is, from what is so often inculcated in that discourse, the necessary existence of two *hypostases* of, and in the first, and of an omnimodous simplicity groundlessly supposed in the Divine Being, he hath kept himself at a wary cautious distance, when he might apprehend there was its strength. Therefore I cannot also but observe, that as he hath marked this hypothesis, with (most undue) ill characters; so he hath maimed it too, of what was most considerable belonging to it, that he might expose it by the former means, so as to make it need much defence; and that by the latter, it might seem quite destitute of any defence at all.

And now when (not without some untoward disfigurations) it hath thus far escaped his hands, and is (in none of the best shapes) set up only to be beaten down; the argument he first attacks it with, is the inartificial one of authority. And yet his argument from this topic, is only negative, that the opinion he would confute wants authority, "that the inquirer was the first that ever dreamt of it: and that no learned divine of any persuasion will subscribe to it:" As if he had said, It is false, and impossible to be true. The inquirer only proposing what he offered, as possible for ought we know, is not otherwise opposed than by asserting it to be impossible. This therefore he must say, or he saith nothing to the purpose; and why now is it impossible? Because no body said it before. So, then, was every thing that any man first said; but afterwards, by being

often spoken, it might, it seems, at length become true! For any learned divines subscribing to it, I suppose he intends that in the strict sense. And so the inquirer never said he would subscribe it himself otherwise than that his judgment did more incline to it, as liable to less exception than other ways of defending the doctrine of the trinity, or than denying it, which he thought least defensible of all.

But now supposing one should find learned divines of the same mind, (and perhaps some may be found more confident than he) I would ask the considerator, whether he will therefore confess a trinity a possible thing? If not, he deals not fairly, to put the inquirer upon quoting authorities to no purpose: or that he would have them conclude him, by whom he will not be concluded himself.

He seems indeed himself to have forgot the question (with which afterwards he charges the inquirer) as it is set down, Sober Inquiry p. 301. Whether a trinity in the Godhead be a possible thing? This was the question, not what John, or Thomas, or James such a one thought? But while he pretends to think no body else is of the inquirer's mind in the particular point he is now speaking to, that is, the delicious society the divine *hypostases* are supposed to have with each other; give me leave freely to discourse this matter. I would fain know what it is, wherein he supposes the inquirer to have over-shot his mark: or of what makes he here so mighty a wonderment? It can be but one of these two things:—either that there are three divine persons in the Godhead really distinct; or,—that they have (if there be) a delicious society or conversation with each other. Will he say the former is a singular opinion? or that it is novel? Was there never a real trinitarian in the world before? Doth he not, in his own express words, sort the inquirer with one, whom he will not deny to be a learned divine, p. 43. of these his present considerations, col. 1. “The author of the 28 propositions, and Mr. H—w, “as he calls the inquirer, are honest men, and real trinitarians.” By which former character he hath, I dare say, ten thousand times more gratified his ambition, than by calling him learned too. And I believe he will as little think this a novel opinion, as a singular one. Nor shall I thank him for acknowledging it to have been the opinion of the fathers, generally, not only *Ante-Nicene* and *Nicene*, but *Post-Nicene* too, for some following ages, unto that of P. Lombard, so obvious it is to every one that will but more slightly search.

For my part, I will not except Justin Martyr himself, whom I the rather mention, both as he was one of the more ancient of the fathers; and as I may also call him, the father of the

modalists; nor his notion even about the Homo-ousian-Trinity, as he expressly styles it. Εκθ. π. 5. For though it will require more time than I now intend to bestow to give a distinct account of every passage throughout that discourse of his, yet his expression of the *τροποι υπαρξέως* must not be so taken, as if it were to be torn away from its coherence, and from itself. When therefore he says the *το μεν αγεννητον, και γεννητον, και εκπορευθον*, *the being unbegotten, begotten, and having proceeded*, are not names of the essence, but *τροποι υπαρξέως, modes of subsistence*; he must mean they are not immediately names of the essence, but mediately they cannot but be so. For what do they modify? not nothing. When they are said to be modes of subsistence, what is it that subsists? We cannot pluck away these modes of subsistence from that which subsists, and whereof they are the modes. And what is that? You will say the *μια οσια*, the *one essence*, which he had mentioned before; and that one essence is, it is true, as perfectly one, as it is possible; for what is of itself, and what are from that, to be with each other, that is, that they are congenerous, as the sun and its rays, (according to that Heb. 1. 3. *απαυγασμια της δοξης*, *the effulgency of glory*) or as mind, and (where there is nothing else but substance) consubstantial thought or word. Therefore this oneness of essence must be taken in so large and extensive a sense, as that it may admit of these differences. For so he afterwards plainly speaks, if “*ο μεν, αγεννητως εχει; if the one* (the Father) hath his existence without being begotten, *ο γεννητως, another* (the Son) by being begotten, *το δε, εκπορευθως, but that* (the Holy Ghost) by having proceeded, here it befalls us to behold differences (*τα της διαφορας*) or the things that import difference.” There must be a sense, therefore, wherein he understood this essence to be most truly one; and a sense wherein he also understood it to have its differences, and those too not unimportant ones, as being unbegotten, and being begotten, signify no light differences.

And in what latitude of sense he understood the oneness of essence, whereof he had before spoken, may be seen in his following explication, when what he said he would have been *σαφεστερον, more manifest*; he makes Adam's peculiar mode of subsistence to be that he was *ε γεννητος, αλλα διαπλασθεις, not begotten*, but *made* by God's own hand; but for them that were from him, he intimates theirs to be, that they were begotten, not made. If then you inquire concerning the same essence that was common to him and them, you still find that man is the *υποκειμενον, the subject*, whether of formation, as to him, or of generation, as to them. And who apprehends not in what latitude of sense the human nature is one, which is com-

mon to Adam, and his posterity? Though the divine nature is incomparably more one, which is common to the Father, Son, and Spirit, as we have formerly insisted, and shall further shew it cannot but be, in all necessary, and continually depending emanations.

Yet I might, if there were need, again (as to this part) quote the considerator to himself. For I suppose he will not disown the considerations in 1693. in which, page 15. col. 1. are these words, "Dr. Cudworth by a great number of very pertinent and home-quotations, hath proved that his explication (I mean that part of it which makes the three persons to be so many distinct essences, or substances) is the doctrine of the principal, if not of all the fathers, as well as of the platonists." And it is added, "and I (for my own part) do grant it." Upon the whole then, I reckon that as to this first part, we stand clear not only to the rest of the world, but with this author himself, that to be a real trinitarian is not so unheard of a thing, or what no learned divine of any persuasion ever dreamt of before the inquirer. But now for the

Second part. The delicious society supposed to be between (or rather among) the three persons. Is this a dream! And so strange a one! Why, good Sir! Can you suppose three persons, that is, three intellectual subsistences, perfectly wise, holy, and good, coexisting with, inexisting in one another to have no society? or that society not to be delicious? He says, How can it be? I say, How can it but be? Herein I am sure the inquirer hath far more company than in the former. For whether the three persons have all the same numerical essence, or three distinct; all agree they most delightfully converse. Will he pretend never to have read any that make love (as it were intercurrent between the two first) the character of the third? In short; Is it the thing he quarrels with as singular, or the word? At the thing, supposing three persons, he can have no quarrel, without quarrelling with the common sense of mankind. For the word, he hath more wit and knowledge of language than to pretend to find fault with that. For let him but consult expositors (even the known critics) upon the mentioned place Prov. 8. (whom, in so plain a case, I will not be at the pains to quote and transcribe) and take notice whether none read those words, *fui in deliciis*. Therefore I believe the considerator will be so ingenuous, as to perceive, he hath, in this part of his discourse, grossly overshoot, or undershot, or shot wide of his own mark, if indeed he had any, or did not (letting his bolt fly too soon) shoot at rovers, before he had taken steady aim at any thing. In short,

all this dust could be raised but with design only because he could not enlighten his readers, to blind them.

But now when he should come by solid argument to disprove the hypothesis, by shewing that three individual divine natures, or essences, can possibly have no *nexus*, so as to become one entire divine nature, and, at the same time, (which this hypothesis supposes) remain still three individual divine natures and essences, he thinks fit to leave it to another to do it for him, who, he says, if he cannot prove this, can prove nothing. And when we see that proof, it will be time enough to consider it.

In the mean time I cannot here but note what I will neither, in charity, call forgery in the considerator, nor, in civility, ignorance; but it cannot be less than great oversight; his talk of *these three*, so united as to *become one*: the inquirer never spake (nor dreamt) of their *becoming one*, but of their being naturally, necessarily, and eternally so.

Then he comes to put the question, as (he says) it is between the inquirer and the socinians. And he puts it thus, How three distinct, several, individual, divine beings, essences, or substances, should remain three several individual substances, and yet, at the same time, be united into *one* divine substance called God? One would have thought, when he had so newly waved the former question, as wherein he meant not to be concerned; he should presently have put a new one, upon which he intended to engage himself. But we have the same over again, even with the same ill look of an equivalent phrase unto *becoming-united into one*, to insinuate to his reader, as if his antagonist thought these three were *de novo* united, not *in*, but *into one*. Which he knew must have a harsh sound, and as well knew it to be most repugnant to the inquirer's most declared sentiment. Nor will it be any presumption, if I take the liberty to set down the question according to the inquirer's mind, who hath as much reason to know it, as he; and I am sure it will be more agreeable to the tenour of his discourse now referred to, "Whether the *τὸ θεῖον*, or the Divine Being, may not possibly, for ought we know, contain three natures, or essences, under the names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so far distinct, as is necessary to found the distinct predications or attributions severally given them in the Holy Scriptures, and yet be eternally, necessarily, naturally, vitally so united, as notwithstanding that remaining distinction, to be one God." And let us now see what he hath to say;—to the inquirer's illustrations of it, as possible: and—what he brings to prove it impossible.

1. As to the former part. He first falls upon what the inquirer

had said concerning the vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual natures in ourselves. And upon this he insists so operously, as if the whole weight of the cause had been laid upon it, and seems to think the inquirer had forgot the question, when he mentioned it; because he says, those are only distinct faculties, not persons, or substances (though persons were not in his question) without ever taking any notice of the inquirer's waving it, with these words, "that he would content himself with what was more obvious." But this is all art: to raise a mighty *posse*, and labour to seem to those that he believed would read what he wrote only, not what the other did, most effectually to expunge what he saw was neglected, though not altogether useless, as we shall see anon.

In the mean time, it is observable how needlessly he slurs himself in this his first brisk onset. He says, "No man ever pretended—that the vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual faculties (or powers) are so many distinct, individual persons, substances, or essences, we grant, &c."

What did no man ever pretend that these three distinct natures, the vegetative, sensitive, intellectual, were in man, three distinct substances, or souls, concurring by a certain subordination in him? What necessity was there, that to heighten his triumph, in the opinion of his credulous followers, he should, with so glorious a confidence, put on the vain and false shew of having all the world on his side; and herein either dissemble his knowledge, or grossly betray his ignorance in the mere history of philosophy; and most imprudently suppose all his readers as ignorant, as he would seem! What, did he never hear of an Averroist in the world? Doth he not know that physician and philosopher, and his followers, earnestly contended for what he says no man ever pretended to? Or that divers other commentators upon Aristotle, have some abetted, others as vehemently opposed them in it? Not to insist also that some thought the *Intellectus Agens*, and *Patiens*, the active and passive intellect, to be distinct substances, belonging to the nature of man, as others had also other conceits about the former? And if he look some hundreds of years back, as far as the time, and extant work of Nemesius, bishop and philosopher (as he writes himself) of the nature of man, (who lived in the time of Gregory Nazianzen, as appears by an epistle of his written to him, and prefixed to that little book of his) he will find that author takes notice there were divers that took man to consist of mind, soul, and body, and that some did doubt, Ποτερον προσελθων ο νους τη ψυχη, ως αλλος αλλη νεραν αυτην εποισεν, &c. whether the mind supervening to the soul sa one to the other, did not make the latter intelligent. Cap. 1.

And in several other parts of that work, easy, if it were necessary to be recited, he speaks it as the judgment of some, Καὶ ἐξυβήν ἐπιζει ὡς λόγον ψυχῆν, *that the unreasonable nature in man did exist by itself, as being of itself an unreasonable soul, not a part of the reasonable, accounting it one of the greatest absurdities, τῶν ἀτοποῦντων, that the unreasonable soul should be a part of that which is reasonable.* cap. 16.

And he carries us yet much further back, referring us to Plotinus, (Enn. 6. lib. 7. cap. 5, 6, 7, &c.) in whom any that will, may read much more to that purpose in many places. It matters not whether this opinion be true or false, but a great mistake (or misrepresentation) it was, to say no man ever pretended to it. And he that as it will; if all the readers will suspend their judgments, that a trinity in the Godhead is impossible, till the considerator shall have proved, by plain demonstration, the concurrence of three such spirits (a vegetative, sensitive and intellective) vitally united in the constitution of man, is a thing simply impossible, I believe he will not in haste, have many proselytes.

I, for my part, as his own eyes might have told him, laid no stress upon it; but only mentioned it in *transitu*, as I was going on to what is obvious, and in view to every man, the union between our soul and body. Nor was I solicitous to find this an exact parallel, as he fancies I was obliged to do. What if there be no exact parallel? Will any man of a sober mind, or that is master of his own thoughts, conclude every thing impossible in the uncreated Being, whereof there is not an exact parallel in the creation? If any man will stand upon this, come make an argument of it, let us see it in form, and try its strength.—Whatsoever hath not its exact parallel in the creation, is impossible in God, &c.—He will sooner prove himself ridiculous, than prove his point by such a medium.

It is enough for a sober man's purpose, in such a case as we are now considering, if we find such things actually are (or might as easily be, as what we see actually is) among the creatures, that are of as difficult conception, and explication, as what appears represented in the inquirer's hypothesis concerning a trinity. It is trifling to attempt to give, or to ask a parallel exact *per omnia: in all things*. It abundantly serves any reasonable purpose, if there be a parallel *quoad hoc*, namely, in respect of the facility or difficulty of conception. And though the vegetative, sensitive, and intellective natures be not so many distinct substances, a trinity is not less conceivable in the Divine Being, than three such natures, or natural powers, in the one human nature.

And whoever they be that will not simplify the Divine Being into nothing (as the excellent author of the 28 propositions

speaks) must also acknowledge the most real perfections in the Divine Being, though not univocal, but infinitely transcendent to any thing in us. And are they no way distinct? Let any sober understanding judge, will the same notion agree to them all? Is his knowledge, throughout, the same with his effective power? Then he must make himself. For who can doubt he knows himself? And is his will the self-same undistinguishable perfection, in him, with his knowledge? Then the purposes of his will must be to effect all that he can. For doth he not know all that he can do? And the complacencies of his will must be as much in what is evil, as good, even in the most odious turpitude of the vilest, and most immoral evils! For he knows both alike. I know what is commonly said of extrinsical denominations: but are such denominations true, or false? Have they any thing *in re* correspondent to them, or have they not? Then some distinction there must be of these perfections themselves. If so, how are they distinguished?

And there appears great reason, from God's own word, to conceive greater distinction of the three *hypostases* in his being, than of the attributes which are common to them, as is said, Sober Inquiry, vide page 353. In reference whereto, it is not improper or impertinent to mention such differences, as we find in our own being, though they be not distinct substances. Less distinction in ourselves may lead us to conceive the possibility of greater in him, in whom we are wont to apprehend nothing but substance.

What he adds concerning the union of soul and body in ourselves, (which he cannot deny to be distinct substances) is, from a man of so good sense, so surprisingly strange, and remote from the purpose, that one would scarce think it from the same man; but that he left this part to some other of the club, and afterwards wrote on, himself, without reading it over; or this was with him (what we are all liable to) some drowsy interval.

For when he had himself recited as the inquirer's words, or sense, "If there be this union between two so contrary natures and substances, as the soul and body, why may there not be a like union between two or three created spirits?" he, without shadow of a pretence, feigns the inquirer again to have forgot the question, because soul and body are not both intelligent substances. And why, Sir, doth this argue him to have forgot the question? It is as if he expected a man to be at the top of the stairs, as soon as he touched the first step. In a series of discourse, must the beginning touch the end, leaving out what is to come between, and connect both parts? What

then serve mediums for? And so farewell to all reasoning, since nothing can be proved by itself. He expected, it seems, I should have proved "three intelligent natures might be united, because three intelligent natures might be united!"

But say I (and so he repeats) if there be so near union between things of so contrary natures as soul and body, why not between two or three created spirits? The question is, as he now states it himself, why may not three intelligent substances be united? And hither he (with palpable violence) immediately refers the mention of the union of soul and body; and says he, "Why Sir, are body and soul intelligent substances?" And, say I, But why, Sir, are not the three (supposed) created spirits intelligent substances? And now, thinks he, will my easy admiring readers, that read me only, and not him, say, What a baffle hath he given the inquirer! What an ignorant man is this Mr.—to talk of soul and body, as both intelligent substances? But if any of them happen upon the inquirer's book too, then must they say, How scurvily doth this matter turn upon himself! how inconsiderate a prevaricator was he that took upon him the present part of a considerer, so to represent him! And I myself would say, had I the opportunity of free discourse with him in a corner, (which because I have not, I say it here) Sir, is this sincere writing? Is this the way to sift out truth? And I must further say, this looks like a man stung by the pungency of the present question. "If soul and body, things of so contrary natures, that is, of an intelligent and unintelligent nature, can be united into one (human) nature, why may not three created spirits, all intelligent natures, be as well united into some one thing? It appears you knew not what to say to it; and would fain seem to say something, when you really had nothing to say, and therefore so egregiously *tergiversate*, and feign yourself not to understand it, or that your antagonist did not understand himself. The inquirer's scope was manifest. Nothing was to be got by so grossly perverting it. Is there no argument but *a pari*? Might you not plainly see, he here argued *a fortiori*? If contrary natures might be so united, why not much rather like natures?"

When you ask me this question, "Do not body and soul remain two substances, a bodily, and a spiritual, notwithstanding their concurrence to the constitution of a man? I answer. Yes. And I thank you, Sir, for this kind look towards my hypothesis: If they were not so, the mention of this union had no way served it. You know it is only union, with continuing distinction, that is for my purpose. I doubt you nodded a little, when you asked me that question; and I do *annuere*."

But when the discourse was only of a natural union, what, in the name of wonder, made you dream of a christmas-pye? Had you wrote it at the same time of year I am now writing, I should have wondered less. But either you had some particular, preternatural appetite to that sort of delicate; or you gave your fancy a random liberty, to make your pen write whatever came to your finger's end, and that whirled you unaware into a pastry, and so, by mere chance, you came to have your finger in the pye. Or you thought to try whether this wild ramble might not issue as luckily for you, as Dr. Echard's jargon of words fortuitously put together (to ridicule Hobbes's fatal chain of thoughts) at length ending in a napkin; which was mightily for your turn, in your present case.

But upon the whole matter, when you let your mind so unwarily be *in patinis, among the pots*, your cookery quite spoiled your philosophy. Otherwise, when you had newly read those words in the Sober Inquiry, as I find you had page 307. "Waving the many artificial unions of distinct things, that united, and continuing distinct, make one thing under one name, I shall only consider what is natural" you would never have let it (your mind, I mean so fine a thing) be huddled up, and sopped, with meat, plums, sugar, wine, in a christmas-pye; or have thought that the union of a human soul with a human body was like such a jumble as this. I believe when some among the antients made use of this union of soul and body, (as I find they have) to represent a very sacred, namely, the hypostatical one, they little thought it would be so debased; or that any thing would be said of it so extravagant as this. And, if we design doing any body good by writing, let us give over this way of talk, lest people think, what I remember Cicero once said of the epicureans arguing, that they do not so much consider, as *sortiri, cast lots* what to say. But now it is like we may come to some closer discourse. We see what is sad to the inquirer's elucidation of his hypothesis to represent it possible, which by mere oversight and incogitance (as I hope now appears) was too hastily pronounced an oversight, or incogitancy.

2. We are next to consider what he says to prove it impossible. And so far as I can apprehend the drift of the discourse, what he alleges will be reduced to these two heads of argument: namely,—that three such *hypostases* (or *subsistents*, as I have chosen to call them) can have no possible nexus, by which to be one God: (1.) Because they are all supposed intelligent: and (2.) Because they can neither be said to be finite, nor infinite. He should not therefore have said the hypothesis was mere incogitance and oversight; for he knows I saw, and con-

sidered them both. ; (In the Sober Inquiry itself; the former, page 308. the latter, page 325. with page 344.) and thought them unconcluding then, as I still think. Nor do I find the considerer hath now added any strength to either of them. But I shall, since he is importune, go to the reconsideration of them with him. And

(1.) As to the former, I cannot so much as imagine what should make him, confessing (which he could not help) the actual union of an intelligent and unintelligent being, deny the possible union of intelligent beings. He seems to apprehend many dangerous things in it, that if he cannot reason, he may frighten a man out of it, and out of his wits too. It will infer associating, discoursing, solacing. But where lies the danger of all this? or to whom is it dangerous. He says it introduces three omniscient, Almighty Beings, as I expressly call them, associating, &c. But he cites no place where, and I challenge him to name any persons among whom, I so expressly called them. He may indeed tell where I blamed him for representing some of his adversaries, as affirming three Almighties, and denying more than one; but that is not expressly calling them so myself. And he may know in time it is one thing expressly to call them so, and another to put him (as he is concerned) to disprove it.

Aye, but it will further infer tritheism. It will make three Gods. And if this be not to make three Gods, it can never be made appear that the pagans held more Gods—Yes, if there be no natural, vital *nexus*, if they be not united in one, of which the pagans never talked: or, if they be co-ordinate, not subordinate, as Dr. Cudworth speaks. And I add, if that subordination be, not arbitrary, but by necessary, natural, continual emanation of the second from the first, and of the third from both the other; so as that their goings forth may be truly from everlasting, as is said of the one, and may as well be conceived of another of them.

I would have the trinitarians be content with the reproach of falling in, *quoad hoc, in this particular*, with Plato; and not envy their antagonists the honour of more closely following Mahomet. And, Sir, there is more paganism in denying this, and the divine revelation upon which it is grounded, than in supposing it.

No. But there can be no such *nexus*. Conversation, consociation, mutual harmony, agreement, and delectation—cannot be conceived, but between beings so distinct and diverse, that they can be one in no natural respect, but only in a civil, or economical. This is loud, and earnest. But why can there not? Setting aside noise and clamour, I want to know

a reason, why intelligent beings may not be as intimately, and naturally united with one another, as unintelligent, and intelligent? And if so, why such union should spoil mutual conversation and delight? Perhaps his mind and mine might not do well together; for he cannot conceive, and I, for my part, cannot but conceive, that most perfect intelligent natures, vitally united, must have the most delightful conversation, harmony, and agreement together; and so much the more, by how much the more perfect they are, and by how much more perfect their union is.

Whereas then I expect a reason, why intelligent beings cannot be capable of natural union, and no other is given me, but because they are intelligent. And again, why such beings naturally united cannot converse, and no other is given me, but because they are naturally united, that is, such things cannot be, because they cannot be. But how much the less such reasons have to convince, they have the more to confirm me, that the hypothesis I have proposed is not capable of being disproved. And for my increased confidence I must profess myself so far beholden to the considerator.

This, in the mean time, I do here declare, that I see not so much as the shadow of a reason from him, why three spiritual, or intelligent beings cannot be naturally and vitally united with each other, with continuing distinction, so as to be really and truly one thing. If they cannot, I would know why? that is, Why they cannot as well, or much rather than the soul and body, so as to be one entire man. If they can, such a created union is acknowledged possible; which is all that part of our discourse contends for. And it is enough for our present purpose; for this will be a union of *ομοθυμια*, that is, of things of the same nature, the soul and body are *ετεροθυμια* that is, things of very different natures. And it sufficiently prepared our way, as was intended, to advance further, and add,

That if such a created or made union be possible, it cannot be understood why a like uncreated or unmade union should be thought impossible.

And if it be possible, the noisy clamour, that a trinity in the Godhead is impossible, or that it will infer tritheism, must cease, and be hushed into everlasting silence. Or if it shall still be resolved to be kept up, to carry on the begun humour, can only serve to frighten children, or unthinking people; but can never be made articulate enough, to have any signification with men of sense. For when the Father is acknowledged on all hands to be the original, or fountain-being, existing necessarily, and eternally of himself; the Son existing by eternal generation necessarily of, and from, and in the Father; the

Holy Ghost of, and in them both ; these, because they all exist necessarily, cannot but be each of them God, and, because they exist in necessary, natural, eternal union, cannot but be one God.

And he that shall attempt to make tritheism of this, will sooner prove himself not the third part of a wise man, than from hence prove three Gods. We may truly and fitly say the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God. But that form of speech, the Father is a God, the Son is a God, the Holy Ghost is a God, I think unjustifiable. The former way of speaking well agrees with the *homo-ousiotes* of the Deity, the substance whereof is congenerous. You may fitly say of three drops of the same water, they are each of them water. But if you should say they are each of them a water, one would understand you to mean they were all drops of so many different sorts of water. I do upon the whole judge the substance or essence of the three *hypostases* to be as perfectly *one*, as can possibly consist with the emanation of some from other of them. But now next,

(2.) In his way to his second topic of argumentation, he is guilty of a strange sort of omission, that is, he twice over says he will omit, what he greatly insists upon, as a mighty matter, that this (meaning the inquirer's hypothesis) is heresy among those of his own party, whether they be the nominal, or the real trinitarians, who all agree, that each of the divine persons is perfect God, in the most adequate and perfect sense ; and this too, as such person is considered sejunctly, or as the Athanasian creed speaks, by himself, &c.

To this I only say, in the first place, that, if this weigh any thing, it ought in reason to be as heavy upon him, as me ; for I believe the same people that will call this account of the trinity heresy, will call his denial of it heresy much more. But if he be not concerned at that, I am the more obliged to him, that he hath a kinder concern for me than himself. And if he really have, let it ease his mind to know, that let the opinion be heresy never so much, I, for my part, am however resolved to be no heretic, as he, and they may well enough see, by the whole tenour of that discourse.

But yet I humbly crave leave to differ from him in this, as well as in greater matters. I am apt enough indeed to think that the *nominal* trinitarians will judge the opinion of the *real* trinitarians to want truth ; and the *real* will, perhaps, more truly judge *theirs* to want sense. But neither the one, nor the other will say that each of the divine persons is perfect God, in the most adequate and perfect sense. For both cannot but agree that God, in the most adequate and perfect sense, includes Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ;

but they will none of them say that each, or any of the persons is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And I am very confident, he that shall so represent them, will betray them by it into such inconveniencies, and so much against their mind and intent, that if ever they did trust him, as I believe they never did this considerator, to express their sense for them, they never will do it more. As for Athanasius himself, whose creed he mentions, though he often speaks of an equality of the persons in point of Godhead; yet he also often, (tom. 2. p. 576.) most expressly excepts the differences (which I take to be very important) of being unbegotten, begotten, and proceeding: And which is a difference with a witness, in his questions and answers; he asks, "How many causes are there in God?" (Q. 11. *ποσα αιτια*.) and answers, "one only, and that is the Father." And then asks" (Q. 12. *ποσα αιτια*) "How many effects, or things caused?" And answers "two, the Son and the Spirit." And adds, "the Father is called a cause, because he begets the Son, and sends out the Spirit: the Son and Spirit are said to be caused, because the Son is begotten, and doth not beget; the Spirit is sent forth, and doth not send." Now can he be thought all this while to mean an absolute equality? And whereas he uses the term *μοναδικως*, which our author renders *sejunctly*, or *by himself*, that he may make it seem opposite to what is said by the inquirer, page 373. I, for my part, say, as Athanasius doth, that each of these persons is *μοναδικως singly God*, and Lord; but I say not, as he doth not; (and he denies what the Sober Inquiry denies, in the mentioned place,) "that any one of the persons *sejunctly*, is all that is signified by the name of God," which words this author slyly leaves out, for what purpose he best knows. But his purpose, be it what it will, can no longer be served by it, than till the reader shall take the pains to cast back his eye upon the Sober Inquiry. *vide* page 318. And I must here put the considerator in mind of what I will not suppose him ignorant, but inadvertent only, at this time; That one may be *sejuncted*, or abstracted from another two ways, or by a twofold abstraction, *precisive*, or *negative*: that we may truly say of the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, that the one of them is, or is not God, abstracting from both the other, according as you differently abstract. If you abstract any one of the persons from both the other by *precisive* abstraction; and each of them is God or Lord, *μοναδικως* or *singly* considered: but if by *negative* abstraction; you sever any one from the other, so as to say the one is God, and not the other, or any one is all that is signified by the name of God, I deny it, as before I did; for so you would exclude the other two the Godhead; which is but what was expressly enough said, Sober Inquiry, page 317. The Father is God, but not ex-

cluding the Son and the Holy Ghost, the Son is God, but not excluding—&c.

And if (as this author quotes) we are compelled by the Christian verity so to speak, I wonder it should not compel him, as it is Christian verity, or at least as it is verity, as well as the rest of christians, or mankind. Why hath he only the privilege of exemption from being compelled by truth? Athanasius's word is *αναγκαστομεθα. we are necessitated*; and if the considerator's own translation grieve him, he might relieve himself by considering that all necessity is not compulsive. And because he hath brought me to Athanasius, I shall take the occasion to say, I cannot apprehend him to have any sentiment contrary to this hypothesis. His business was against the arians, or the ariomanites (as he often called them, as symbolizing also with Manes.) And because with them the controversy was, "whether the Son and Spirit were creatures?" in opposition hereto he constantly asserts their consubstantiality with the Father, never intending (for ought that appears) that their being was numerically the same with his; but of the same kind, uncreated, coessential, coeternal with his own. For so he expressly speaks in his *Quæstiones aliæ, other or additional questions*, that is, asking (quest. 6.) "How many essences *ποσας οσιας*, that is, how many sorts of essence (as the answer will direct us to understand it) do you acknowledge in God?"

The answer is, I say, "one essence, one nature, one form" (*μορφην*) and adds, "one kind," (*εν γενος*) which sufficiently expounds all the rest. He acknowledged no different kinds of essence or nature in the Godhead, but that one only, which was eternal and uncreated; agreeably to what he elsewhere says against the followers of Sabellius. "It is impossible things not eternal-beings, not partaking Godhead, should be ranked, or put in the same order with the Godhead." * Afterwards speaking of the Father and the Son, he says, *τοιςτος εστιν οιος κκεινος*, the *one* is such (not the same) as the *other*, the other such as he. And that the Son was not to be conceived under another species (*καθ ετερον ειδος*) nor under a strange and foreign character (*ξενον χαρακτηρηα*) but was God as the Father. And I appeal to any man's understanding and conscience, If that great author believed a numerical sameness of essence, common to the three persons, what should make him blame the sabellians for making the Son *μονοθεσιον*, not *ομοθεσιον*, when by the latter in that case, he must mean the the same thing as by the former? †

* Contra Sabellii Gregales. † Εκθ. πικ. Tom. 1. p. 241. Edit. Paris

In the forecited questions, he expressly says we were to acknowledge in the Deity *τρεῖς ατομικα*, *three individuals*. Answer to question 7. *ubi prius*. And elsewhere he as distinctly asserts *τρεῖς πραγματικα* *three things*. And what could he mean by three things, not three deities, (as he often inculcates) but he must certainly mean three entities, three essences; for by three things, he could not possibly mean three non-entities, or three nothings. His great care plainly was to assert the true Deity of the Son and Spirit, or their pre-eternity, or that it could never be said (*ην οτε εν ην*) there was a time when they were not, which he inculcates in a hundred places, still insisting that one deity, one essence was common to them, but still with distinction; and as warmly inveighs against Sabellius and P. Samosatensis, as against Arius, every whit.

And that which puts his meaning quite out of doubt, speaking* how the Father, Son and Spirit, though of one and the same sort of essence, are three *hypostases*, he plainly says the nature wherein they partake is so one, as the human nature is one in all men. We men, saith he, consisting of a body and a soul, are all *μικα φυσικα, και ομοιας* *of one nature and substance, or essence*; but we are many *hypostases*. And to the same purpose (Dial. 2. de Trinitate) his *anomicos* comparing the Father, Son and Spirit, to a bishop, presbyter, and deacon, he brings in the orthodox saying, they have all the same nature, being each of them man; as an angel, a man, and a horse, have different natures.

In the mean time, because men are not inseparably, and vitally united with one another, as the Divine Persons are, and cannot but be, by reason of the necessary, eternal, perpetual emanation of the two latter from the first, they cannot admit to be called one man, as the three persons in the Godhead, are and cannot but be one God. Inasmuch as these three Divine Persons partake real Godhead (as existing necessarily each of them) they are each truly God: but because they partake it in necessary, eternal, vital union; and so that the first is the *radix*, the second perpetually springing from the first, and the third from both the other, they are therefore together one God as branches, though really distinct from each other, and the root, are altogether notwithstanding but one tree, and all *omousial*, or *consubstantial* to one another; which is an illustration familiar with the antients. And if there be any, now a days, that will call this heresy, (though as I said, I will be no heretic however) yet if I must make a choice, I had rather be a heretic with the Ante-Nicene and Nicene fathers, and Post-Nicene, for ought appears to the contrary, through some following centuries, than be reputed orthodox with P. Luni-

* Tractat. de Definitionibus, Tom. 2. 45. ubi vid. plura.

bard, &c. whom a German divine, not of meanest account, calls “one of the four evangelists of antichrist.”

But having now done with what he said he would omit, but did not, (though he might to every whit as good purpose) we come to what he overlooks not, because (he intimates) he cannot. And let us see whether he looks into it, to any better purpose, than if he had quite overlooked it. He is indeed the more excusable that he overlooks it not, because (he says) he could not. In that case there is no remedy. Nor do I see how he well could, when the sober inquirer had once and again so directly put it in his view, and, as was said, objected it to himself. But he thinks, however, to make an irrefragable battering-ram of it, wherewith to shiver this doctrine of the trinity all to pieces, and he brings it into play with the two horns before mentioned. The Father, he says, for instance, is either infinite in his substance, his wisdom, his power, his goodness, or he is not. With the like pompous apparatus, and even in the same terms, I find a series of argumentation is by a noted sceptic adorned, and set forth against the being of any God at all. *εἰ ἐστὶ τί θεῖον, ἢτοι πεπερασμένον ἢ ἀπειρον, &c.* *If there be any Divine Being, it is either finite or infinite, &c.** And he reasons upon each head, as the matter could admit, and probably thought as well of the performance as our author doth of his.

But let us see how much to the purpose our author uses it in the present case. The inquirer had represented three really distinct subsistents in the Godhead as possible, for ought we know, not presuming to determine herein, this way or that, beyond what is plain in itself, or plainly revealed. And so still he thinks it may be, for ought he knows; for he professes not to know any thing to the contrary. Yes, saith the considerator, but I do. No doubt, if any man. But say I, How know you? I know, saith he, they can neither be finite, nor infinite, therefore there can be no such thing at all. But, say I, Do you know what infinite is, or can you comprehend it? Yes, very well, says he, for I have an infinite all comprehending mind. † What a cyclopic understanding is this! Nay, and he pretends he can comprehend the very being of God (otherwise all religion must cease) after he had granted, “we (including himself) cannot comprehend the least spire of grass.” And yet that being of God is nothing else with him, but existence, (that is not to be nothing) which he there vafrously in-

* Sext. Empir. adversus Mathematicos, Lib. 8.

† Considerations on the Lord Bishop of Worcester's Sermon p. 7, 8.

serts, but very imprudently ; for every one sees he said it only to avoid the purpose he was to speak to, and so said it not to any present good purpose at all ? As if it had been the bishop's word, and all one with God's being. It is true that his being includes his existence : but hath he therefore a clear, distinct and adequate conception what God is, because he, indistinctly, conceives a being, vulgarly signified by the name of God, doth exist ? Bring the matter to creatures, and because he knows, as he may by the sight of his eye, that such a creature exists, doth he therefore understand its nature ? Existence is to be *extra causas, distinct from its causes*, and this is common to all creatures ; as to be necessarily, and without a cause, is peculiar to God. If therefore existence, and their being be all one, all creatures are the same, and differ not from one another ; for to be *extra causas* is that wherein they all agree. And extend it further, as existence is to be, in *rerum natura*, abstracting from being caused, or uncaused ; and so God, and creatures will be all one. And see whether this will not make all religion cease too ?

But if he say, though existence abstractly taken, distinguishes not God from creatures ; yet his existence doth distinguish him. Very true ; but that leads us back to the consideration of his being, of what sort that is. Which therefore, if he had pleased, he might as well have let stand before as it was ; and might have considered that existence, and that which doth exist, are not of the same import. Or that it is not all one, to say that God doth exist, and what he is that doth exist.

But it will be worth the while to examine a little further this author's comprehension of infinites. He says it is to have a clear, distinct, and adequate conception of them, so he comprehends the infinite attributes of God. His eternity, that is, that duration by which he is without all beginning, and end. This tells us what it is not. But doth it tell us what it is ? It is as though he should say, An infinite duration is a boundless duration : A grammatical definition ! or rather a mere translation of latin into english. And so he might teach a mere latinist what boundless is, by turning the english back again into latin. And greatly hath he edified his disciple ! As much as he should, without such change of language, by saying invasion is invasion. And doth he give any better account of infinite wisdom and power ? Are his conceptions of them clear and distinct ? It is possible to know much, and not be very wise. I do not think *that* therefore, which he gives, a very good account of wisdom. Again, knowing is doing somewhat. He speaks not now of making this or that, but more generally of doing any thing. Nor doth any one know any

thing, but what he can know. Therefore his wisdom is power; for so is an ability to know, power, as truly, as an ability to do any thing else. Here is confusion therefore, instead of distinction. And to the comprehending any thing, I should think it as requisite a man's conception be true, as distinct. Now when he pretends to have distinct conceptions of God's infinite wisdom and power, if also his conceptions be true, those infinite attributes are distinct. I am sure he comprehends them not, if, whereas he clearly conceives them distinct, they are not so. But if they are distinct, they are distinct, what? Substances? or accidents? If the former, according to him, distinct divine substances must be distinct Gods. If the latter, let him weather the difficulties as he can of admitting accidents in the Divine Being. Either way, he must as little pretend to believe an omnimodous simplicity there, as the inquirer. But would he then have him give better and fuller conceptions of these infinite attributes, or rather of the infinity of them, which is his present business? No, no, that is none of the inquirer's part. He pretends not to comprehend infiniteness. It is enough for *one*, among mortals, to offer at that *ingens autum, so great a thing!*

When again he says his conception of the infinite, divine wisdom, power, &c. is adequate, telling us they are those properties whereby God knows, and can do, whatsoever implies not a contradiction to be known, and done: I ask, but doth he comprehend in his mind all those things which it implies not a contradiction for him to know and do? If not, what is become of his adequate conception? He may so comprehend all that the most learned book contains, because he knows the title, or something of its cover; and he hath a very adequate conception of all that is contained in the universe, because he hath some general notion of what is signified by the word world. Let him then pretend as long as he please to comprehend infiniteness, no sober man will believe him, and the less, because he pretends it. If he put his mind upon the trial, and deal justly and truly when he hath tried, I would ask him, let him put the notion of infiniteness upon what he pleases, space, for instance, whether, as he thinks away any whatsoever bounds of it, new ones do not immediately succeed; and let him think away those, whether still he doth not presently conceive new? Yes, but he can divert and think no more of it, that is, he can think what infinite is, by not thinking! And yet if he did understand infinites never so well, it would be no small spite to him if a man did but assert the infiniteness of one of the persons, (the Father) and only *επεχειν* as to the other two, as knowing their intimate union with him, makes his wisdom,

power, &c. as truly theirs, as if it first resided in themselves; his argument is quite undone by it to all intents and purposes.

But I shall however, further state and weigh this case of—knowing, or not knowing, three such hypostases cannot be infinite: and—shew what might cast a thinking man upon, supposing they may be all infinite for ought one knows: and—then consider the difficulty that is in it.

1. As to the former. That the Father virtually (or eminent-ly rather) comprehends all being, created and uncreated, there is no doubt. Nor again, that what is from him, by perpetual, natural, necessary emanation, cannot but be *homoousial* to himself, the Athanasian differences only supposed, of being unbegotten, and begotten, &c.

2. But how to understand these is the difficulty; that is, How the same numerical nature is both begotten, and not begotten; nor will I determine it. Let them do it that can better. I, for my part, as I have said, assert nothing in this matter, only have proposed to be considered what may be thought possible herein.

But if any would set themselves to consider this matter, I would have them take the difficulty they are to consider, entirely, and as it truly is in itself; that they may not be short in their reckoning. And to that purpose to bethink themselves what is the proper character (as Athanasius, and before him Justin Martyr phrase it) or modus of the Son (for instance) that it is to be begotten. This methinks should bear very hard upon the mere modalists, who hereupon must say, that to be begotten is the only thing begotten, and so consequently that to be begotten, is the thing that is peculiarly said to be incarnate, and that suffered, &c. For they must assign that which distinguishes the Son from the Father, otherwise they will make the Father be begotten, which is somewhat harder than to be *patripassians*, or to make him to have suffered.

But it must also be upon the matter even the same difficulty, to say, “the same numerical nature, with the modus, is begotten.” For then the same numerical nature must still be both unbegotten, and begotten, which is very hard. And if they reply, Yes, but under a distinct *modus*: Well; but what is that distinct *modus*? And when they find it is but to be begotten, they must be hugely abashed, as one of less deep thought than they would think. For so, the nature being common both to the Father and the Son, all that is peculiar to the begotten, from the begetter, will still be but to be begotten; that is, when the question is asked, What only is begotten? the answer will be but as above, To be begotten. It hath hitherto, therefore, been only inquired, whether it will not

seem easier to suppose each subsistent to have its own singular nature, though *homoousial*, as, the two latter being by emanation from the first, it cannot but be? Which hath been often inculcated, and is plain in itself. Mere arbitrary productions may be very diverse from their original, but purely natural, especially emanative, cannot be so. And then the only considerable difficulty which remains is this now before us, namely, the finiteness or infiniteness of these three *hypostases*: it is plain they cannot be all finite. But here our present adversary places his principal pains and labour, to prove, what he knows no body will deny, that they cannot be so. And hence he carries away glorious trophies, that three, or three thousand finites, will never make one infinite.—*Spolia ampla, ample spoils!*

But how knows he they are not all infinite? That, in short, which he hath here to say, is but this, and can be no more than this, till his thoughts have run through and compassed the never-utmost range of infiniteness, namely, That he knows they are not, he knows not what! But how can he soberly say that? How can he either affirm or deny of another what he doth not understand? Is this his demonstration of the impossibility of a trinity in the Godhead? Suppose the Father infinite, cannot the other two be infinite also, for ought he knows? How doth he know they cannot? By the same medium, by which he knows it, he may make other mortals know it too, if he think fit to communicate it. Which, from so mighty confidence, especially when he pretends it to be so easy, I have hitherto expected, but in vain. Is it because the first is infinite, therefore the two other cannot be so? I am sure he ought not to say so, whatever others may, or whatsoever the truth of the thing is (which we shall inquire into by and by) for he hath over and over acknowledged more infinites than one; as when he ascribes infinite comprehension to the mind of man (as hath been noted,) page 8. of these considerations. He doth not indeed say the mind is simply in itself infinite, but it is so in respect of its comprehension, which comprehension must therefore be infinite. How agreeable or consistent these terms are, the infinite comprehension of a finite mind, we are not to consider; let him take care for that, who can easily make light of such trivial difficulties as these. But in the mean time this infinite comprehension is an infinite something, not an infinite nothing; and then so many minds, so many comprehensions, and so many infinites. No doubt he includes his own mind; and it is possible he may think some other minds as comprehensive as his own. And ought not to think it impossible, supposing an uncreated, eternal Word, and Spirit, in the Deity, that they may be infi-

nite, as well as the comprehension of his own and some other minds.* Besides what he seems to grant of infinite guilts, and punishments due, though he doth not grant the sacrifice of Christ to be an equivalent for them. All shews he thinks there may be many infinites, and even in the same kind.

But though to him, to whom it is not easy to guess what would be difficult, this would seem a very vincible difficulty; it is of much greater importance, that we may do right to truth, to consider it, as it is in itself. And I acknowledge it (as I have said over and over) to be in itself, a great difficulty, as all sober men have been wont to do, that have had any occasion to employ their thoughts that way.

But my part herein hath less of difficulty in it; which is only to expect, and examine, what another will attempt to prove from this topic, not to assert any thing myself. My opponent takes upon him boldly to pronounce, "there cannot be three distinct *hypostases* in the Deity." Why? say I. Because saith he, that will suppose each of them infinite, which cannot be. I say, Why can it not be? He perhaps may tell me, If any one be infinite, nothing can be added thereto, or be without its compass, much less can there be another infinite added to the former. I only now say, you talk confidently in the dark, you know not what: and so as to involve yourself in contradictions, do what you can:—in saying nothing can be added to what is infinite: and—in pretending to know, if any thing can be added, how much, or how little can.

First. In saying nothing can be added to, or be without the compass of, what is infinite. For then there could be no creation, which I cannot doubt him to grant. Before there was any, was there not an infinitude of being in the eternal Godhead? And hath the creation nothing in it of real being? Or will you say the being of the creature is the being of God? I know what may be said (and is elsewhere said) to this, and it will better serve my purpose than his.

Secondly, In pretending to know what can, or cannot be added. Or that, in the way of necessary eternal emanation, there cannot be an infinite addition; though not in the way of voluntary, or arbitrary and temporary production. The reason of the difference is too obvious to need elucidation to them that can consider. But for your part (I must tell my antagonist) you have concluded yourself, even as to that which carries the greatest appearance of impossibility: come off as you can. You say, (considerations, page 8.) "a body of an inch

* These Considerations, p. 31, 32.

square, is not only not infinite in extension, but is a very small body; yet it hath this infinite power, to be divisible to infinity." So, I suppose, you must say of half that inch, or a quarter, or the thousandth part of it, much more of two, or twenty, or a thousand inches. You say, indeed, "this body itself is not infinite." Nor will I insist upon the trite and common objection against you. "How can any thing be divisible into parts which it hath not in it?" Which yet men have not talked away, by talking it often over. Still *hæret lateri, the arrow sticks*—Nor of an infinite power being lodged in a finite (and so minute a) subject. But, in the mean time, here are infinites upon infinites, an infinite power upon an infinite power multiplied infinitely; and still these infinite powers greater and less than other, as either the inch is augmented, or diminished. And he saith (Ibid.) "the mind of man hath the property of infinite or eternal duration." Therefore so many minds, so many infinites. And he must suppose the infinite duration of some minds to be greater than of others, unless he think his own mind to be as old as Adam's; or do not only hold their pre-existence, but that they were all created in the same moment. Which if he do, I am sure he can never prove. And so, for ought he knows, there may not only be many infinites, but one greater than another.

What therefore exceeds all limits that are assignable, or any way conceivable by us, as we are sure the Divine Being doth, it is impossible for us to know what differences that vast infinitude contains. And we shall, therefore, but talk at random, and with much more presumption than knowledge, when we take upon us to pronounce it impossible, there should be three infinite *hypostases* in the Godhead. Especially considering that most intimate vital union that they are supposed to have each with other, in respect whereof, the Son is said to be *εὐνοουσαίος*, inexisting in the Father (as Athanasius's phrase is) agreeably to the language of Scripture, John 14. 11. and elsewhere. And which, by parity of reason, is to be conceived of the Holy Ghost too, who is also said to search all things, even the deep things of God, 1 Cor. 2. 10. In respect of which union, and the *εὐνοουσιχωρησις* *mutual permeation* which may thence be collected, whatever of real perfection, wisdom, power, goodness. &c. is in any one, is each one's as truly as any one's, all being originally in the Father, as the first and everliving Fountain of all. And was said, Sober Inquiry, p. 312.

But whereas the considerator urges, "If the Father be infinite in his substance, in his wisdom, his power, his goodness, he is God in the most adequate and perfect sense of the word." I

say, Well, and what then? If therefore he mean the Son and the Holy Ghost must be excluded the Godhead, let him prove his consequence if he can. And he may find the answer to it, Sober Inquiry, page 310. I shall not transcribe, nor love, when I have written a book, to write it over again. His notion may fit pagans well enough, or those who are not otherwise taught. Christians are directed to understand that the Deity includes Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Their equality I acknowledge with the mentioned Athanasian exception; notwithstanding which, that they equally communicate in the most characteristic difference, of the Deity, from all creatures, namely, necessity of existence, is conceivable enough.

To sum up all, the considerator I understand, even by the whole management of his discourse, and especially by the conclusion of that part wherein the inquirer is concerned, to have most entirely given up this cause, as ever did any man. The inquirer's only undertaking was to maintain "the possibility of a trinity in the Godhead," in opposition to his former, daring assertion, of its being impossible, and nonsense.

He now, in conclusion, says, the inquirer saw there must be a *nexus*; intimating, if there can, that he hath gained his point; but, it is added, "he durst not venture to say what it was." To which I must say,

That this is most uncautiously said; I will not say, deceitfully, though I know it is said untruly; and he might have known (or remembered) too, that he (the inquirer) often spoke of it, as a necessary, natural, eternal, vital, and most intimate union. He further says, he only explains it by the union of soul and body. Which again,

First. Is so great a misrepresentation, that I wonder he would say it here, when he himself but two or three pages off recites as the inquirer's word, "If God could unite into one, two such contrary natures, let any man give me a reason why he might not (much more) first make, and then unite two, and if two, why not three Spirits, &c." Is this only to explain it by the union of soul and body?

But by the way that "first make, and then unite" was none of the inquirer's, but appears thrust in to make what was manifestly possible, seem impossible. *Sic notus*—let two substances be created entire, with no natural propension to each other, they are capable of no natural union, without change of their natures. Who sees not, it were a contradiction to suppose them, the same still, and not the same? But suppose them created with mutual aptitudes to union, and united, what should hinder but they may continue united, without being confounded?

Secondly. And it is said impertinently, as well as untruly; for what if he had not explained it at all, it is therefore impossible, which it belonged to him to prove, or he did nothing; and he hath done nothing towards it. I have asked him before, and now I put it again seriously to him, whether he do in his conscience believe this a good argument “such a union, that is natural, necessary, &c. hath no pattern or parallel in the creation; therefore it is impossible in the nature of God?”

For what he adds, “That the soul and body in a man are not united into one substance or essence, nor possibly can be;” the cause indeed depends not on it, but lies remote from it. Methinks however it is very feat, and shews him pinched, that he can be brought to this! Hath a man no substance? Is he a shadow? Or hath he no essence? Is he a non-entity? or is his essence a body? Then a body is a man. Or is his essence a spirit? Then, a spirit is a man. If he say either of these, I wish he would tell us the quantity of those propositions, that we may know whether he means that every body is a man, or every spirit is a man? I am sure where the essence is, there must be the *essentiatum*. Or whether soul and body united, make nothing different from either, or both disunited? Or whether a man be only such a thing as a pye? Or why might not a pudding serve as well, if made up of several ingredients? He hath greatly indeed obliged mankind for such an honour done them! If indeed the cause depended on it, he would have good store of philosophers to confute, and all that have any concern for their own kind, before he could disprove the possibility of the supposed union in the Deity, and you have nothing for it but his bare word: which (at least, without the addition of his name) will not do the business. Nor, if he could also bring us a demonstration against the union of soul and body, can he thereby prove such a union as we suppose in the Godhead impossible. The case is quite another. The union of the soul and body was never by me called essential; for I well know, if they were essentially united, in the strict sense they could never be disunited. But it is commonly called a substantial union, and I called it natural in respect of the principle, *nature*, in contradistinction to *art*. As for the supposed union we speak of in the Deity, that, being necessary, original, eternal, it must be essential, or none; but with such distinction as before was supposed. For it was union, not identity, that was meant, which union, with such distinction, till they be proved impossible, the inquirer’s cause is untouched. And is certainly to any such purpose, not in the least touched by the considerator. Whether there be any such union that may admit to be called essential among the creatures, doth

neither make nor mar. We have never said there was, nor doth the stress of the cause lie upon it.

I find indeed an ingenious, merry gentleman animadverts upon a postscript written against the Sober Inquiry, and upon a letter in answer to it, who at a venture calls all essential union, essential contradiction, and substantial nonsense. Who this is, I will not pretend to guess, only I guess him not to be the same with the considerator, for this, besides other reasons, that he calls the author of the considerations a great man; and I scarce think he would call himself so. His wit, and sportful humour, I should have liked better in a less serious affair. For *this* he boldly pronounces, in immediate reference to the trinity itself, (that the world might know he hath a confidence, at least, equal to his wit) I can easily abstain from asserting that any created unions are to be called strictly essential, because then they must be simply indissoluble. And I see not but whatsoever things the Creator hath united, he may disunite, if he be so pleased. Yet one might have expected this author to have been a little more civil to him whom he styles the late famous Dr. More, who hath published to the world his express sentiments in this matter, that created spirits have real amplitude, made up of indiscerpible parts, essentially united, so as not to be separable, without annihilation of the whole. One would think he should not have treated him so, as to make his essential union, substantial nonsense. But there are those left in the world, who have that veneration for the doctor, as to think it no indecent rudeness to this gentleman, not to put his judgment in the balance against the doctor's, or to distinguish between his calling it nonsense, and proving it so.

But if any wonder that they who think there is no such thing as an essential union among creatures, do yet think there may be in the uncreated Being, they will shew themselves mighty wise in their wonder, that is in wondering that the creatures are not God. And if they further hereupon inquire, why we will then make use of unions not essential, among creatures, to illustrate that which is supposed essential in the uncreated being, and expect very particular, distinct accounts of every thing so represented; they will shew themselves as wise in their expectations, that is, that they think nothing can serve to illustrate, unless it be like in all respects.

That question still returns. Is every thing to be judged by any man of sense impossible in God, whereof he hath not given distinct and explicit accounts, and illustrations from somewhat in the creatures? And another will be added, Is there any thing originally in God, not essential to him? But when the

world is so full of instances of substantial unions, without confusion, or identification, that he cannot so much as name me a created substance, that he can be sure exists absolutely simple. I am sure it can be no contradiction to suppose that there may be uncreated, necessary, eternal union, without confusion or identification: and that it would be, as he phrases it, essential contradiction, or substantial nonsense, to say that things united necessarily (though distinct) can possibly ever admit of separation. And if our modern anti-trinitarians (for I will not call them by the inept name of unitarians, which as rightfully belongs to them whose adversaries they are pleased to be, as to themselves, and therefore cannot distinguish the one from the other) would allow it to be their method to understand the doctrine of the orthodox ancients, before they decry and hoot at it, they would find that as they allow sufficient distinction of the sacred *hypostases*; so the union they assert, is not such as identifies them, but only signifies them to be inseparable. So speaks Athanasius himself, “we think not as the sabellians, that the Son is of one and the same essence with the Father, but consubstantial—nor do we assert three *hypostases* separated as with men, bodily, lest with the gentiles, we should admit polytheism, &c.” *κεμερισμενως. Εκθ. π. 15.*

So do Liberius and he agree in sentiment. The one says, “The Son is not separated from the Father’s hypostasis. * The other, “We hold not the Son divided from the Father, &c. †

And upon the most impartial, faithful, and diligent search and consideration, I do solemnly declare there needed not more of rationality, or intelligibleness in this doctrine, to keep it from being ridiculed, as contradictory, and nonsense; but only less prejudice, and more modesty in the opposers of it, with more reverence of the divine Majesty, upon this (obvious) apprehension, that if it be true, it must be sacred, divine truth.

This author would fain have me with him to the play-house, whither really I have no leisure to accompany him, nor much temptation; for I perceive it hath filled his mind with ideas not useful to my purpose; nor, I think, to any good one of his own. If there he learned to jest away that which should be the best part of himself; and of which Socrates, dying, told his friends it would be gone far enough out of their hands, and for that which was left behind, they might bury, or do with it what they pleased. If there he was taught to ridicule the holy

* Liber. Epist. ad Athan. *ε μ ε ρ ι σ ζ ε ι τ α ι*

† Rescript. Ath. ad Liberium. *οι διδακται ζεμερισμενων.*

apostle's distinction of an *ο εσω*, and *ο εξωθεν*, an *inner and an outer man* ; and when he hath thrown the former of these out of his notion of himself, for my part, I must think of that which is left, that the silly Indian is the less silly creature of the two.

And besides, as he is too much given to play, to mind any thing of serious discourse, so I find he is not throughout honest in his play neither ; but that even when he pretends to sit out, and be but a spectator, only taking care that there be fair play, he falls in himself, and plays booty. Nor do I find he hath any thing of argument in his discourse, which hath not been considered already in the discourse I have had with the considerator. I therefore take leave of them both together, and of you too, Sir, being in great sincerity

Your affectionate

Humble Servant,

The Inquirer.

ADVERTISEMENT.



THE "Letter to the clergy of both universities," came not to my sight, or notice, till some hours after the last sheet of this discourse was brought to me from the press ; I have not time therefore to say much to it, nor yet should say more than I do had I never so much. The author seems to think what he was now doing, as to the inquiry, superfluous, because he said it was so fully done by an abler hand, &c. In the mean time he was in ill case, that he was neither able to write to any purpose, nor be silent : a most deplorable double impotency ! But he hath notwithstanding his modesty, shewn a double ability, to invent and make an hypothesis of his own fingers' ends, and then most dexterously to combat that shadow. Three inadequate Gods, is indeed (to use his own phrase) his own invention, constantly disavowed by the inquirer, who, with the generality of trinitarians, calls the three subsistents in the Godhead, God ; being each of them necessarily existent, but none of them alone exclusively, a God.

What art he hath, is shewn in fighting this his own figment. As also that of parts of the Deity, other than conceivable, which no man can avoid. So we have his dream of a third part of a God, about which he so learnedly raves in his dreams, as to disprove, as effectually, any God at all. For I appeal to what sense he hath left himself, whether power alone be God exclusive of wisdom and goodness ? Then it is an inadequate,

or a not complete notion of God; then, by his profound reasoning, not eternal. No more are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost parts, unless you be enamoured of the bull, impartible parts, that never were parted, nor ever can be. As what are necessarily united (though unconfounded) cannot without nonsense and contradiction, be said to be parted. His fiction, that what is from the eternal Father by necessary emanation, cannot be eternal, but must have a beginning, is of the same stamp. He did not need when he wrote, to have abandoned all logic and common sense, that would have told him *relata sunt simul natura : things related are of the same nature*. His so confidently taking it for granted on all hands, that all infinites are equal, shews his little compass of thought, and how unacquainted he is with the difficulties of a controversy, wherein yet he will be so over-meddlesome. *Qui pauca respicit, &c. one who takes a partial view. &c.* But who so bold as—? I leave him to compound that difference with his abler considerator, whether one inch and two inches be equal? and so bid him good night.

A
LETTER

WRITTEN OUT OF THE COUNTRY TO A PERSON OF QUALITY
IN THE CITY.

WHO TOOK OFFENCE AT THE LATE

SERMON OF Dr. STILLINGFLEET,

Dean of St. Paul's,
BEFORE THE LORD MAYOR.

—
Considering thyself lest thou also be tempted Gal. 6. 1.
—

Johannes Coletus, Decanus quem dicunt, Divi Pauli,—a quod suos
Anglos alter pene Apostolus Paulus habitus est. Polyd. Virgil.
John Colet, whom they call, dean of St. Pauls—was with his own
countrymen (the English) accounted almost another apostle Paul.

A LETTER &c.

SIR,

I perceive your mind is disturbed, which my friendship with you can no more let me be unconcerned for, than if I heard you were sick; nor less to study your relief. Such may be the cause and measure of your passion, and such the disproportion between the one and the other, as to need it a great deal more, though yet perhaps to deserve it less. For your sickness might be your infelicity only, but a perturbation that exceeds its cause, cannot but be your fault. Which kind of evil, though it be much greater, and therefore needs no application for the removing of it; yet it can challenge less help from another, because you are your own afflicter, and may, by dependance on divine help, when you please, cure yourself, which no man else can do for you. But if another may contribute towards it, by laying before you apt considerations which you are yourself to apply, you know you are to expect it from no man's good will more than mine. If indeed you expect much from my ability, that is another fault, entirely your own, and whereto you could have no temptation.

Thus much I freely profess to you, that I have a great value of an equal temper and composure of mind, not apt to be unduly moved, or entertain any thing that occurs with indecent perturbation, or other resentment than is due and suitable to the occasion: and desire it more than either to be in the best external circumstances, or not to be in the worst. As I wish for myself, I wish for you; and therefore am willing to place my endeavour accordingly, where it may be in a possibility of effecting somewhat to your advantage, and where it is most desirable it should

In the present case, the fault I find with you is, that your resentment of the matter you complain of, is undue, and not

proportionable to the occasion. And whereas you seem to labour under the distemper and excess of a twofold passion, of fear, lest a just and good cause (as you and I do both account) should suffer some great prejudice, by this opposition of Dr. Stillingfleet: and of anger, that he from whom better things might have been expected, should attempt any thing in this kind. I shall hereupon endeavour to represent to you the causelessness both of your fear, and (in great part) of your anger. And first defend the cause against Dr. Stillingfleet, and then add somewhat in defence of Dr. Stillingfleet against you.

First.—As to the former we are,

I. To give the plain state of it, with the doctor's judgment against us in it.

II. To discuss the matter with the doctor and shew; 1. The indefensibleness of that judgment: and 2. The inefficacy of the doctor's attempt to defend it.

I. It is first necessary that we have a true state of the cause itself before our eyes; which is plainly this,—That as there are very great numbers of people, beyond what the ministers of parishes, in divers places, can possibly perform ministerial duty unto: so there are withal very many that cannot be satisfied in conscience, to intrust their souls and their spiritual concerns to the pastoral care and conduct of the parochial ministry only; though they generally have a very reverend esteem of divers who are of it: do, many of them, very frequently partake of some part of their labours, and rejoice in them as great ornaments and real blessings to the Christian church. But these are very unproportionable in number to the necessities of the people, and are by legal restraints tied up one way, as they by conscientious, are another, in respect of some principal parts of Christian worship; without which they should be visibly in the condition of pagans.

There are also many persons who have been devoted to the service of God and his church in the ministerial function; some of them in the way which now obtains, others in a way which this reverend author did not disapprove, who are not satisfied in conscience about the terms upon which they might have continued, or may be admitted parochial incumbents. So that here are numerous flocks scattered without pastors, here are many pastors without flocks.

The people, it is true, on whose behalf these papers are more especially written, are in this destitute condition by their own scruples. Nor is it the present design to justify all those scruples. But they are, with many, of long continuance, and, for ought appears, unremovable. If they should be deferred, and bidden to use patience, while such further en-

deavours are used with them as this sermon contains, yet death will have no patience, nor be deferred. So that there are multitudes passing into eternity out of a Christian nation, having no benefit of Christian ordinances; no means of instruction in the truth and doctrines of the Christian religion, in order to their salvation. The course which is *de facto* taken in this distress for their relief is that which the reverend author bends himself against in this sermon. And there are two sorts of persons concerned in it. The people; who, rather than return to the state of paganism, implore the help of these unemployed ministers, desiring them to perform the duty of Christian ministers towards them. And the ministers, who rather than they should cease to be christians, or themselves always cease from the work of ministers, comply with their desires, and, as they can, allow them their desired help.

This author doth more directly and professedly speak to the case of the people; to that of the ministers, only by way of oblique reflection. You and I who (among the former) do often partake in the worship and ordinances of God, in the separate assemblies (though we are not so squeamish as to balk the public, nor so unjust and ungrateful, as not to thank God for the excellent advantages that are sometimes to be met with there) are both concerned, and led by the doctor's discourse, to consider what is said as to this case of ours. Which yet I would have us consider not so appropriately, as to exclude them our very compassionate consideration, that are more pinched and confined to narrower limits, by their own scruples, than we are; and whose number you cannot but apprehend to be so great, as to call for a very large compassion in considering their case.

It is indeed a case of far-prospect, and which looks down upon after-times. You know how easily it may be deduced all along from the beginning of the English reformation, when some very eminent among our reformers were not well satisfied with the ceremonial part of the constitution settled at that time; how an unsatisfied party hath gradually increased from age to age among the common people also. They are now grown very numerous. And unless some very over-powering impression upon men's minds, (nor reasonably to be expected according to common measures) should alter the case, it is still likely to increase in succeeding ages. You are not ignorant that no one thing is more commonly scrupled by this unsatisfied party, than the addition of that federal rite in the dedicating of their children to God, the signing them with the sign of the cross, which many (how justly or unjustly I am not now to discuss) esteem so sinful a practice, that, rather than admit it,

they will choose not to offer their children to baptism. Nor is it in itself of less weight (perhaps it is of much greater) that, in this solemn dedication, they have no opportunity of performing the parental duty, of covenanting with God on behalf of their own children, but that part (with the exclusion of themselves) is to be done by others whom God hath not concerned in the business; and who, after the solemnity is over, are never like to concern themselves. And there are divers other scruples besides, in reference to this, and other parts of worship that, with multitudes, are in no great probability to admit of cure.

Now let us see what the reverend doctor's judgment is upon this state of our case, who dissent from the established way, whether the people, or their ministers, and that both concerning what they do, and what, by consequence from his judgment, upon their case, they are to suffer. For the practice of the people in this case (at least the negative part of it) he hath some charity in his censure, for in their declining to join in the public assemblies, he believes them generally to practise according to their judgment as he professes, page 37. of his sermon. For the ministers, most of them, none at all, who, as he says in the same place, he believes go against theirs. His words are, "I dare say, if most of the preachers at this day in the separate meetings, were soberly asked their judgments, whether it were lawful for the people to join with us in the public assemblies, they would not deny it; and yet the people that frequent them, generally judge otherwise. For it is not to be supposed, that faction among them should so commonly prevail beyond interest."

But his judgment concerning what both are to undergo is eventually, and in the sequel, as he states their case, much more hard in respect of the people, who cannot relieve themselves; whereas the ministers, according to the notion he hath of them, presently may.

We are to attend chiefly to what he says in reference to the lay-people, and shall consider,—How severe he is towards them; and—How well consistent he is therein with himself.

1. His severity towards those of us in respect of what we practise, who put ourselves under the pastoral care of other than the parochial ministers is to be seen in what he proposes to evince, page 20. namely, That our preceeding to the forming of separate congregations, that is, under other teachers, and by other rules, than what the established religion allows, is the present ease of separation which he intends to consider, and to make the sinfulness and mischief of it appear. He doth

you see in short absolutely pronounce our practice in this case to be sinful and mischievous.

Now it is hence also to be collected, how hard things he would have us suffer upon supposition of our only remaining unsatisfied to join ourselves into the parochial communion. He doth not indeed bespeak for us gibbets, whipping-posts, or dungeons: nor (directly) any thing grievous to our flesh. But to such as consider themselves to have souls made for an everlasting state, the doom which his words imply, in the mentioned place cannot be thought gentle. Which that you may apprehend the more distinctly; observe that he hath nothing to say against our bare suspending communion in some particular rites which we modestly scruple, while we use it in what we judge lawful, page 29. (whereas page 37. he supposes us generally to judge it unlawful to join in the public assemblies) to which purpose he also speaks in his late dialogues page 171. and 172, (giving his antagonist an account of what he had said in his *irenicum* to the matter now in discourse) namely, That some scrupulous and conscientious men, after all endeavours used to satisfy themselves, may remain unsatisfied as to the lawfulness of some imposed rites, but dare not proceed to positive separation from the church, but are willing to comply in all other things save in those rites which they still scruple: and concerning these he puts the question, whether such bare non-conformity do involve such men in the guilt of schism. And this he confesses he resolved negatively (approving or not disavowing that resolution.) Thus far indeed he well agrees with himself; and seems to have no quarrel with us.

But consider the fatal consequence. He well knows that if we suspend communion in the rite of the cross (upon our never so modest scruple) we cannot have our children ministerially dedicated to God in the ordinance of baptism, nor be so ourselves, if being adult, we remain any of us unbaptized (as he may well apprehend many among us are) nor if we decline the use of sponsors as to what we conceive should be performed by parents for their children, and by adult persons for themselves. And that if we kneel not before the consecrated elements at the Lord's table, we are not to partake of his holy supper. Yea, and what if we scruple somewhat that is more than ritual, to sit under the ministry of a noted drunkard, or open enemy to godliness as our teacher and guide, when we might enjoy the fruitful labours of one that hath not his qualifications every Lord's day? No, by no means, without limitation, or the supposition of any possible case wherein it may be otherwise, a meeting never so little besides the established course, he will make

appear is sinful and mischievous, and not tolerable upon any terms.

What then would he have us do? He directs us indeed afterward to the endeavour of satisfaction. But what shall we do if after our utmost endeavours our dissatisfaction remain? What, while we are endeavouring? which may be all our days in vain. What if we can never be satisfied concerning the established way of baptism for ourselves and our children, and of partaking the body and blood of our Lord and Saviour? Nor to hear or give countenance to such a one pretending to preach the glorious gospel of the blessed God, who either substantially perverts and depraves it, or whose profligate life proclaims him an opposer and enemy to the holy rules and design of it? Nor to commit ourselves to the pastoral care and charge of a less exceptionable person, yea though otherwise never so deserving that hath tied his own hands, and is under such restraints that he cannot, or so disinclined that he will not dispense the ordinances of Christ in such a way, as wherein with satisfaction to our consciences we may enjoy them.

Read over the doctor's sermon again, and again, and you will find no course is prescribed us, but to sit still without any enjoyment of Christian ordinances at all. And with how great numbers must this be the case? for himself professes to believe, that the people that frequent the separate meetings (who you know are not a few) do generally judge it to be unlawful to join in the public assemblies. And are we always to sit still thus? That is to exchange visible Christianity for visible (at least negative) paganism! This, if you take the whole compass of it, is a thing of awful importance, that so great a limb of a Christian nation, they and their posterity, should be paganized from age to age, and cut off from the whole body of the Christian community, only because they scruple some things, the least exceptionable whereof are no part of the Christian institution (as himself, and they whose advocate he is, will freely confess) nor do necessarily belong to it, being (as they contend) but indifferent things. He seems rather contented we should not be christians at all, than not to be christians of this particular mode: that we should rather want the substance of Christ's gospel and sacraments, than not have them accompanied with confessedly needless additions, and which we fear to be forbidden us by their Lord and ours.

We do sincerely profess wherein we decline the communion he invites us to, we only displease him, and those of his way and mind, out of a real fear of otherwise displeasing God. We agree with them in far greater things than we can differ in. We are of that one body which they themselves profess to be

of, so far as mere Christianity is the distinction, and collective bond of it, and desire to be under the conduct and government of that one Spirit. We are called with them in that one hope of our calling, and earnestly expect (whatever hard thoughts they have of us) to meet many a one of them in the participation of the blessed hoped end of that calling. We acknowledge that one Lord, that one faith, that one baptism, (or covenant which the baptism of our Lord's appointment seals) and that one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all. Yet because we cannot, we dare not consent with them to the additions which belong not (and which we fear are unduly affixed) to the religion of christians, we are adjudged to be (as much as in them is) cut off from Christ, deprived of the dear pledges of his love, and acquisitions of his blood, are driven out from the inheritance of the Lord,, and it is in effect said to us, Go and serve other Gods. Thus far the severity of this reverend author towards us extends. Which while we thus truly represent and recount, let us also,

2. Consider what agreement it holds with what we elsewhere observe from him. We have already taken notice, that for our bare con-conformity he acquits us of the guilt of schism. And, page 20. of this sermon, he says, he doth "not confound bare suspending communion in some particular rites, which persons do modestly scruple, and using it in what they judge to be lawful, with either total, or at least ordinary forbearance of communion in what they judge to be lawful; and proceeding to the forming of separate congregations, &c." It is this latter he severs and singles out for his opposition. Against our suspending communion in some particular rites (which we judge unlawful) if we use it in what we judge lawful, (which I with him, presume the lay-dissenters in England generally do;) he hath nothing to say: yea, and undertaking to shew what error of conscience doth excuse a man from sin, in following the dictates of it; he tells us, page 44. that "If the error be wholly involuntary, that is, if it be caused by invincible ignorance," (which he thus explains in the following words) "or after using the best means for due information of his conscience; though the act may be a fault in itself, yet it shall not be imputed to him for a sin, because it wanted the consent of the mind by which the will is determined." And now, Sir, I beseech you consider,

(1.) When he confesses if we be willing to be satisfied, and our error be involuntary, it shall not be imputed to us for a sin; why are we so severely dealt with for what is not to be imputed to us for a sin? If it were any, methinks it should not deserve such rigour at the hands of men, that are themselves also

liable to mistakes and errors. Is it so very criminal, if every poor illiterate dissenter in England (man or woman) cannot in all their days attain to a better and more settled judgment in such dubious matters, than this reverend person had himself arrived to twenty years ago? Especially that never had, or were capable of having those peculiar helps and inducements, to temper and reform their judgments that he hath enjoyed. It is a long time that his own judgment has been ripening to that maturity, as, at length to think it fit and reasonable to say so much as he hath, for the reforming of ours, even in this sermon. Methinks he should not be so very quick and hard towards us, upon so slender a cause, as our scrupling some particular rites, to adjudge us, and ours to be totally deprived of baptism, which themselves count necessary to our salvation, and of the other ordinances of Christ, which they do not think unnecessary. And consider,

(2.) Whereas he says, that if a man err after using the best means for due information of his conscience,—it shall not be imputed to him as a sin. What if we err this error as he counts it) after using the best means for due information; that we ought rather than to return to the state of paganism, to bear our part in the forming of such meetings for the worship of God, as wherein we may, with the satisfaction of our own consciences, enjoy all his holy ordinances? It will surely be within the compass of this his general position, and not be imputable as a sin. Then it is to be hoped we should rather choose to do so, than paganize ourselves, or live in the wilful neglect of his institutions: which to do by our own choice, when we might do otherwise, we cannot but think a very great sin.

If here the doctor should assume to himself to tell us not only that we err herein (whereof we are to regard his proof, as it shall be considered by and by, more than his affirmation:) but also that our error is wilful, we shall appeal from him to one that better knows, how willingly, how gladly we should receive information, and admit the belief, that we ought to content ourselves entirely and only with such provisions as the established religion, (to use the doctor's phrase) allows us, if the evidence of the thing itself did not seem irresistibly and unavoidably to persuade us otherwise. And for him to say so, were but to suppose men wilful, only for not being of his mind, who can as easily think him so, for not being of theirs. But this cannot be a question between the doctor and us; whom, as we have taken notice above, he hath so far obliged, as to admit, (page 37.) "that we generally judge as we practise, and that it is not to be supposed that faction among us should so commonly prevail beyond interest." But since this appears to be his

determination concerning us, and that his assertion seems positive and peremptory, page 20. "That in this our case, to proceed to the forming of congregations under other teachers, and by other rules than what the established religion allows, were a sinful and mischievous separation."—We are in the next place,

II. To discuss the matter with the doctor; wherein we shall endeavour to shew,—The indefensibleness, of the judgment the doctor hath given in this case; which will both infer (and in some part excuse) what we are afterwards to discover: namely—The infirmity of what is alleged by him in this attempt of his to defend it.

1. For the former, it being obvious to common observation, that a natural self-indulgence and aptness to decline and wave what is of more terrible import to themselves, doth usually insinuate and influence men's minds in their judging of such cases: we are the more concerned (because a favourable false judgment will do us no good) with an impartial strictness to hold ourselves to the thing itself. And when we most strictly do so, methinks the doctor should have somewhat a hard province of it. For his determination amounts to thus much, (that we ought to be kept in a state of damnation for scrupling the ceremonies) that is, to be deprived of the necessary means of our salvation. And that, while he accounts our scruple (after the use of due means for our information) not imputable to us as a sin: and not that only, but that we ought to consent to our own damnation for this no sin of ours; inasmuch as it would be sinful and mischievous to procure to ourselves the necessary means of our salvation in another way, while we apprehend that, without our sin, we cannot have them in the way which he allows us.

We are indeed satisfied, that our sin one way or other would contribute little to our salvation. But when also we are satisfied that we cannot enjoy the means of salvation in his way without sin; and he tells us, we cannot without sin enjoy them in our own: we hope every door is not shut up against us, and cannot think the merciful and holy God hath so stated our case, as to reduce us to a necessity of sinning to get out of a state of damnation. And therefore this reverend author having already determined that our remedy cannot lie (as our consciences are hitherto informed) in coming over to him and his way; for he believes we generally judge it unlawful to join with them in the public assemblies, page 37. and says, page, 43. "that no man that hath any conscience will speak against the power of it, and he that will speak against it, hath no reason to be regarded in what he says:" (as no question he expected to be,

otherwise he had not given himself so much trouble) and concludes, page 44. "that we should sin in going against it." As he also thinks we should in acting with it, which (as is necessarily implied) we as yet see not. Our great hope upon the whole matter is, that our relief must lie in taking the way which we do take; and that it cannot be proved to be sinful.

We reckon it is not, and that the doctor's judgment herein is simply indefensible, because whatsoever is sinful must transgress some law immediately divine, or that obliges by virtue of the divine law. And we cannot find that God hath made any law, or enabled any made by others, to oblige us so far, in our present circumstances, as that we should be involved in the guilt of sin, by some variation from the letter of it. For any divine law that can be supposed to oblige us to the use of the things we scruple, or else to live without the worship and ordinances of God, not knowing any such ourselves, we must wait until we be informed of it.

And that his law doth give an obliging force so far to any other, we as yet understand not. Wheresoever he hath been pleased to lodge and entrust the keys of the church, we do not find he hath appointed them to that use, to admit us into the communion of his worship and ordinances, or totally to exclude us, upon such terms. And herein we suppose we have the doctor consenting with us: who in his irenicum, (page 216.) plainly asserts, "that the office which the power of the keys implies is ministerial, and not authoritative; declarative, and not juridical." And says in the preface to the same book, that "he that came to take away the unsupportable yoke of the Jewish ceremonies, did never intend to gall the disciples necks with another instead of it." Whereto he immediately adds in the same preface: "And it would be strange the church should require more than Christ himself did; and make other conditions of her communion, than our Saviour did of discipleship. What possible reason can be assigned or given why such things should not be sufficient for communion with a church; which are sufficient for eternal salvation? And certainly those things are sufficient for that, which are laid down by our Lord and Saviour in his word. What ground can there be why christians should not stand upon the same terms now, which they did in the time of Christ and his apostles? Was not religion sufficiently guarded and fenced in them? Was there ever more true and cordial reverence in the worship of God? What charter hath Christ given the church to bind men up to more than himself hath done, or to exclude those from her society, who may be admitted into heaven? Will Christ ever thank men at the great day for keeping such out from commu-

nion with his church, whom he will vouchsafe not only crowns of glory to, but it may be *aureolæ*, of gold too, if there be any such things there? The grand commission the apostles were sent out with, was only to teach what Christ had commanded them. Not the least intimation of any power given them to impose or require any thing beyond what himself had spoken to them, or they were directed to by the immediate guidance of the Spirit of God. It is not whether the things commanded and required be lawful or no: it is not whether indifferences may be determined or no: it is not how far christians are bound to submit to a restraint of their Christian liberty, which I now inquire after; (of those things in the treatise itself) but whether they do consult for the church's peace and unity who suspend it upon such things: how far either the example of our Saviour or his apostles doth warrant such rigorous impositions? We never read the apostles making laws but of things supposed necessary. When the council of apostles met at Jerusalem for deciding a case that disturbed the churches, peace, we see they will lay no other burden *πλην των αναγκασιων τετων* besides these necessary things. Acts 15. 28. It was not enough with them that the things would be necessary when they had required them, but they looked on an antecedent necessity either absolute or for the present state, which was the only ground of their imposing those commands upon the gentile christians. There were, after this, great diversities of practice and varieties of observations among christians, but the Holy Ghost never thought those things fit to be made matters of laws, to which all parties should conform; all that the apostles required as to these, was mutual forbearance and condescension towards each other in them. The apostles valued not differences at all, and those things it is evident they accounted such, which whether men did them or not, was not of concernment to salvation. And what reason is there why men should be so strictly tied up to such things, which they may do, or let alone, and yet be very good christians still? Without all controversy the main inlet of all the distractions, confusions, and divisions, of the Christian world, hath been by adding other conditions of church-communion than Christ hath done."

Nor am I now inquiring whether the things commanded be lawful or no: nor whether indifferences may be determined or no: nor how far christians are bound to submit to a restraint of their Christian liberty? But only inquiring (as he there doth) concerning the charter given by Christ for the binding men up more than himself hath done. And I further inquire, by what power they can be bound which Christ hath not given? And if there be no such power to bind them, suppose the

things required were all lawful (which if it can be evinced, I should rejoice to see done) yet while they cannot in conscience think they are, how can they apprehend themselves bound to be without the means of salvation, which Christ's charter entitles them to? I readily grant it is fit a man do many things for peace and common order's sake which, otherwise, no law doth formally oblige him to, that is, supposing he can do those things without intolerable prejudice to himself. And so it is commonly determined in the matter of scandals. But can it be thought a man is to put himself out of the state or way of salvation in the compliment to such as will otherwise take offence? and be so courteous as to perish for ever, rather than they shall be displeas'd?

Yea, and it may be moreover added, that our course being accounted lawful, must also (as the doctor speaks in another case) be thought a duty: for the things that are as means necessary to our salvation, are also necessary by divine precept. We are commanded to hear God's word, to devote ourselves and our children to God in baptism; and, at the Lord's own table, to remember him, and shew forth his death until he come. And if we compare together certain positions of this reverend author, we cannot see but he must, as our case is, acknowledge our obligation to the practice which he here seems to blame. For in his *Irenicum* (page 109.) he asserts, that every christian is under an obligation to join in church society with others; because it is his duty to profess himself a christian, and to own his religion publicly, and to partake of the ordinances and sacraments of the gospel, which cannot be without society with some church or other. And he after adds, on the same page, "It had been a cause disputed of by some (particularly by Grotius the supposed author of a little tract, *an semper sit communicandum per symbola*, *must we always communicate by means of symbols?* when he designed the syncretism with the church of Rome) whether in a time when churches are divided, it be a christian's duty to communicate with any of those parties which divide the church, and not rather to suspend communion from all of them." A case not hard to be decided; for either the person questioning it doth suppose the churches divided to remain true churches, but some to be more pure than other; in which case, by virtue of his general obligation to communion, he is bound to adhere to that church which appears most to retain its evangelical purity. To which purpose he further tells us, page, 110. "he knows not whether Chrysostom's act were to be commended, who after being made a deacon in the church of Antioch by Meletius, upon his death; because Flavianus came in irregularly as bishop of the church, would neither communicate with him, nor with Pau-

linus another bishop at that time in the city; nor with the Meletians but for three years time withdrew himself from communion with any of them." And, page 113. "Where any church is guilty of corruptions both in doctrine and practice, which it avoweth and professeth, and requireth the owning them as necessary conditions of communion with her, there a non-communication with that church is necessary, and a total and positive separation is lawful and convenient." What he discourses page 111, 112. upon the question, "Whether it is a sin to communicate with churches true, as to essentials, but supposed corrupt in the exercise of discipline?" many of us will no doubt heartily concur with him in. But it touches not the case of many more, who do not so much fear upon the account of the neglect of discipline, to be involved in the guilt of other men's sin; (as there seems to be little cause, that part being not incumbent upon us :) nor, if that be his meaning, when he speaks of separating on a pretence of great purity, is it the case with most of us: but we justly fear (and therefore avoid) to be made to sin ourselves, by having such things as we judge to be sinful imposed on us, as the conditions of our communion. And as to this case, this reverend author speaks our sense in in this last cited proposition, and pleads our present cause. Nor need we more to be said on behalf of it than what is reducible to that general proposition; or particularly, to that second thing, compared with the third, which page (115.) he says "makes separation and withdrawal of communion lawful and necessary; namely, corruption of practice, where we say as he doth, we speak not of practice, as relating to the civil conversation of men, but as it takes in the *agenda* of religion; when unlawful things of that kind, are not only crept into a church, but are the prescribed devotion of it: those being required (which he adds as an accession to the foregoing) as necessary conditions of communion from all the members of their church, which makes our withdrawing from them unavoidably necessary, as long as we judge them to be such corruptions as indeed they are." And whereas he instances only in such things as belong to the head of idolatrous customs, (suppressing what might be instanced under the other head, which he also there mentions; namely, superstitious practice) yet we doubt not if other things also, that appear to be sinful, besides idolatrous customs, be required as necessary conditions of communion, the case will be the same, unless we will distinguish sins, into such as be lawful, and such as be unlawful. Or there be any that may be committed, that we may be admitted to the communion of this or that church.

Now, to reduce things to the method which suits the present

case ; if this reverend author do still judge,—that where sinful conditions of communion are imposed, there non-communication is necessary (and those things be sinful to us which our consciences judge to be so,) as he hath acknowledged :—and again, if he still judge,—that we are under an obligation to join in church-society, so as to own our religion publicly, and to partake of the ordinances and sacraments of the gospel ;—he must certainly account that our duty, which he taxes in this sermon as our fault, at least till our consciences be otherwise informed, whereof many of us have no great hope.

We are indeed not so stupid, as not to apprehend there are laws, the letter whereof seems adverse to us. Nor are we so ungrateful, as not to acknowledge his Majesty's clemency in not subjecting us to the utmost rigour of those laws ; whom we cannot, without deep regret, so much as seem not, in every thing, exactly to obey. Nor can it enter into our minds to imagine, that he expects to be obeyed by us at the expence of our salvation. Or that it would be at all grateful to him, that being, as we are, unsatisfied in some things that are by the law made necessary to our partaking the privileges of the Christian church, we should become pagans in duty to him. His Majesty was once pleased to give an ample testimony, by his never to be forgotten gracious declaration of March 15, 1672. how remote any such thought was from his royal breast ; and though we humbly submit to the exigency of those reasons of state from whence it proceeded, that we enjoy not the continued positive favour which his Majesty was then pleased to express towards us ; yet we have no reason to doubt, but his propensions are equally benign as they were.

Nor, though it be uncertain to us what laws they are, the authority whereof this reverend person relies upon to make our practice sinful, yet we hope he doth not mean to urge us herein with the laws of the civil government, because those as much forbid our non-communication (and under as severe penalty) for which, he acquits us from the guilt of schism or, if we endeavour satisfaction, from any sin imputable to us.

But if that should be his meaning, we desire it may be considered how unreasonable it seems, that the design of the law relating to that part of our practice, which the doctor in this sermon condemns. being declaredly to prevent sedition ; they should take themselves to be meant who are conscious of no such design or disposition.

And again, that it is not with any reason, charity, or justice, to be supposed, that when that, and other restrictive laws were made, either the temporal ruin of so great a part of the nation, as are now found to be dissenters, was intended by

the legislators, or the reducing them to the condition of heathens. But a uniformity in the worship of God, being in itself a thing really desirable; this means was thought fit to be tried, in order to that end. And so are human laws, about such mutable matters, generally designed to be probationary; the events and success being unforeknown. Whereupon, after a competent time of trial, as his Majesty was graciously pleased to declare his own favourable sense and intention, so it is very commonly known, that the like propensions were by common suffrage expressed in parliament, namely, to grant a relaxation. So that the law, being in its own nature, nothing else but an indication of the legislator's will, we may account the thing was in substance done, so far as may satisfy a man's private reason and conscience concerning the lawgiver's intention and pleasure; though it were not done with that formality as uses (and is generally needful) to be stood upon, by them who are the ministers of the law. And that it was not done with that formality also, seemed rather to be from a disagreement about the manner or method of doing it, than about the thing to be done. And how usual is it for laws, without formal repeals, gently and gradually to expire, grow old, and vanish away, not being longer useful, as the ritual part of the Mosaical law did become an ineffectual and unprofitable thing? And how easy were it to instance in many other laws, the letter of which, they that urge these against the dissenters, do without scruple transgress? And from which no such weighty reasons do urge to borrow now and then a point? How many dispense with themselves in many parts of their required conformity, that have obliged themselves to it? The priests in the temple transgress the law, and are blameless. Yea, and he that knows all things, and who is Judge of all, knows how little scruple is made of transgressing the laws by gross immoralities and debaucheries. Men learn to judge of the sacredness of laws by their own inclinations. Any that can be wire-drawn, and made by torture to speak against religion not modified their way, must be most binding. Such as prohibit the vilest and most open wickedness, bind as the withs did Sampson.

The sum of all is, that whereas we are under the obligation of the divine law to worship God in the use of those his ordinances which require to be dispensed and attended in society, and that we apprehend we cannot do it without sin in the way this reverend author invites us to. Whereas also we do, with this author, deliberate, whether Christ hath given any power to men to oblige us to the things we scruple, or disoblige us from the things we practise, and judge it unproved. We cannot but reckon the judgment the doctor hath given in our case

(that our practice is sinful) is erroneous and indefensible by any man, but least fitly, of most other men, attempted to be defended by himself. From whom it would little have been expected that he should so earnestly recommend that very thing to us, as the only foundation of union, which he had so publicly told us in his preface to the *Irenicum*, "was, without controversy, the main in-let of all the distractions, confusions, and divisions of the Christian world, namely, the adding other conditions of church-communion than Christ hath done."

And though he hath lately told the world, there are some passages in that book that shew only the inconsiderateness of youth, and that he seems to wish unsaid, yet he hath not, that we know, declared that these are some of them. However, since this present determination and judgment of his against us is so peremptory and positive, as well as severe, let us, in the next place,

2. Consider, and carefully examine, as we are concerned, what he hath performed in defence of it; and, it is to be hoped, the inefficacy and weakness of his attempt therein will sufficiently appear. What I can find in his sermon, hath any aspect or design that way, is either *ad rem*, or, *ad hominem*. And, to my apprehension, his reasonings, of the one kind or the other, are altogether unconcluding.

(1.) As to what may be supposed to be *ad rem*, if you look narrowly, you will find, that the principal things alleged by him, that can, under that notion, give support to his cause, are only affirmed, but not proved. For instance, page 9. when he tells us, that the "apostle supposed the necessity of one fixed and certain rule," &c. this had been very material to his purpose; if, first. He had told us, and had proved, the apostle meant some rule or other super-added to the sacred Scriptures: for then he might, it is to be presumed, as easily have let us know what that rule was, which, most probably, would have ended all our controversy; it being little to be doubted, we should all most readily have agreed to obey it: or, secondly, If he had proved, that, because the apostle had power to make such a rule, and oblige the churches to observe it, that therefore such church-guides as they, whose cause the doctor pleads, have an equal power to make other rules divers from his, containing many new things, which he never enjoined, and to enforce them upon the church; (though manifestly tending to its destruction, rather than edification :) but these things he doth but suppose himself, without colour of proof.

Again, for his notion of churches, page 16, 17, 18, 19. examine as strictly as you will what he says about it; and see whether it come to any thing more than only to represent a na-

tional church a possible thing? And whereto the name church, may without absurdity be given. His own words seem to aim no higher. "Why may there not be one national church from the consent in the same articles of religion, and the same order of worship?" page 18. "The word was used in the first ages of the Christian church, as it comprehended the ecclesiastical governors, and the people of whole cities. And why many of these cities being united together under one civil government and the same rules of religion, should not be called one national church, I cannot understand," page 19.

But can it now be inferred thence, that therefore God hath actually constituted every Christian kingdom or nation such a church? Can it further be inferred, that he hath invested the guides of this church, not chosen by the people (according to Scripture, and primitive practice for some ages) with a power to make laws and degrees, prescribing not only things necessary for common order and decency, but new federal rites, and teaching signs and symbols, superadded to the whole Christian institution; with many more dubious and unnecessary things besides? And to exclude sober and pious christians, from the privileges that are proper to the Christian church, as such, merely for that out of conscience towards God, they dare not admit into their worship those additions to the Christian religion? to take order they shall have no pastors, no sacraments, no assemblies for worship? And because they will not be so much more than christians, that they shall not be christians at all?

He that would go about to make these inferences merely from the forementioned ground, Would gain to be laughed at by all sober men, instead of a conclusion, whatsoever better success he should have, who should undertake to prove the same things any other way.

This reverend author was so wise as not to attempt either of these. But then in the mean time, What doth the mere possible notion of such a church advantage his cause? Because it is possible, there might have been such a Macedonian, or such a Lydian church, is such a one therefore necessary? and any other constitution of a Christian church impossible, or unlawful? Or because the general meeting of magistrates of the whole city and people together in pagan Athens was called *Εκκλησια*, therefore such must be the constitution of a Christian church? And therefore such a church hath such powers from Christ as were above mentioned?

Here howsoever we make our stand, and say that until the doctor hath proved these two things.

[1.] That such a church as he hath given us the notion of, as

of a thing merely possible, is actually a divine institution: and

[2.] That God hath given to the ecclesiastical governors in it never chosen by the Christian community, or to any other power, to super-add institutions of the nature above mentioned, and to enforce them under the mentioned penalties: all his reasonings that pretend to be *ad rem*, are to no purpose, and do nothing at all advantage his cause.

Yet there are some passages in this part of his discourse, that though they signify nothing to his main purpose, are yet very remarkable, and which it is fit we should take some notice of.

As when, page 16. He tells us what he means by whole churches; namely, "The churches of such nations, which upon the decay of the Roman empire, resumed their just power of government to themselves, and upon their owning Christianity, incorporated into one Christian society, under the same common ties and rules of order and government." As if there could be no whole churches in the world that had not been of the Roman empire, or as if those of the Roman empire could not have been whole churches without resumption of the civil government; as we suppose he means.

Or, as if (which he intimates, page 19.) we needed this (so dearly espoused notion as a ground) to acquit us from the imputation of schism, in our separating from the church of Rome. Which certainly it were not for the advantage of the protestant cause to admit: for then all that remain within the empire, were bound to continue in the communion of the Roman church. And in the other kingdoms, where princes have not resumed their just right of reforming errors in doctrine, and corruptions in worship; all should be schismatics that should separate from the church of Rome.

Again, when page 17. He would confute that great mistake, the making the notion of a church barely to relate to acts of worship: (a mistake whereof I never knew any man guilty) he surely runs into as great an opposite mistake, in making the notion of a church to be no more than of a society of men united together, for their order and government, according to the rules of the Christian religion. Now faith and worship are quite excluded the notion of a church: and order and government and the rules of the Christian religion, but as they refer to these, only included. Whence it will come to pass, that we can have no notion of one catholic church, from which yet he argues at the bottom of the same page.

Nor, though I dislike the thing, do I understand the strength of the doctor's argument, against making the notion of the church barely to relate to acts of worship; namely, That if

this held true, the church must be dissolved as soon as the congregation is broken up. For will it not also follow as well, that if the notion of a church relate only to order and government, every time any meeting for affairs of order and government is broken up, the church is dissolved? And that an assembly of the states in any kingdom or nation cannot break up without a dissolution of the government? A parliament (at least) not adjourn or be prorogued without being dissolved? And whereas he adds, but if they retain the nature of a church, when they do not meet together for worship, then there is some other bond that unites them, and whatever that is, it constitutes the church. Is it not possible there may be such a bond for worship, as well as for government? an obligation to meet at stated times for that purpose, when they are not met? And then (if this were all that were to be said to the contrary) why might not that bond as well serve to constitute the church? But

2. For his reasonings *ad hominem*, they need not detain us long; he argues from the judgment of the assembly of divines, and others. All which arguing must suppose, if it concern us, that we are bound to be of the same judgment with the ministers that are and have been so and so minded, which I for my part understand not. But I perceive here his intention is, having endeavoured to draw us off from our ministers; now to move another stone, and try if he can draw them off from us.

For the assembly, I think it fit those that survive of them should be as much concluded by what they then determined, as this reverend author by the Irenicum. But I know no reason that such as they never represented, nor who ever pretended to be of their party, should be concluded to the world's end. Nor do understand why even the same party may not be as well supposed in a possibility, to vary from itself in forty years, as the same man from himself in less than twenty. If they did incline to deal too hardly with their brethren, that will not justify them who deal more hardly. It is hoped such as have been so inclined, have, being smitten, and suffered the rebukes of the Almighty, repented it, and are become wiser: and when some think themselves grown wiser by prosperity, others by adversity, there is less reason to suspect the latter.

Yet also this reverend author ought to have considered the great disparity of the cases he would parallel. For when one sort of men are considering of having only such a frame of things settled, as are imposed by Christ himself, whether they judge rightly or no, that he hath imposed every part of that frame, yet while they think and judge that he hath, and consequently that nothing is to be abated of it: it were very unfitly argued.

that therefore another sort professing to impose many things never imposed by Christ, should abate nothing of their unnecessary impositions.

For such as the doctor quotes besides of the non-conformists, acknowledging the parish churches true churches, and the lawfulness of holding, sometimes, communion with some of them; it is not to be thought but among so many parties as come all under one common notion of dissenters from the public rule (and whom that rule did not find one, but made them so in that common notion) there must be great diversity of opinions, and proportionably differing practices in these matters. I heartily prefer the most moderate, as I believe you do. But here this reverend author takes occasion for so ignominious reflections upon our preachers, as insincere, dishonest, and unconscientious, as I doubt not, in one twenty years more, his ingenuity will oblige him to repent more heartily, than ever it permitted him to do of his *Irenicum*. Because he can allege a very few persons that have spoken to this purpose, therefore, first it must be represented to the world as their common judgment; next, they are charged with concealing this judgment (why is this kept up as such a mighty secret in the breasts of their teachers? page 37.) and then it is endeavoured to make men think they practise against their own judgments, in preaching to separate congregations.

Surely you and I are concerned, as we have occasion, to say what we truly can, for the just vindication of our ministers. I doubt not but you believe, and you have, for some, particular reason to be confident that, it is for our sakes they expose themselves to the displeasure of such men as Dr. Stillingfleet. I must, for my part, say,

(1.) that I believe it to be the judgment of very few, that every parish is, as such, a true Christian church. I am sorry I have such a ground to fear it of one kind, namely, that some may not be so, as not having among them any tolerable understanding of the most confessedly fundamental principles of Christian religion. What say you to such, where the minister is grossly ignorant of the principles of religion, or habitually vicious, and of a profligate life? Do mere orders make him a minister, who (perhaps since he received them) is become destitute of the most essential qualifications? any more than the habit, a monk? or a beard, a philosopher? Can a Mercury be made of every log? not to insist that this reverend author can scarce think they are, from a ground of another kind, because they assemble only for worship, and not for government.

(2.) And surely, a church may be unfit to be communicated with, although it be a true church; (those words of the reve-

rend and worthy dean of Canterbury carry their own light with them to this purpose †) as a man may be truly and really a man, though he have the plague upon him, and for that reason be fit to be avoided by all that wish well to themselves. It is true, there are vastly different degrees of that unfitness. But I see not how they can apprehend there is the fitness which is simply necessary, who judge there are conditions of communion imposed that are sinful.

And I believe this reverend author will think it possible a true church may impose some sinful conditions of her communion; in which case, he hath determined a non-communication with her necessary and unavoidable.

(3.) For those that are of that judgment, the parochial assemblies ought to be communicated with so far as is alleged was declared. As I know none of the dissenting ministers, that thought they ought always, and only to be communicated with, so I see not with what pretence it can be said they keep up their judgment herein, as a mighty secret. If it be so, how came this author to have it revealed to him? Is printing it to the world keeping it secret? Some have published it in that way, as we see is known to the doctor. Others, by their frequent discourses, and their own practice. And, to my observation, divers of them have in their sermons made it much their business to dispose the minds of their hearers to a truly Catholic Christian union, as I have been much pleased to take notice, some of the conforming clergy do also. But if this be the doctor's quarrel with any of our ministers (who think such communion lawful) that they do not constantly, in every sermon, inculcate the business of communicating in the ceremonial way, for my part, I shall blame them as much as he, when once he hath made it very evident, that the ceremonies are more profitable, and likely to do more good to the souls of men, than repentance, the faith of the gospel, the fear of God, a good life in this world, and eternal life in the other; which I confess are the more usual subjects, so far as I have had the opportunity to observe, of their preaching.

And, let me add, that I can tell you of a secret, which some might be apt to think (as it is really so) is industriously and much more unrighteously kept up in one man's breast, that may be conscious of a great design in it. The author of the book, entitled, *The Weapon Salve, or Irenicum*, seems to have found it some inconvenience to him, to have been the author of so good a book; whereupon, in a certain soliloquy, (though he is pleased to represent it as a tripartite dialogue) he asks

† Sermon on Josh. 24. 15.

himself his own opinion of it, and gives himself this answer; I will tell you freely (as you know men use great liberty in talking with themselves, though prudence would direct that to be done in some cases, with great caution, and not to talk inconvenient things too loud, lest they be too much overheard) I believe there are many things in it, which if Dr. Stillingfleet were to write now, he would not have said, for there are some things which shew his youth, and want of due consideration; others, in which he yielded too far, &c. Now here (though I believe he had begun to be inclined to throw away his salve, and use only the weapon for the wounding of sound parts, not the cutting off the incurable, yet) I conceive one may safely enough take it for granted, his intention was not to retract the whole book. But whereas he tells us not what he doth: how would the doctor take it if one should ask, Why is this kept up as such a mighty secret in his own breast? Or, say the tenderness of his mind might, it is likely, out of mere shamefacedness, keep him from declaring against what his own conscience tells him is truth? However, this retraction cannot make that which was true become false. The reason of things is sullen, and will not alter to serve men's conveniencies. Perhaps, indeed, his judgment is really altered. If therefore he would acquit himself like an honest and conscientious man, let him tell the world plainly, which be the pernicious principles of that book, that honest and conscientious men, who have thought well of many things in it, (and perhaps the same things, which he now disapproves) may not always be deceived by the shews of reason that deceived himself, and by which he deceived them. The same justice that obliges not to lay a stumbling-block in the way of the blind, doth also oblige him to remove it who hath laid it: which is to be done, not by professing another opinion, for we depend not on his authority, which he hath himself so much diminished; but on the reasons he alleged, which if they were fallacious, let him shew wherein, and answer his own reasons. To say the truth, the gravity and seriousness wherewith that book was written, appears to have so little of the youth in it, in comparison of the jocularly, and sportful humour of some of his latter writings, when he hath been discussing the most weighty and important cases of conscience. that it seems as a prodigy in nature, and that he began his life at the wrong end; that he was old in his youth, and reserved his puerility to his more grown age. But we hope there is a great residue behind, wherein he may have opportunity and inclination to shew the world, that he did not repent the pious design of that book: or, at least, with a repentance that (can as well as that) ought to be repented of.

(4.) And whereas such of the dissenting ministers, as have

most openly declared for communicating at some times with some of the parochial churches, have also declared their judgment of the lawfulness and necessity of preaching and hearing, and doing other religious duties in other congregations also. If now either the doctor discern not the inconsistency of these things, or they discern not their inconsistency; is there nothing to be said or thought, but that they acquit not themselves like honest and conscientious men? Must it be taken for a demonstration of a man's want of honesty and conscience, not to be presently of the doctor's opinion in every thing? or not to see every consequence which he sees, or thinks he sees?

But let us consider the goodness of this consequence, which it must be so great a piece of dishonesty not to discern. If it be the duty of some to communicate sometimes with some parish churches, (for this is the most the doctor could make of that re-lator's concession, whom he cites page 21, 22. of his sermon) therefore it is the duty of every one to communicate with any parish church where his abode is, so constantly and entirely as never to have any communion with any otherwise constituted congregation.

This is the thing, must be to his purpose inferred; yea and he would have it be from somewhat a lower premise. For he tells us, page 37. "that he dare say, if most of the preachers at this day in the separate meetings were soberly asked their judgment, whether it were lawful (only) for the people to join with us in the public assemblies, they would not deny it." He surely dares not say that their meaning was, that it was lawful constantly to join with them in all their parochial assemblies, unless he dares say, what he hath not, from any of them, the least ground to think. Now hereupon he collects, page 38. that our ministers cannot declare so much in a separate congregation, but this truth must fly in their faces: because he supposeth it repugnant to it, to preach at all in a separate congregation, and yet afterwards on the same page, he so well agrees with himself, as to bid them, if they would acquit themselves like honest and conscientious men, tell the people plainly that they look on our churches as true churches, and that they may lawfully communicate with us in prayers and sacraments. And where are they to tell them so, but in the separate congregations? Singly and severally he knows it were impossible. Nor do I think he would reckon honesty and conscience obliged them to come and tell the people so in their congregations.

Now I am afraid there are but a very few honest and conscientious men in the world at this day, if none are to go for such, but who can perceive the strength and reasonableness of the above-mentioned consequence.

And that you may further see what reasons our ministers may

have, notwithstanding all the alleged concessions, to administer in the worship of God in our assemblies; though it were never so much their common universal judgment, that they and we might sometimes communicate in some of the parochial; let us consider, that in the more populous and frequented places, as with you at London for instance, the churches cannot receive, some not a tenth part, some not half the people belonging to them, few can receive all. Methinks good men should not be offended that multitudes do in this distress relieve themselves by resorting to other places for necessary instruction. And though they be the inclinations of the people that divide them this way and that (as it can be nothing else) though places for their resort be not every where most conveniently situate for their resort, where there is most need, (which must be taken not always where it were most desirable, but where they can be had) yet they that have a mind, had better go to places at a more inconvenient distance, than have no whither to go; and it is better the necessities of many should be provided for in such an exigency, than of none. In the mean time, the churches of worthy conforming ministers in such populous places are generally filled, as I have been informed, and have sometimes had occasion to observe.

Do not necessities of a much lower nature oblige us to recede from stated human rules? It is well known there is a law against relieving such as beg out of their own parishes. But if one find upon the road such a poor wretch ready to perish, am I not bound, notwithstanding, if I can, to relieve him? And who would think in such a case, I transgressed the true intention of the law?

Yea and God's own laws respecting rituals, common order, and the external part of religion, were by his own direction to yield to far less urgent necessities. To the plucking an ass or an ox out of a ditch, how much more the souls of men? Have we not read what David did when he was an hungered, and they that were with him, how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which it was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? How expressly is it alleged by our blessed Saviour, against those nice and punctillious observers and urgers of the letter of the law, the pharisees, I will have mercy and not sacrifice. And if he were willing to abate a sacrifice to himself, that there might be room for the exercise of mercy towards men's bodies, how monitory and apprehensive should that be to such merciless persons, as would have the very souls of men themselves be sacrificed to their stiff and unyielding humours! Positive laws cease to bind when, by accident, they thwart the law of nature.

Which binds to nothing more deeply than the endeavour of saving one's own soul, and (within the bounds of his calling) his neighbour's as his own.

What if many of our ministers think it lawful, and, at some times, a duty to join in some of the public assemblies? It is not then their duty, when an inviting opportunity, and so urging necessities lay before them greater duty. This reverend author tells us, very pertinently to this purpose, when he was declaiming against us and our ministers, page 31. of his sermon: "It is a great fault among some who pretend to great niceness in some positive duties. that they have little regard to some comparative duties: for that which may be a duty in one case, when it comes to thwart a greater duty, may be none. This doctrine we learn from our blessed Saviour in the case of the obligation of the sabbath; which he makes to yield to duties of mercy. And can we think that a duty lying upon us, which, in our circumstances, makes a far greater duty impracticable? We acknowledge order and unity very lovely and desirable things, but we think it of greater importance that the ministers with whom such fault is found, conduct men, though not in so accurate order, (which they cannot help) to heaven, than let them go in the best order, yea (and as the case is) without any at all, to hell.

And what though the necessity of many of us arise from our own scruples, and what though those scruples, were without ground, doth it therefore follow we must be abandoned to perish? when our very error, if we be willing to admit conviction (as we sincerely are, could the matter admit it) is not imputable to us for a sin? This author was once pleased to make it one of his proposals for accommodation, page 64. of his *Irenicum*; "That no sanctions be made, nor mulct or penalties be inflicted on such, who only dissent from the use of some things, whose lawfulness they at present scruple, until sufficient time and means be used for the information of the nature and indifferency of the things, that it may be seen whether it be out of wilful contempt, and obstinacy of spirit, or only weakness of conscience, and dissatisfaction concerning the things themselves, that they disobey. And if it be made evident to be out of contempt, that only such penalties be inflicted as answer to the nature of the offence." Where he adds, "I am sure it is contrary to the primitive practice, and the moderation then used, to suspend and deprive men of their ministerial function for not conforming in habits, gestures, or the like." Which he makes good by following instances beyond his own present contradictions. It is strange that for such like things, now, it is thought so highly just, that our ministers are

totally to be kept out of the ministry, and we out of the church, and way of salvation! Are these unproportionable penalties even where contempt appears? And what are they when, through God's mercy, there appears not the least colour of it?

Is mere scrupling a human device in the worship of God, and an inability to see with other men's eyes, and to mould and form our judgment and consciences, as some other men can do theirs, a crime so inexpiable, that nothing less than our eternal ruin can satisfy for it? They know, who have read the Turkish history, that mere scruple brought that necessity upon the garrison of Sfetigrade in Scanderbeg's days, that rather than drink of water which they thought polluted, they must either surrender or perish. If another possible way could have been found to supply them, was it fit they and the town should rather be lost, than their unreasonable scruple be borne with? Or should they, in that exigency, be still held to it, to drink of that very water or none? We think we have greater reason to urge for our scruples, we think our necessity is greater, the case more important, and God deliver us from such pastors, as will not think so too, and value souls at a higher rate.

Our case being thus, we apply ourselves to ministers, bound by their calling and office to attend the affairs of the souls of men, they are at leisure, have nothing else to do, they may not live idle and useless in the world. This is their proper business. Whatever their opinion is about the things we scruple (and we believe it is mostly the same with ours) we see not how they can, or dare, deny us the help of their ministerial labours: we thank God that they dare not. And should they daily spend their pains upon us to urge us to the ceremonial way, as we believe they would do it very heartlessly (wishing things to be in that respect, otherwise in the Christian church, as well as we) so would their labour in that kind be unprofitable, and therefore ungrateful to us. Nor do we think it needs any sort of mortifiedness in them (as we find they are jeered under that notion) not to send us away unedified and grieved from their congregations; so much as a mortifiedness in their love of souls, and their sense of eternal concernments; wherein too many others, have attained to a great degree of mortification.

But now, my honoured friend, What think you of our cause? Let us seriously consider it, not according to the appearance which it will have to a captious sophistical wit; but as you will apprehend it to look in the eyes of our supreme and final Judge; considering also the same blessed Jesus, as that mighty Redeemer and Lover of souls, who once suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring them to God. Bring the matter before him, with whom you are to expect no tricks, but most plain

and equal dealing. And bethink yourself, whether of these two things he will be more likely to have regard unto, the saving of souls, which he bought with his blood; or, the preserving inviolate certain human institutions and rules, confessed by the devisers of them not to be necessary to the being of the church, which common reason sees unnecessary to its well being, to its external order and decency (evidently as great without them) which this author makes foreign thereto, when he tells us, that matters of order and decency are allowable and fitting, but ceremonies properly taken for actions significative, and therefore appointed because significative, their lawfulness may with better ground be scrupled, *Iren.* page 68. And which experience shews to be destructive. As whereby so great numbers, not only of his labourers are to be discarded, but of living, flourishing plants to be torn up by the roots, and all thrown out of his vineyard together?

For my own part, I must profess not to have the least doubt concerning the thing itself which we and our minister do, and practise, it is only our common great concern, to be very careful with what temper of spirit, and with what design we do it. It should to the uttermost be endeavoured to be done with all meekness and humility, with all possible reverence to authority, abhorrence of the least real contempt, and unfeigned regret there should be any appearance of it, though never so unavoidable; with a design only to glorify God, and promote the common salvation: not to make or serve a party, or advance any other interest than that of mere substantial Christianity and godliness. Let us covet this temper of mind, and where we see persons of real worth, and of a true latitude and largeness of spirit, commensurate to the Christian interest, that fall in with the public constitution, value and love them nothing the less, than if their judgments about these lesser things were never so exactly squared with our own, and so much more, by how much they may excel us in far greater and more valuable things. And if it be our lot to suffer under the notion of evil doers for doing what we take to be our duty, let it be according to the doctor's wholesome counsel, with an unrepining patience, and with much thankfulness both to God and our rulers, that we have enjoyed so much tranquillity; and with that cheerfulness that becomes those that expect a blessed eternity; and to be translated ere long into a pure and peaceful region, where we are to serve God, in society even with many of them who have been offended with us, without scruple or trouble to ourselves or them. If with such dispositions and aims we persist in our course, while our case is attended with such circumstances as now it is; I have no fear, I sincerely profess to you, of our

acceptance with God, and, sooner or later, with all good men.

Upon the whole matter, I conceive the honest cause you were so deeply concerned for, is really unharmed, and I hope you apprehend it too ; and that therefore your fear and despondency was causeless, as if it could not outlive this attempt against it by Doctor Stillingfleet. As you therefore see how capable it is of defence against him, I shall not forget the other part of my undertaking : but shall,

Secondly. Say somewhat (as your's sufficiently lets me see there is cause) in his just defence against you. And really, Sir, though that be an untoward thing to dispute against, I find it needful to defend him only against your anger, that is, the excess of it : which, although it can no more harm him, than he hath done the cause ; and consequently the blunting and breaking its edge (which is the thing I aim at) cannot advantage him, yet it will do him right ; and (which was the thing I first intended) it will be an advantage and kindness to you.

I must here indeed tell you, that I cannot blame you for being in some measure offended, as I can excuse the doctor but in part. I do dislike, as well as you, two things especially in his way of managing this business ; namely, his too great acrimony, and too little seriousness.

For the former, it is too evident, and I heartily pity him for it, that he should so forget, and suffer himself to be transported beyond the rules of Christianity and prudence ; neither of which would allow him, (and I am sure within the compass of the former, his text would not) so as to make himself a standard to all other men, and to suppose no man can be honest or conscientious that is not of his mind in the matters he then undertook to controvert, or that should not judge of the connections of things as he did. I cannot think it hath added to his reputation to reflect so grossly before such an assembly, upon a whole party of men that are, many of them, well known in the world ; and who, in point of integrity, are so little liable to be suspected, that an attempt to blemish them upon so slight a pretence, and in matter of fact, so untrue, could not but recoil upon himself ; especially with them that shall impartially compare their inducements to prevaricate with what he hath.

And for the other, it were indeed to have been wished, that upon so grave and solemn an occasion he had forborne jests, especially of that nature ; as for instance, such mortified and conscientious men, and the most godly—can least endure to be told of their faults, &c. Which expressions, any one that considers his scope, will understand to be ironical ; and that considers the matter, to be somewhat bold ironies ; and the occasion, to be causeless ones. Inasmuch as it is not impossible,

that truly mortified and conscientious men may desire opportunities to do God service in the world, in a way that he dislikes. And it may consist with real godliness not to count all those things faults which he takes to be such. And indeed, in his dedication, his way of averting the report of those ill men, that he intended to stir up the magistrates and judges to a persecution of the dissenters, is, to any considering man, sportful and ludicrous; namely, offering them only such a way of escaping persecution, as whereupon a man may shun suffering, if he please, from any party of men in the world, as such, by being in every thing of their mind and way: but which in effect grants the charge which he would avoid, that if we will not be so united to his party, we were to expect nothing but utmost rigour. One would rather have thought he should have bedewed that discourse with tears, which had in itself, most manifestly so awful, and tremendous a design, as not only the devoting of so great numbers, that might possibly not be convinced, and persuaded by him, to a temporal ruin; but the depriving them of the ordinary means of their salvation. And that, if he thought it necessary for the preserving of order in the church, they should be so dealt with; he should have spoken of their case with the greatest compassion and tenderness, not with derision and contempt.

Yet I would have you use lenitives with yourself, and calm your own spirit; and I wish you were capable of contributing any thing to the moderating and pacifying his too. That though he have been angry unprovoked, and with a sort of men that have ever respected and honoured him, as if he had been of themselves; his anger that hath been without cause, (as you know perhaps who in a like expression blames the exorbitancy of another passion) may not also be without end. At least, I pray you take heed you do not deserve the like sharp repartee, which the cynick met with from that noble philosopher, that he taxed his pride with greater pride; that you exceed not the heats whereof you complain. If he will still retain his fervour, let him be angry alone: and his displeasure have its continuance, with as little influence or concomitancy of yours, (and I could wish of any other man's) as (for ought I know) it had its beginning. And that since he thinks of being a sacrifice, he may only burn gently in his own flame, which he may moderate as he please, and I hope will seasonably extinguish, before he have suffered much harm by it.

For the qualifying of your own too great resentment and offence; I would have you consider how great reason you have to believe, that this blow came only from the (somewhat misgoverned) hand of a pious and good man. Be it far from you

to imagine otherwise. If you think he was to blame for intimating suspicions of their sincerity whom he opposes, make not yourself equally blamable, by admitting hereupon any concerning his. Which would argue a mean narrow spirit, and a most unwarrantable fondness of a party, as if all true religion and godliness were bound up in it.

And if it look unlovely in your eyes to see one of so much avowed latitude and enlargedness of mind, and capable upon that account of being the more universally serviceable to the Christian church, forsaking that comprehensive interest, so far as to be ingulfed into a party upon a private and distinct basis, consider what aspect the same thing would have in yourself. And never make his difference with you in this matter, a reason to yourself of a hard judgment concerning him; who can, you must consider, differ no more from us, than we do from him.

Believe him, in the substance of what he said, to speak according to his present judgment. Think how gradually and insensibly men's judgments alter, and are formed by their converse: that his circumstances have made it necessary to him to converse most for a long time, with those who are fully of that mind which he here discovers, that his own real worth must have drawn into his acquaintance the best and most valuable of them, and such for whom he might not only have a kindness, but a reverence; and who, therefore, must have the more power and influence upon him, to conform his sentiments to their own.

We ourselves do not know, had we been, by our circumstances, led to associate and converse mostly with men of another judgment, what our own would have been. And they that are wont to discover most confidence of themselves, do usually but discover most ignorance of the nature of man; and how little they consider the power of external objects and inducements to draw men's minds this way or that. Nor indeed, as to matters of this nature, can any man be confident that the grace of God shall certainly incline him to be of this, or another opinion or practice in these matters; because we find those that we have no reason to believe have great assistances of divine grace are divided about them, and go not all one way.

We may indeed be confident that had the same considerations occurred to us which have, we should have been of the same mind and judgment that we are. But it is very supposable that some accidental occasions might possibly have happened, that might hinder our actual taking up such considerations, though the things to be considered were not unknown to us. And not that only, but that might prevent our knowing even

matters of fact, that have signified not a little to the determining our judgments that way which they now incline to.

And I do particularly believe (as I doubt not but God is graciously present with those that in the sincerity of their hearts have chosen to serve him in the way which the law prescribes so) that if Dr. Stillingfleet had known what proofs there are of that same gracious presence, in these so much censured meetings, his thoughts would have been very different of them from what they are. I do not speak of proselyting men to a party, which I heartily despise as a mean and inconsiderable thing: but have known some, and heard of many instances of very ignorant and profane persons, that have been led, perhaps by their own curiosity, or it may be, by the persuasion of some neighbour or friend, to hear and see what was done in such meetings, that have (through God's blessing, upon so despised means) become very much reformed men, and (for ought that could be judged) serious and sincere christians. And whereas some, that have very prejudicial thoughts of all that frequent such meetings, may be apt to suspect all effects of that kind, to be nothing else but illusions of fancy, or a disposition (at least) to enthusiasm, or an artificial and industrious hypocrisy; I am very confident that if the doctor had had the opportunity, frequently to observe and converse with such, as we have had, and heard the sobriety and consistency of their discourse, and seen the unaffected simplicity, humility, and heavenliness of their conversation, he could not have allowed himself the liberty of such hard censures, but would have judged of many such persons as you and I do.

Upon supposition of all which, I make little question but it would have been very remote from him to wish that so many persons had rather lived in sin, and perished for ever; than have been brought to repentance and a good life, by being now and then at a separate meeting.

So that for the substance of what he hath said against such meetings, we have reason to impute it to his judgment; and his judgment to such circumstances, very much, as I have mentioned, that have led him the way he hath taken; and not given him opportunity to know what might have begot a better opinion in him of the way which he opposes.

But for the manner of his treating of this subject, that I impute to the prevalency of some present temptation; and hope he did not express in that sermon his habitual temper. And am highly confident, notwithstanding what he hath said in it; if it were in his power, we might even safely trust him to prescribe us terms, and should receive no hard ones from him.

Somewhat it is likely he was expected (and might be urged)

to say to this business. And his own thoughts being set a work, fermented into an intemperate heat, which, it is to be hoped, will in time evaporate.

If I may freely speak to you my own thoughts, he seems to deal in this business, as one that forced himself to say somewhat. For though I apprehend he speaks his judgment, yet the expressing it in this time and manner he might regret. And because it might appear a becoming thing to him to seem earnest, the temptation prevailed with him (against his habitual inclination) to supply with sharpness the defect of reason; which the poverty of the cause afforded not. For really his reasonings are faint, unconcluding, and unlike Dr. Stillingfleet. So that if any expected this performance from him, one may think (and this ought in some part to excuse him) that, besides some little flourishes of his reading and wit, he seems only to have lent them his name. Which however I pray you let still be of great value with you. And turn your displeasure into serious earnest praying for him, and that his spirit may not be further harmed; that, amidst his many temptations, he may be delivered and preserved from being at all puffed up, or any way embittered; and that so valuable a person be not lost, or in the least degree, rendered less useful to the church of God. And that all that know his more inward conversation, may discern in his frequent savoury discourses, in his continued serious calling upon God in his family, in his readiness to do good, especially to the souls of men, in his aptness to condescend to those that are much beneath him, how great the efficacy is of divine grace. And that, through the power of it, a great measure of wit, learning, applause, and secular advantages, may not only consist with vivid godliness, and sincere devotedness to the interest of religion, but contribute abundantly to the service and diffusion thereof in the world. I am very serious in this advice to you. Nor, thanks be to God, have so low or profane thoughts of prayer (which hath ever borne so great a part in the religion of all times, notions, and sorts of men) as to think it will signify nothing, especially when the design of it is not mean and private, but such wherein all good men will unite.

I little doubt, but if ever there shall be good days, and a happy state of things on earth, a factious zeal for parties will become a contemptible thing: and all the discriminative accretions to religion, which are severally scandalous to all other parties except their own, who embrace any sort of them (too probably for the sake of some secular interest or other, which is hoped to be gratified and engaged thereby) will be spontaneously quitted and abandoned by all parties, from an over pow-

ering sense and grateful relish of substantial religion itself; that is, entire devotedness to God and the Redeemer, with the joyful expectation of the blessedness of the other world: and so all become one.

But is this to be done while we sleep and do nothing? Or, have we in our circumstances, any thing to do, by which we may hope to contribute so much towards it, as by prayer? By this means (if men of sincere and pious minds, did with universal and abstracted aims, apply themselves to this great duty) we are to reckon the blessed spirit of holiness, love, and peace, would be more and more drawn into consent. Do you your own part herein, you will find your own present advantage by it; it will fill you with good thoughts, hopes, and expectations. The kindly benign influences whereof, will pleasantly qualify and temper your spirit, and make you know how much more grateful an inhabitant that charity is, which thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, than frowardness, discontent, vexation, and anger, at any one that thinks and speaks otherwise, than you did expect or wish. Insist upon such things in prayer, as wherein it may reasonably be expected good men shall generally agree with you. You have the more reason to expect being heard; yea, and ought to hope the spirit of this person, whom you have taken such offence at, will be rescued out of temptation, and be drawn into full consent with you. For you have no cause to doubt, but that he hath those principles wrought into the temper of his mind, which need only resuscitation, that they may dispose him to union with the whole body of sober and serious christians of his own way, or of others, (whosoever that can be seasonably endeavoured for) upon more probable and hopeful terms than he hath proposed in this sermon. Therefore be you serious and fervent in requests to this purpose, as you have that love to God and his church, which you profess; and that value for this worthy person, which I reckon you still ought to have: or (if that can be fit to be added) any kindness for

SIR,

Your affectionate Servant, &c.

SINCE my writing these pages, I hear of answers to the dean's sermon ; which, in so remote a corner, I have had no opportunity to see : what is here written may therefore (upon comparing) be communicated, or suppressed, as shall be thought fit.

And so I should take leave of you, but that it may be needful, whereas I have principally considered in these papers, the case of such as think it unlawful to join in the public assemblies ; to add somewhat (whomsoever it may serve) in reference to their case that think otherwise. For to say the truth, this is here the more common case. And though the doctor believes they that frequent the separate meetings, do generally judge it unlawful to join in the public ; howsoever it is with you, (and it is likely the doctor speaks of what is more within the compass of his own knowledge, or theirs who inform him :) it is with us in this part of the country quite contrary. And I may truly say, that in this place (and others where I have sometimes occasionally been) the generality of them who come to the other meetings do also attend the public.

Now these may perhaps think themselves left under blame, and may apprehend the doctor's consequence is strong against them, (that if occasional communion be lawful, constant communion must be a duty :) which he no doubt, understands exclusively of any distinct way of communion.

And if indeed they judge that consequence strong, I would fain know what hurt they can think it doth them ? Why should any man be afraid of his duty ? Or of the truth which makes it known ? And, if hereupon, they can, with the satisfaction of their own consciences, wave all other opportunities of worshipping God with others of his people, they have the less to do : and why should they complain who are satisfied ?

But in short, either they apprehend such other additional means, a real necessary help and advantage to them, or they do not. If they do not, they have no cause to trouble themselves, nor to grudge that so much is said for others; whose, for ought I know, may, as the doctor thinks, (for I cannot make an estimate from this or that little spot) be the much more common case. If they do, they have little reason to be concerned about the doctor's consequence: which I must wonder if he himself can think strong. It hath not, you see, been altogether overlooked in the foregoing discourse: and if any feel themselves wounded by it; he is so great an Achilles, that they may have their wound and healing from the same hand.

For, as hath been noted from him in his preface to the *Irenicum*, he seems plainly to intimate, that men have no charter, or grant of divine power, to make other conditions of church communion than Christ hath made. If so, then the conditions by which this way of communion is distinguished from the other, (supposing they be lawful) are still, in themselves matter of liberty, not of duty: and so it is left to the prudence of a christian to determine him (as in all like cases) this way or that; as will make most for the common good, consistently with that of his own soul. That is sin or duty, which in this or that case, will do more hurt or good. There being no particular rule to guide a man's practise, he must have recourse to that general one: by which it may be my duty, upon some great reason, to do that, at one time; which for as great reason, I ought not to do in a continued course. And it is highly commendable, when a christian understands the latitude which the law of Christ hath left him; is, in his own spirit, exempt from servile restraints, by other imagined bonds: and can with a generous liberty (pure from base self-respects) turn himself this way or that, as shall make most for the service of the ends he lives for. And when any accordingly use that liberty, it is a fancy of none but half-witted persons, to think they must therefore addict themselves to this or that party.

If a man's case come to be so stated, that he hath reason to apprehend it will do more good than hurt to others, that he own a sort of christians, who have particularly modified themselves, otherwise than they needed, by any divine injunction (or by any that God hath impowered men to put them under) by communicating with them under the common notion of christians, only, not as so modified: he doth but express the genuine complexion of a truly Christian spirit. But he is not to do so in

a continued course, if he find it will be a real damage to his own soul, in comparison of another way that he finds more edifying. Perhaps if he will be religious only, after the mode of this or that party, his fare may be either too fine or too coarse for his constant diet. I may, besides my own inclination, drink a single glass of wine out of civility to one person, or of water, to another, when I am not, for any man's pleasure, to destroy my health by trying myself to drink nothing else. And whatever Christian condescendingness and goodness of temper may prompt a man to, who makes not what others do, but what they ought to do his rule and measure: they have least reason to expect much compliance from others, who bind themselves up within their own party, are enwrapt as leviathan in his scales, call themselves the church (as many say, Here is Christ and there is Christ) and call all men separatists that will not be of their church. And perhaps they assume, and appropriate the name with no more pretence or colour, and with no better sense, than if a humoursome company of men, should distinguish themselves from others, by wearing a blue or a yellow girdle, and call themselves mankind? Do not too many in our days distinguish their church and Christian communion, by things no more belonging to a church, or to Christianity, than a girdle of this or that colour to human nature? And which no more qualify for Christian society, than that doth for human? If however, an ingenuous, free spirited man, out of respect to his present company, or for any other valuable reason, should in such a case put on the blue girdle, I shall find no fault with him. But if any should go about to pinch him too close with it, so as would be inconvenient to his ease and health, or oblige him to protest against the true humanity of all that neglect it, I doubt not he would throw it away with scorn. Much less would he be a confederate with them that use it, if they professedly combine for the destruction of the rest of mankind that use it not, when many of them that refuse it apprehend it a real grievance. Especially, when they that would impose it, live with many of the rest under the government of a just and sovereign prince, from whom they have no charter for their imposition, but who hath declared he will not have his subjects so imposed upon.

In sum, we are all indispensably obliged by our Lord Jesus Christ, the sovereign Prince and Ruler of his church, to the substance of all Christian ordinances. As to uninstituted modes thereof, we are free. And they that understand their liberty, may use or not use them as is more for their own, and the common good. They that understand it not, and think them-

selves under an obligation from Christ not to admit questionable, devised additions into their worship; they are not therefore to deprive themselves of the substantial ordinances of the Christian religion, whereof there is no question.

I shut up all with the words of the great apostle, Rom. 14. 3, 4. One believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, for God hath received him, verse 13. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: But judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block, or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

SOME
CONSIDERATION
OF A
PREFACE TO AN INQUIRY,
CONCERNING THE OCCASIONAL
CONFORMITY OF DISSENTERS, &c.

CONSIDERATION ON A PREFACE, &c.

I hope your public challenge, Mr. Prefacer, (as you only allow me to call you) was given with an honest intention. Yet with what kindness or equity, you could make your first onset in the view of the world; by hiding your own name, and exposing mine, designing yourself to fight in the dark, and expecting me to do it in open light, I leave to your own (perhaps calmer) second thoughts. I might hereupon, as I promise myself, be justified in the opinion of competent and impartial judges, if I had disappointed you in not writing; but I am apt to think I shall disappoint you more, in what I shall write upon this occasion. Yet not at all for this reason; for I thank God, I hold no opinion which I am ashamed to own to the world; but for what is with me of far greater weight. I have, for a long time, had an habitual aversion in my own mind, from perplexing myself, or disturbing others, by being concerned in agitating the controversies that have been on foot, about the circumstantials of our religion. I hope it will offend nobody, if I recite somewhat of what I wrote almost thirty years ago, in the epistle prefixed to a treatise of delighting in God, namely, thus;

“I have reflected and considered with some satisfaction, that this hath been my way, and the temper of my mind among you,* namely, to recommend the serious practice of the great

* The inhabitants of Torrington, magistrates and people, to whom this discourse was dedicated.

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. 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, that I have 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 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 thus 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 person's opinion: but I therefore 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 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, whilst I was among you; or in censuring such as have differed from me in such notions or 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 juggle others."

This was long before, and hath been ever since the constant

temper of my mind, in reference to matters of this kind. I have contented myself by the best means I could be furnished with, and the best use God enabled me to make of them, so far to form, and settle my judgment, as was absolutely necessary to my own practice: not taking my measures from what I was to hope or fear, of worldly advantage, or disadvantage; reputation or disreputation; but in what way, as my case was to be circumstanced, I might walk most agreeably to the common Christian rule, the holy word of God, and best serve the proper ends of life: do most good in the world, and, as my calling obliged me, most promote the common salvation. And that judgment, once formed, and preponderating to the way I chose, I have endeavoured faithfully to follow. Herein my heart reproaches me not, and I hope, shall not, as long as I live.

In the mean time, I have abstained from censuring others, who have taken a different way. I have rejoiced in the seriousness and success of any such, in their ministerial work, and in the liberty they had for public service, which I had not. I usually pray for a blessing upon their labours, as upon my own. My converse hath been as free, and pleasant, with divers of them, as with others, that were entirely agreed with me in circumstantial matters. Nor have I felt any inclination in my mind, to controvert with them the matters of difference between us, but have even, in our converse, forgot what we differed, having no more cause to suspect hurt from them, than they from me. Where is the man that can say, I ever persuaded him to conform, or not to conform?

This disinclination with me to controversies of any such kind, hath proceeded from sundry reasons. My judgment was already so far settled in these things, as was necessary to my own practice. I reckoned an unproportionable measure of the short time we have to live in this world, was not to be taken up about them: that it consisted not with a man's designed progress towards his end, to be always, or too long inquiring about his way: that disputes of that kind have little savour in them, compared with the great, agreed matters of our faith and hope. I was loath to disquiet others, or cast stumbling-blocks before them, who seemed as well satisfied, in their way, as I was in mine. I observed such altercations seldom better men's spirits, but that often they make them worse. I had a great reverence for divers that differed from me in these things; I knew several of them to be much superior to me, in all sorts of more valuable knowledge; as also I did of them that therein agreed with me. Comparisons I thought odious and vain. I could not be of every worthy and good man's mind, when they were

not all of the same mind. I had enough, I thought, to satisfy myself in reference to my own practice, not enough to change theirs; or enable me to set up to be a decider of such controversies. It was remote from me to think sincere religion, either confined to any party, distinguished by these little things, or excluded from any. That the kingdom of God consisted not in them, but in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. I have thought, that as things that were most necessary, were most plain; so things that were so very little plain, were the less necessary. Those particles of matter must have very little of real entity in them, that escape the acies, and discerning, of the finest, and quickest eye. I have hardly known any point in metaphysics or scholastic divinity, disputed with greater niceness and subtilty, than our controversy about the ceremonies; and though I never thought myself to be any of the quickest in the art of disputing, yet I think, taking which side I will in this disputation, I could easily puzzle the most, of plain people, and that are but of an ordinary understanding, about them; much more easily, than I could convince, or satisfy them (or perhaps, did myself) the one way, or the other.

The matter were indeed easy, if (for instance) in a select gathered church (of one or other whereof I suppose you are) one conscience, or a few men's, would serve for the whole body; or by parity of cases, of a whole parish or nation. But when we consider, that every one must give an account of himself to God; and that in matters which concern our own duty Godward, we are no more capable of having it done by another for us, than (as a noted person in our time aptly speaks) of being represented by another in the day of judgment; this will bring the matter, with weight, upon our own spirits, lest we should be found transgressors in Bethel, and to have offered strange fire, instead of a sacrifice, on the one hand; or needlessly, on the other hand, set on fire the temple itself. This will, in God's time; I doubt not, be considered by such as can make the occasion cease, of such difficulties. In the mean time, it is of great consolation to those that sincerely fear God, that if with upright minds they principally study to approve themselves to him, and if they mistake, do only err for fear of erring; he will not with severity animadvert upon the infirmity of a weak and merely misguided judgment.

It is a most sure truth, and worth all this world, that to an honest unbiassed heart, it is a far easier thing to please God, than men.—I have also considered, that some that can contend fervently, and conclude positively, concerning church-power, where it is lodged, and how far it can extend, in making rules, and inflicting censures, discover too often more confidence

than knowledge and solid judgment, in those very things themselves; but much oftener, little of the Spirit of Christ, and the gospel; little of that meekness, humility, charity, that are most essential, and inward to true Christianity; and are too apt to magnify the—tithing of mint, annis, and cummin, above faith, mercy,, and the love of God.—I have sometimes thought that to be somewhat instructive, which is storied of Plato, * that having one in his academy that had great skill in driving a chariot, with that exactness, as not to swerve one jot, from the lines on which the wheels were, very swiftly, to move; nor could be satisfied until he had prevailed with that great man to be the spectator of his performance herein; he was so far from applauding him, that turning away with contempt, he said, “They that mind, with such exactness, little things, will never mind great.”—I detract nothing from the exact care, that ought to be had in observing God’s own revelations and injunctions, if you understand aright, under what notion, and for what ends he intended them. Nothing is to be thought little in religion, that truly belongs to it. But, Sir, if you should take upon you to devise rules, and measures of your own; and then put a sacredness upon them; yea more, insist to have them observed with greater strictness, and for more distinguishing purposes, than ever God intended divers of his own revelations for: this I must tell you were bold, and extravagant. And how you are concerned herein, we shall see in the progress of this discourse.

To come somewhat closer to you therefore, Mr. Prefacer, I shall first consider how reasonably, and justly you offer to engage me in this quarrel; and this will lead me on to take a view of your treatment of that honourable person, against whom your quarrel is more principally meant. As to your endeavour to involve me in this affair, I think before you had offered at it, you should have been well assured of these two things; at least of the one or the other of them. First—that I really did concern myself to advise, one way or other, as to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of that occasional conformity, about which you contend: Secondly,—that I ought to have done so. If neither of these can be made to appear, I cannot but think it was a distemper of mind, an immoderate scripturiency, or what shall I call it? too great an affectation of intermeddling beyond any call you had, that could lead you to it. And whereas you think you have not exceeded, herein, the rules of charity or good manners: as to the point of manners, I will not take upon me to be your judge; I believe you guess me to be no master of ceremo-

* Æl. Var. Hist.

nies. But as to the, much greater, business of charity, I must talk with you more about that, before we part. For it is a matter of much greater compass. And in your measures, and exercise whereof, the generality of serious christians are concerned as well as I. But as concerning myself, can you make either of these appear?

As to the *first*, I am sure you cannot, nor any man. Nor ought you to have presumed it, unless you had been sure of the *second*, that I ought. I, for my part, judged I ought not. Whether I did truly judge, or no, that leads into the main cause, that will lie between us, wherein I shall be no less cautious than you, though therein I shall not so far compliment you, as to pretend I more follow your example in it, than my own inclination, that is, I shall not undertake to determine, whether the action, (as circumstanced) of that honourable personage you principally reflect upon, were lawful or unlawful. This I meddle not with; and you pretend to decline it too (either you, or the author you recommend and follow, which is all one to me) namely, the question, whether this or that communion be lawful or unlawful; but are so little true to that pretence, as to judge that person who occasionally partakes in the legally established church's communion, unfit, ever after to be received, otherwise than as a penitent to any other Christian communion. And I think no man is to do the part of a penitent, but for what was unlawful, or a fault.

Now I, for my part, shall not take so much upon me as to determine, not being called, if I were never so competent, whether there were any thing faulty in that action or no. But in this I am neither in doubt, nor without a sufficient occasion to declare, that I can judge it no such fault, (if it be one) as should exclude one, that in all other respects appears a serious and an orderly christian, from any other Christian communion, to which he may have thought fit to adjoin himself. And that I may set in view the ground for my not judging otherwise, and for the following discourse, we must distinguish,

I. Of the obligation of precepts negative, and affirmative, or against sins, and unto duties, namely, against or unto, such things; as, by those precepts, become sins or duties. And of these, I shall speak only so far, as concerns our present purpose, that is, as they are to come under consideration, in *foro ecclesiæ*, or in a visible church of Christ. And so, there are sins consistent with the Christian state. And there are sins inconsistent with it; or destructive of it. Duties that are matter of simple precept, and duties that are also conditions of Christian communion. We are also to distinguish the obligation of negative and affirmative precepts, as it is usual and common,

namely, that the former bind (unless the precept were repealed) *semper*, &c. *ad semper*, always, and to every point of time. The latter, always, while the precept stands in force, but not to every point of time. Of this we shall make the proper use, in the fit place.

II. Of the different notions, under which, or causes, for which, men of different sentiments, or persuasions, may decline the communion of this, or that church, namely, *Some* may decline the communion of this, or that church, as judging it essentially defective; so as not to have in it the essentials of a Christian church. (Whether that judgment be right or wrong, true or false, is not now the question; or under our present consideration.) *Others* may decline it, as judging it defective in respect of some accidentals, or circumstances; either simply considered, or compared with some other Christian church, that they may apprehend to come nearer the Christian rule; and wherein the administration of Christ's ordinances may be more profitable, and tend more to their advantage and benefit, in their spiritual concernments.

These distinctions we shall consider severally, both by way of explication and application to the present case.

For the former. When we speak of sins consistent, or inconsistent with the Christian state; of duties that are merely such; or that also are required, as necessary to Christian communion, we intend the distinction, as referring to visible Christianity. And mean, that as there are sins inconsistent with visible Christianity: avowed atheism, open idolatry, infidelity, apostacy, total, or in respect of some or other known fundamental or Christian religion; contumacious, and continuing rebellion against the authority and known laws of Christ; which without visibly serious repentance and reformation, slur, and deface a man's character, as a visible christian; so there may be faults that do it not; which may yet come under common notice, or view. I only instance in what is more agreeable to our present case, as misjudging in some circumstantial matters, and very disputable, that are extra-essential to the substance of Christianity; and practising according to that erring and mistaken judgment; even though the mistake be continued, never discerned, and never repented of, or reformed as long as one lives.

Such were the differences in judgment and practice about meats and days, Rom. 14. 2. &c. wherein there could not but be right and wrong. Both sides could not be in the right, that is, referring their practice to their judgment. The question being, whether such and such things were lawful, or unlawful, and that the one side judged them lawful; the other,

unlawful. The one side must be in the wrong. The things about which they differed, could not be both lawful and unlawful. It must be sin to judge and do amiss ; duty, to judge aright, and practise accordingly. And what was now to be done in this case.? Were they to excommunicate and curse, and damn one another? Some that presided in the Christian church did, it is true, in process of time, come to use an unchristian severity in such cases. As when some tied themselves to the eating of herbs only, and abstained from flesh (whether they derived their opinion from the school of Pythagoras, or however they came by it, matters not.) And it was determined concerning them, (I could shew where and when, were it needful) that if they would use abstinence, upon other considerations, they might ? but if upon a judgment, or opinion, that the eating of flesh was unlawful ; they should be excommunicated. And this was thought a sufficient reason for that hard censure, because they denied Christ to have given that liberty, as to meats, which he had really given. But was this according to the mind of God? No, quite contrary ; we see it otherwise determined by apostolical authority, Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations, Rom. 14. 1. The case follows. The charge is, Receive them, take them into your communion, and dispute not his doubting judgment with him, or pass you no judgment upon it, so as to vex or disquiet him with it. Let him alone with his judgment and practice together ; but receive him. And the forementioned rigour, we find to have been corrected in after-time.

And the like charges are elsewhere given in reference to the differences between the jewish and the gentile christians ; the circumcised and the uncircumcised, that is, that in the Christian state, no distinction was to be made of Jews, or greeks ; circumcision, or uncircumcision ; them that used, or disused the jewish rites and ceremonies ; but all were to be esteemed as one in Christ Jesus, or Christ to be all in all among them, Gal. 3. 28. Col. 3. 11. that is, God makes no difference, supposing they be good men, sincere christians, or become new creatures ; he stands neither upon their being circumcised, or uncircumcised. Gal. 6. 15. Retaining or quitting the subsequent judaical observances ; so tenderly, and by so gentle a hand, did the divine wisdom and goodness draw off the judaizing christians from those things, whereof he designed the total abolition ; whereof they had more pretence to be tenacious, being things enjoined by God himself. Therefore God treats them with more indulgence. And what example should we rather choose to follow ? especially, what indulgence doth the case itself challenge, in not pressing, under penalty, what there

can be no pretence of divine authority for? And we find this is the measure according to which we are to go, in receiving persons into our communion. We are to receive such as we have reason to think God receives; in the forecited, Rom. 14. 3.—Do not judge, but receive him, for God hath received him.

There are therefore two plain rules, laid down by that great apostle, in reference to such dubious, and small matters; namely concerning such scrupulous persons themselves, that they be fully persuaded in their own minds, (ver. 5,) and do nothing against the judgment of their own consciences, in those matters; which he enforces, verse 23. the other concerning the carriage of fellow christians, towards them, that they judge them not, but receive them, verse 1, 2, 3,—10. Whereupon, Mr. Prefacer, I conceive myself clear in not judging. And you will be clear in judging, if not only, you are an abler judge (which I will never dispute with you) but also, that you were called to judge; and that your judgment is most assuredly true. If God have authorized you, and revealed to you, not only what was right or wrong, in the case itself, but the secrets of his heart, whom you judge; and that he practised what he thought to be wrong: that is, that he is a hypocrite, and that he hath against his conscience, yielded to do that for (an unprofitable) preferment, probably to his great loss, (as some have found it) which he himself thought unlawful: if you know him to be of so vain and light a mind, that, not for any real advantage, but for a little temporary, evanid honour and gaiety; he hath offered this violence to the judgment of his own conscience; if God revealed this to you, and charged you to proclaim it to the world; then hath he indeed set you over him, and far above him; placed you in a much higher seat of judicature, than that wherein he is seated; dignified you with an authority superior to what he ever conferred upon any apostle, or on the whole Christian church, or on any, besides his own Son.

But if there be nothing of all this; then, though your judgment should happen to be true, yet if it were without any ground, upon which you could know it to be true; and so it were only right by chance: if it were without call; if you had nothing to do with the matter; if it come among the exempted cases reserved by the great God to his own tribunal; and which he hath subjected to no ecclesiastical, nor human cognizance; being, as to the matter itself, very minute, not so much as a doubtful action: but the circumstance of an action, and that touches not any vital of religion: as to the lawfulness of that circumstance, disputable; a ceremony; one of them, that were not less disputed, by men of excellent wisdom, and piety on both sides, than the jewish ones, in the time when they were matter of controversy to the Christian church: and after all that dis-

putation, determinable, for ought I know, chiefly, by the *maius* or *minus bonum ecclesiæ*; greater or less good of the church; as in the time when that jewish rite of circumcision was the occasion of so much disquiet to the primitive christians, St. Paul circumcised Timothy, for the greater service of the Christian interest; and being, as to the inward intention, motive, and inducement, secret, and liable only to the divine view; then, I say, upon all this, even supposing the thing you censure were faulty, yet it is no such fault as can slur the character of a man, otherwise appearing, a serious christian. If the contrary were duty, it is no such duty as is necessary to entitle a man to any Christian communion. Yea, and I add, your censuring it, as you do, is a thousand-fold (even unconceivably) more faulty. And if you could truly say, as Diogenes did, trampling upon Plato's rich bed, *calco platonis fastum, I tread upon Plato's pride*, it might more justly be replied, as the latter did reply, *sed majori fastu, but you do it with greater pride*. You take upon you to invade the throne of the most high; and may take that assaid to you, Who art thou that judgest another's servant? Why dost thou judge thy brother? We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, Rom. 14. 4—10. And I wonder you did not dread those awful words, of that very Judge, Mat. 7. 1. Judge not that ye be not judged. And shall more wonder, if yet you perceive not, when you thought a mote was in another's eye, that there was a beam in your own, as verse 3. A thing that among heathens * has been animadverted on with just severity. Nor shall I recharge you in the following words, Thou hypocrite (for I know not your heart in this matter) but I would have you re-consider, with how little warrant you have broadly charged that worthy person your quarrel is about, with hypocrisy; that he acted against his own conscience, because he acted not according to yours: as if yours were to be the standard, and the conscience-general to mankind! But that you may apprehend it not impossible for a man to follow the dictate of conscience, and perhaps as good a one as yours, though he do not follow yours; I shall yet have recourse to a second distinction, before laid down, namely, between the different notions, under which, of causes for which, men of different sentiments may decline the communion of this, or that church, namely, some, as thinking it essentially defective—others, as judging it defective in some circumstances only.—Now, Sir, if any man decline the communion of what is (however) vulgar-

* Cum tua pervideas oculis mala lippus inunctis.

Cur in amicorum vitiis tam cernis acutum.

Quam aut aquila, aut serpens Epidaurius?—Hor. lib. 1. Sat. 3, l. 25.

(And many others of them abound with like passages.)

ly called a church, as counting it really no church at all, his withdrawing or abstaining from its communion, must be total and constant, he can have no communion with it, as a Christian church, at all. But if one avoid more ordinary communion with a church, as judging it, though not essentially defective, yet to want, or err in some circumstances, so considerable, as that he counts another church comes nearer the common Christian rule, the holy Scriptures; and finds its administrations more conducing to his spiritual advantage; he may be led, by the judgment of his conscience; both, sometimes, upon weighty and important reasons, to communicate with the former, and continue therein, according as these reasons shall continue urgent upon him; and yet, sometimes, as the cessant, or diminished weight of such reasons shall allow, to communicate with the other.

They that will not admit of this distinction, thus generally proposed, as a ground of such different practice in the general, as is here expressed; but judge not only essential perfection, but a perfection by the concurrence of all desirable accidents to be necessary also unto Christian communion, can have no communion with any Christian church on earth; for where is any to be found every way perfect? It is true, that accidental defects may be more or less, and it requires great accuracy to apply what is here generally said to particular cases; nor shall that be my present business; I have somewhat else of greater importance to do. All that I concern myself for, is only to have it considered, that a man of conscience may, upon the grounds generally mentioned, vary his communion, as hath been said, while he keeps himself within the limits of a Christian church, essentially true, and that hath no additions destructive of that essence. And if he mistake in making application hereof, to a particular case, it proves him not to be a man of a profligate conscience, or of none at all. He may have arguments so specious, that supposing he err, may impose upon the judgment, and thereby direct the practice of a very intelligent, discerning, and upright-hearted man: so as to make him think that which is perhaps an error, his present duty; and so not offer violence to his conscience, in what he so doth. As, judging such a church true, as to essentials, he may think (occasion inviting) he hath greater reason, though it be defective in accidents, to communicate with it sometimes, than to shun its communion always; since those christians that agree in all the essentials of Christianity, agree in far greater things than it is possible for them to disagree in. He must have mean and mishapen thoughts of Christian religion, that thinks not the great doctrines of faith, ordinances of worship, and rules of

daily practice (common to us all) unspeakably more valuable, than this or that external mode, or form, of religion, that is but accidentally, and mutably, adherent thereto. And what if some have thought that alone, a sufficient reason for their occasional communion with a church, with which they have not constant communion, that they may do it and themselves, that right before the world, as to testify, they decline it not as no church; but so far, practically, own it, as the reason of the thing requires: why may they not be supposed to do this, as thinking it a good reason, whether it really be so or no, without going against conscience herein? And yet the same person may, perhaps, think the communion of another church preferable, and, for ordinary resort, rather to be chosen, as wherein he finds the same essence, with more regular, grateful, and advantageous modes, and ways of administration.

And if hereupon it should be said, But since Sir, you think it not unlawful to communicate with such a church sometimes, why should you not for common order's sake, do it always?

May he not reply, Pardon me in that, good Sir, if I think I owe more, to what I take for Christ's rule, and to the discernible advantage of my own soul; judging, in these respects, that communion to be best, which I more constantly adhere to. I say, why may not an honest well-meaning man reason thus; and do accordingly, (whether his sentiments herein be right or wrong) without gainsaying his own conscience? And the rather, for that the church itself, with which he more ordinarily communicates not, (as comprehended in the states of the realm) so far gives him the liberty of his choice, as to reckon his doing herein what is more for his satisfaction, and advantage, no punishable thing. Why may he not, conscientiously say, Let me be excused, if I do not compliment away, things that are, to me, of so great importance? And which they to whom I give it, cannot but count a profane sort of compliment?

Question. But should not the latitude of a christian carry him to fix his communion with the larger, and more extensive church?

Answer. What! Should the latitude of a christian bind him to one sort of christians, with exclusion of all other? Never was that noble principle of true Christian latitude, more perverted, or turned even against itself, than if it be used to train men into a religious bigotry! As if the apostle's professing to be all men; to the Jews as a Jew, &c. must signify, that he take one side, and engage with the Jews, against the gentiles! They that refuse confinement to the largest church may avoid

it, not because they should, otherwise, express too much latitude, but too little.

Some may here, perhaps, say, "What one judges best, ought to be chosen always." And indeed nothing is more easy, or ordinary, than for them that have little compass of thought, to pronounce hastily, and conclude peremptorily, even beyond seven men that can render a reason. How would such a one stare, if one should oppose a downright negative to his confident assertion! and say, What is best, in matter of practice, is not to be chosen, and done always? It is not enough to justify such a choice, and practice, that it be in itself, or simply best; but that it be best, in present circumstances, and all things considered, that ought to be considered, in the present juncture.

Let here another distinction be remembered, before laid down. Negative precepts oblige to every point of time. Affirmative do not so. He that is always under obligation to pray solemnly, is not obliged to be alway solemnly at prayer. The worship of God is better than most actions of our lives, yet the saving of a town, or house from fire, yea, the plucking of a sheep or an ox out of a ditch, is, sometimes, to be preferred. The most sacred, external act of duty becomes a sin, when it excludes that which is more a duty at that time. How fatal! how totally destructive an error might it have proved, before, to the Jewish nation, always to have thought it unlawful to defend themselves on the Sabbath-day! * How long was sacramental oblation in the wilderness omitted! How much more may, attending upon such an institution, in, what some may think, a more eligible manner; if there be a reason that outweighs; when, not the substance of the ordinance is wanting, but what is counted (perhaps by you) a fitter modus!

To be plain with you, Mr. Prefacer, suppose you judge kneeling at the Lord's table, a sin, (as cautious as you are, not to seem to take this, or that side, in these controversies, wherein you, however, unwarily betrayed yourself as hath been noted; yet my supposing it doth you no hurt) and suppose you judge another gesture a duty; suppose you judge concurrence in the use of the liturgy, a sin, and the unprescribed way (by human authority) a duty; yet who hath empowered you to make such sins (if they were such) exclusive from Christian communion? or such duties, conditions of it? Sometimes, surely it will be understood how bold an adventure it is, to make terms of Christian communion, which Christ hath never made. There are sins and duties, immediately by God's law itself, that he

* As it was once said to have been, Plutarch de Superst.

never intended to be so characteristical, namely, of the unfit or fit subjects of Christian communion. For what! Hath God forbidden any to be admitted to Christian communion, but such as are perfect in knowledge and holiness? How bold a self-assuming then is it in you, not only to make sins and duties which God hath never made so; but also to make them distinguishing terms of Christian communion! which is far higher, and the more insolent usurpation! You know, or it is meet for you so to judge, that many pious men dare not partake of the Lord's supper, otherwise, than kneeling. And I have been sufficiently assured concerning divers of eminent sanctity, that they have been as greatly affected, and had as high elevations of soul, in the use of the common prayer, as others in any other way of devotion.

Now, Mr. Prefacer, ought another man's gust to have been the measure of theirs? would you have these men excluded from all Christian worship, namely, in society with Christian worshippers? To say, Let them worship God with those of their own way, is to say you know not what. For if (as by your rule it seems to be determined) the things are unlawful and exclusive from all Christian communion in worship, there ought to be none of any such way, that they can worship with. And now, Sir, if that be your conscience, that supposing there be never so many thousands in a Christian nation that cannot worship God in your way, you would have them paganized, made as heathens and publicans, God bless me from your conscience! And shall this be your way of recommending yourself to Christian communion? Wheresoever such a spirit appears of zeal against such and such external forms; (or if it be for them, it is all one to me) of pride and self-esteem, for so contemptibly little things; of malice and cruelty, that they could persecute even to the death, if it were in their power, or into strange countries, such as differ from them in things of no greater moment: I would sooner be of a fellowship with drunkards, or other sensualists, (though I hope God will keep me from both) than with them; as much, as I count a devil somewhat a worse thing than a brute. Nor can it be said, that herein Satan is transformed into an angel of light; his transformation is, at least, in this, very inartificial. He apparently enough shews himself to belong to the darkest region. And whereas some such may talk of offering strange fire, because it comes not from their altar; their fire is as much stranger than Nadab's and Abihu's, as common unconsecrated fire differs from infernal.

You will say, These human forms, and other devices they are so much set upon, are sins. Sins! but I ask, Do they unchristian a man? They will be much more over-magnified, by so

fervent opposition, than by serious use. But what would I do in such a case? would I not reject a man from the Lord's table, how serious soever, that would not communicate otherwise than kneeling? No, God forbid! let him use his own freedom; and be fully persuaded in his own mind; he shall not offend me. And though there was a time when christians were forbidden kneeling at all on the Lord's day: I had rather that human institution were neglected, than any good man debarred of so useful an ordinance. I should never quarrel with any man for that gesture itself. But I should like no one's choice of it the better, that should pretend to choose it for a moral reason. For instance, as expressive of greater reverence; because a moral reason must immediately bind conscience; and is of universal extent, must equally concern all; whence, this would imply an accusation of all other Christian churches that use not this gesture, as irreverend, or less reverend than they ought to be. Nor can there be any other measure of *debitum*, or of that which ought to be, but some law or other; nor can there be any law of universal obligation, but by a universal law-giver. This would therefore insinuate an accusation of our Lord himself of neglect, in not making such a law, and in allowing a different gesture to his disciples, when he first appointed that ordinance. For though their gesture was not sitting, it is more probable to have been such, as was used in those times and countries for their ordinary table-gesture. And this other I should use, being in communion with those that use it, rather not to offend them, than please the master of the house, or to satisfy my own conscience, as if it were in itself a sin not to use it. But for them that use it on that account, that is, of conscience towards God; I should, according to the mentioned rule, not judge, but receive them.

And whereas some may think it would introduce confusion into the church, that all should not be confined to one gesture in such an act of worship, it would be a worse confusion to have serious christians, because their conscience obliges them to kneel, when others do not, mingled with turks and infidels. Nor is that oneness of gesture more necessary to any order that is itself necessary, than that all that partake together in such an ordinance, be of one stature, size, or sex; or wear all garments of the same shape or colour. I hope for a time, when Christianity will be the religion of the world. While it is cramped it will never grow. I hope it not, to prevail in the world, by having all the world, in every minute thing, reduced to the model of this or that party. How absurdly arrogant would he be, that should pray that all the world might be of one mind, by being all brought to be, in every nice punctilio,

of his mind. When I see partition-walls taken down, truly Catholic Christianity coming into repute, a readiness and promptness of mind, to be all things to all men in the apostle's true meaning: when the great things of religion do more engage men's minds, and they cease to magnify trifles, when as to faults, (real or supposed,) men no longer strain at gnats and swallow camels; when the love of God comes to govern the Christian church, and reign in the hearts of men; then will the kingdom of God come with power. For I am sure the spirit of love is the spirit of power, and of a sound mind. In the mean time, I declare myself (as I have often) to be of no party, self-distinguished by so little things. Nor, when the visible church of Christ on earth comes to be confessedly composed (as of old) only of three sorts, catechumens, penitents, and the fideles, with their infants, can it be any great or insuperable difficulty, whom we are to receive into our communions, and whom we are to exclude.

And thus, Mr. Prefacer, I have said all I intend, as to the main of your cause, that is, Whether they that shall not be of your mind, when such a case occurs to them, as that about which you litigate, and shall practise otherwise (that is, shall not please you) should therefore, except they repent, be excluded all other Christian communion? I shall say no more to it, except what may occasionally fall in, upon my giving some short remarks as to the manner of your treating such worthy persons, whose judgment and practice agree not with yours. Herein, because I never intended to answer your book, (thinking what I have said makes that needless) I shall only note some passages from it, here and there.

And I begin with the title page. Where, I pray you inquire of your own heart, what you meant by that suggestion "in cases of preferment;" Was it not to insinuate, that preferment was the inducement to; that worthy person, to act against his own conscience in that case? when it was his known judgment, testified by his practice several years before. Herein you should have been sure. You meddled with a two-edged weapon, wherewith you vainly aimed to wound him (for a sincere conscience is invulnerable) but have most certainly wounded yourself. You may in time feel the wound; it is worse while you do not. If he can sincerely appeal to the Searcher of hearts (as for ought you know, he can) Lord, thou knowest this man hath wronged me: I would not have such an appeal lying in heaven against me for all the world! How can you tell but that such a thing was designed, and done with a sincere aim, and intention of mind? Among heathens it hath not been unknown, that some having honorary coronets conferred upon

them, consecrated them to their Gods. * Is it impossible somewhat like it should be done by a christian to the true and living God? Are you so much a stranger to a devoted life, as not to think this possible? You have wronged him, when without ground, you judged otherwise: but you wronged the great God infinitely more, whose throne you presumed to usurp. And you should have been able, before you concluded with so rash confidence, to prove the act in its circumstance unlawful. If it were lawful: go among them you thought to gratify, and inquire who of them will think a consequent preferment could make it unlawful? Therefore your insinuation, except wherein it is spiteful and mischievous, is idle and vain.

Again, your subjoined text of scripture, "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal"—for what purpose was it set there? What! To signify, that the God of the dissenters, and of the established church, differ as the living God and Baal? Did you take this for a piece of wit? it was uncharitable. Uncharitable! that is a trifle in comparison; it was profane and most impious wit; yet you are mighty fond of the conceit, and we have it over and over in the book, that the conformists and dissenters serve two Gods (as the one of them is miscalled) and have two religions! The Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, and as truly the congregations of England, to place his name in them (and whom, as invocated in many, and for ought appears you intend, in most of them, you blaspheme as a senseless idol) rebuke, and forgive you!

This may occasion some idle people to cry out "What! at church in the forenoon, and at a meeting-house in the afternoon! This is fine! and what will now become of our religion?" And what is, already, become of his religion who so exclaims? Do the religion of the church, and of the meeting-house, make two religions? Wherein do they differ? The substance of the same religion is common to them both. Therefore the modes and accidents, wherein only they differ, are this man's religion. And can any man be the better for such a religion, that consists of modes and accidents? It is true, that religion may possibly be so ludicrously disguised and misrepresented, as scarce to be fitly owned for any religion at all. But this cannot be said of most (if of any) of the congregations of England, of either sort. And they that have any thing of charity, or the fear of God, about them, will be very wary how, for a misplaced word, or indecent action, or expression, they censure one or another of these two sorts of solemn worshipping assemblies, as having nothing of God, or true religion, among them.

* Athen. deipnos. cum animadvers. is casaub.

Thirty nine articles are given us for the summary of our religion, and of what is thought to appertain to it. Thirty six contain the substance of it, wherein we agree : three, the additional appendices, about which we have some difference. With such a man, the three weigh more than all the thirty six. And if his eyes and understanding were useable things with him, he would see the church is a meeting-house, and the meeting-house a church. How remote are these men from the temper of spirit they were directed to be of, that had far greater differences among them than ours, to count themselves all one in Christ Jesus ! But throughout the book, such as are of this Christian latitude, and benignity of mind towards one another, and not so stingily bigotted to a party, as he, are treated with this sort of charity, to be styled painted hypocrites ; such as play bo-peep with God Almighty ; that, if such an occasion offer itself to any of them to serve God and their country, in a public station, do what the law requires, and which they think they may sinlessly do in order to it, do trespass upon their consciences, and damn their own souls to serve their country. And they that censure them not, as he doth, are induced to forbear it, only by their gold ring, or fine apparel.

And that he would have all such as use that liberty, which their consciences and the divine law, as they think, allow them in order to their serving God and their country, to be disfranchised, and made incapable of doing public service to either, that is, for doing that, which as wise men as he, count indifferent ; and which can therefore make no one, either a better or worse man, or christian. And would draw that odium upon the established church, to represent it as if it sought to engross all power to itself, as such, even in civil affairs, upon so insignificant a pretence ! than which he could not attempt doing it a greater mischief, or more directly tending to make it intolerable to the prince, nobility, gentry, and to the whole body of the nation itself. No such arts need to be used to expose the clergy to the ill-will of the people, and raise in nobler minds, what some may count a just and generous disdain of being so enslaved. The nature of man, in his lapsed state, is so alienated from God, as to have little regard for any sacredness of persons and things, by which only they become related to him.

The church of Rome hath not gained much upon kings and princes, of later years, by affecting to make them dependent on her. And it is not difficult to pre-apprehend, what may at length engage them against her, to her final ruin : that is, to make them hate her, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. In that church, this caprice first began in their *dominium temporale, in gratia fundatum* ; and thence by a strangely

wide sort of stride or skip, even of a heavenly width, from pole to pole, it was got quite among another sort of men, treading antipodes to the former, in the immodest, rude claim, and appropriation to themselves, of the entire privilege and prerogative of the saints' reign. It is the easiest thing in the world, when any sort or party of men have got power into their hands, to saint themselves, and unsaint all other men, at their own pleasure. But do the civil rights of men depend upon such (that is, so easily abusable) pretences? We are saying nothing now of their rights, claimable from God himself, but from one another; and even such rights none could have, that is, that are claimable from their fellow-creatures, or their (conceives) fellow-members, under any government, but by some original grant, one way or other conveyed from the Supreme Ruler, who is the Fountain of all rights.

But hath he ever given christians (or saints) as such, a right to seize the rights and properties of other men? The notion of the saints' reign, because we find it in the Holy Bible, is not to be torn out, but must have its true sense assigned it. And if there be a time yet to come, wherein it shall have place; it must mean, that a more general pouring forth of the Spirit shall introduce a supervening sanctity upon rulers, as well as others; not to give every man a right to rule, (for who should then be ruled?) but to enable and incline them that shall duly have a right, to rule better. And so the kingdom will be the saints, when it is administered, by some, and for others, who are so. If God have allowed to men, as men, any rights, that is, that are claimable against other men; and should again give a right to christians in other men's properties; to what a strait and distress were the rest of the world reduced? Might not any of them say, Since one must be a man before he can be a christian, what am I to do in this case? must I unman myself, and lose the rights I have, as such, that I may recover them by being a christian? I had them as a man before, sufficiently to secure me against the claim of all others. What! But not against christians? Then are they an unmanned sort of men! And whereas obligations accompany rights, what lawless men are these christians?

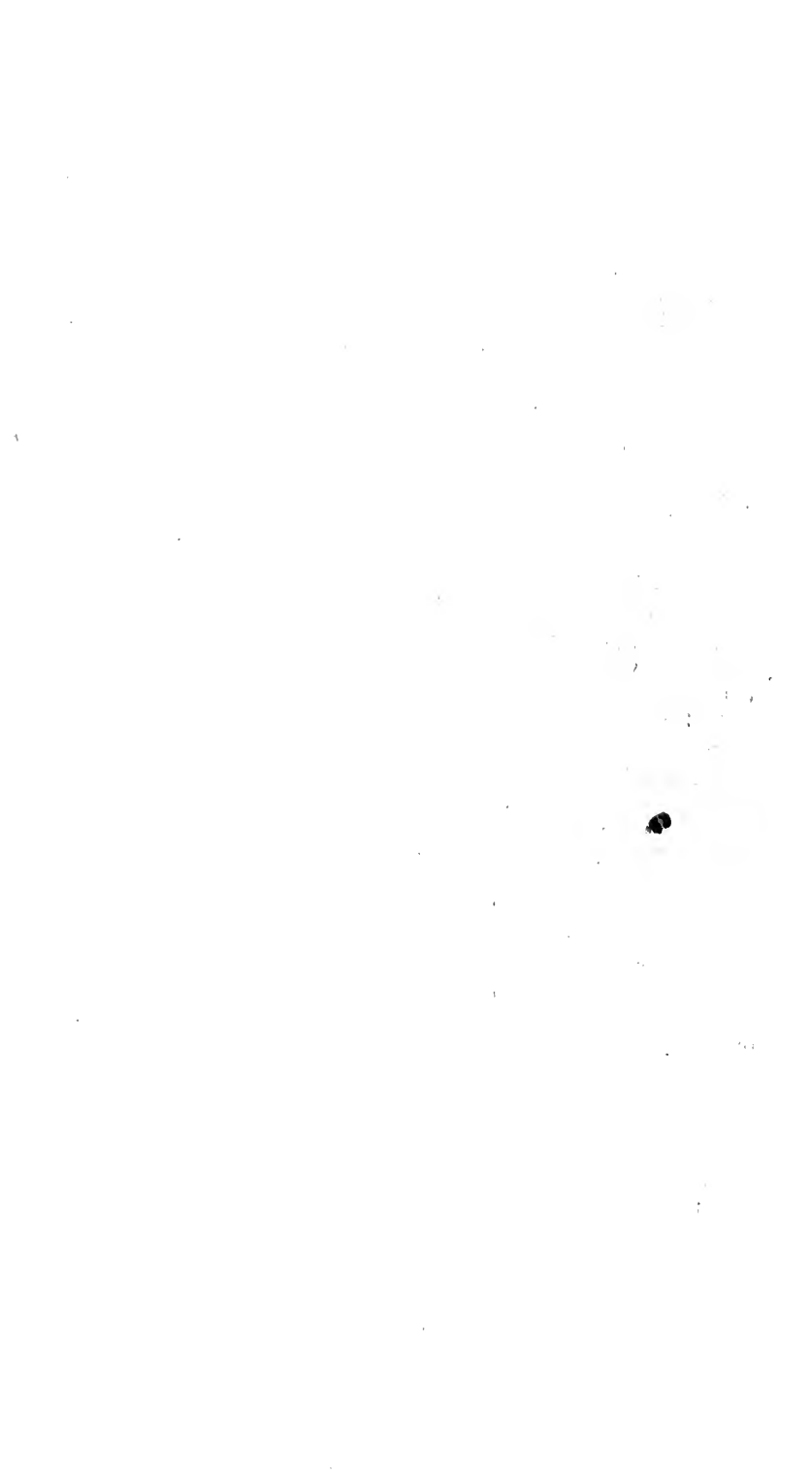
But whereas God hath in great compassion to the world, appointed it to be Christianized, he hath with equal wisdom, chosen the fittest methods for it; that is, not to commission christians to divest other men of their all, unless they become christians; but to let men see, Christianity had no design to disturb the world, or disquiet them in their former possessions, though they should not be christians; but that they might enjoy them with higher advantage, if they be. in order to another

world. If God had made Christianity the measure of civil rights to mankind, his sovereignty were not to be disputed; but he never exerts acts of sovereignty, but by the direction of his wisdom. Wheresoever the sound of the Christian name comes, if it carried that avowed principle with it, that christians, as such, had a right to out all other men of their birth-rights; instead of becoming the religion of the world, nothing could more directly tend to engage and inflame all the world against it, and make them endeavour its utter extirpation, as a thing intolerable to mankind. Nor could they have any so plausible pretence against it besides; having nothing in itself, but what must render it most amiable and self-recommending. Did the Spaniards' methods for Christianizing America, recommend the Christian faith to that miserable people? And if God himself would never give such a power, for introducing the very substance of Christian religion itself; how intolerable must it be for any sort or church of christians, to claim and use it for the introduction of their own additions to Christianity, as the church of Rome hath notoriously long done! And time will shew the event, as common reason doth the tendency of it.

And, Sir, though the strain of your discourse shews your no great kindness to this established church, the compliments which here and there you bestow upon it, too broadly shew, as if, under a colour of kindness, you would tempt it, to aim at loading itself with such a weight of power and greatness, as you may think, must finally sink it. Its more real friends, our civil rulers, are more wisely kind to it, and give it no more interest in the civil government, than it may, more safely bear. They never exact in order to any one's having a share therein, a total, constant conformity to all its rites, as you would have them. And have only designed by the limits they have set, the excluding that sort of men, whose known principles make them more incapable of human society, than mere pagans. But especially, it is not to be let pass, that you, or your author, industriously represent the primitive English puritans (concerning whom it were in some respects well for you, if, as the great author you mention, speaks, your soul were with theirs) as if they were generally of your stingy narrow spirit. I wonder how you could think to impose upon the world in a matter of so recent memory. This attempt had been more prudently deferred, till three or four ages hence; especially if great care had been taken, in the mean time, that all books were burnt, or buried, that give any account of them. How notorious is it, that generally they that continued in their native land, as far the greater number did, looked not upon the church of England, as no church? That they wished her more reformed; but in great part kept in her communion: (their principal leaders and,

the people) taking other opportunities of spiritual improvement, as they could; for which they often ran great hazards. In 62, the same spirit and sentiment afresh appeared; when most of the considerable ejected London ministers met, and agreed to hold occasional communion with the (now) re-established church: not quitting their own ministry, or declining the exercise of it, as they could have opportunity. And as far as I could by inquiry learn, I can little doubt this to have been the judgment of their fellow-sufferers through the nation, in great part, ever since. How could you have the confidence to represent this as a new thing; and an apostacy from primitive puritanism! that hath so much in it of the spirit of primitive Christianity; such largeness of mind! such reverence of what bears any divine stamp and signature upon it, undefaced! such benignity, even towards them by whom they suffered! How strangely inverted, Sir, do things lie in your mind! must we accordingly transpose the names of virtue and vice? And by how much more illustrious any render themselves by the eminent virtues of pride, fury, self-conceit, censoriousness, to the damning of every body, that in all things do not think, and do, as they! Are these things with you, characters of the most excellent sort of christians?

If I had seen any thing in your book, that needed, or deserved a particular answer, I should not have balked it. But seeing nothing that looks like reasoning, but what is so idly sophistical, that any one of common sense can see through it; such as that, "How can a man dissent and conform at the same time?" when all the world knows, or may, conformity consists of numerous parts; and is it such a miracle for a man to conform, in some part, and not in every part? conscientiously to scruple constant entire conformity, and not scruple some part of it, at some time? If any think such talk needs further answering, let them seek it elsewhere. And for your replying; I shall not prescribe to you; only I can assure you, that thereby, neither you, nor any man else, shall divert me from my much more important, pleasant work; unless I see somewhat that shall make it worth my while. The person you criminate, may yet, notwithstanding what you have said, be in the right for ought I see. And therefore to any such, whose case this is, or may be; I can only say, that their rule having been consulted with serious diligence, as I hope it hath; and their end a secret between God and them, which, if it be sincere, is enough for them they have no cause to be discouraged, but go on, and prosper. But, Mr. Prefacer, if your judgment, upon the case itself, be true; I conceive that truth, accompanied with your temper of spirit, is much worse than their error.



A
S E R M O N

ON THE OCCASION OF THE JUSTLY LAMENTED DEATH OF THE
TRULY REVEREND

MR. JOHN HOWE,

Deceased April the 2d.

Preached to his congregation, April 8. 1705. And published at
their request.

—
By JOHN SPADEMAN, Minister of the Gospel,
—

We are your rejoicing, even as you also are ours in the day of
the Lord Jesus, 2. Cor. 1. xiv.



TO MY SINCERELY

HONOURED FRIENDS,

Mrs. MARGARET HOWE, Dr. GEORGE HOWE,

Mr. JOHN HOWE,

Mrs. PHILLIPPE COLLET, Mr. JAMES HOWE ;

WITH OTHER

Near Relatives of the Deceased.

MY WORTHY FRIENDS,

IF either the desire of him, whom the all-wise Disposer hath translated, or yours, (differing in this single matter from his) had invited me to preach a funeral sermon for your excellent relative, I should have found a real unwillingness to such a service ; and have judged it more eligible to have been wholly silent, than have spoken so few things, as are mentioned in this practical discourse, concerning him. He indeed received, from the Father of lights, so great a variety of both natural and christian perfections, that he was not only a shining light, and ornament of his age, but an inviting example of universal goodness. The exercises whereof, towards men, did strongly recommend him to the esteem of those from whom his judgment in some things disagreed. So that, (though he was most remote from seeking honour on this earth) he had that principal recompense of piety, in this life, a good name ; which must preserve him from oblivion, though all his near relatives, and acquaintance, should studiously conceal his just praises. Nor can he want a monument to make him live in following ages, whose excellent writings have gained the approving suffrage of those who are capable judges ; and they will be valued, while a relish of good sense, and genuine piety is found among men.

All this speaks your loss, and of his church, yea, and of the nation, to be the greater ; and I persuade myself, very few of his order have been so generally lamented : which is a tribute due to his real worth. But the obedience, and resignation of your faith have been the more grateful to him who hath called you to make such an offering, and whose mighty hand alone is able to bind up this wound, and both sustain and guide you in your progress to the same happiness which he now possesseth : if this plain discourse may contribute unto this blessed design, this will induce you to excuse the publishing of it, and the defects which are very obvious in

Your affectionate faithful Servant,

In our common Lord,

J. Spademan,

A SERMON.

2 Timothy, III. xiv.

*But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned,
and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou
hast learned them.*

IT is reasonably supposed that the mantle which fell from the prophet Elijah, as he was taken up into heaven, was highly valued, and carefully preserved by his disciple Elisha; especially when he experienced a miraculous virtue annexed to it: the waters of Jordan, being divided when this garment was applied to them; as we read. 2 Kings. ii. 14. Indeed, when your late most worthy pastor, (who may justly be styled an Elijah of this age) was translated by death, he left no garment which has any virtue to recommend it: but (which is far more important) before his translation, he let fall such holy instructions and heavenly counsels, as, through divine assistance, are able to dry up the waters of excessive grief, and open a passage into the celestial Canaan, into which himself hath entered. It is not necessary, nor is it my design, to open fresh springs of sorrow, for so very grievous a breach as the hand of God hath made, by representing the exceeding loss which his family, and relatives, this society, yea, the whole city and nation, have sustained. There is the justest reason, with heart-affecting sorrow, to repeat Elisha's words, used on the occasion now mentioned, (2 Kings 2. 12.) My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, (England) and the horsemen thereof. The death of one Elijah, who had the spirit of prayer, whereby to open heaven, and bring down refreshing showers of blessings

on a whole people ; the death, I say, of one such, must be a public, and common loss never enough to be deplored.

The attiring of this place, and of many assembled in it, speaks it to be a house of mourning, but our concernment here, is not to indulge a fruitless sorrow, which can neither bring him back to us, or assist our happy ascent to him, which is far more covetable, and will certainly be attained, by continuing in those things which we have learned, knowing and considering of whom we have learned them.

This excellent advice, given by the apostle Paul to his disciple Timothy, I have judged a more proper subject of your meditation, on this occasion, than an encomium of your deceased pastor, whose truly humble mind made him discover an averseness to any funeral solemnities, or discourses, which had a tendency to magnify him, and gain public applause: he hated the sounding a trumpet before him, living and dying. I am not appointed to perform such a service, (though but a reasonable tribute to his memory) only the sense of my own duty has induced me to discourse something from the scripture that hath been read, which will, (through the divine blessing) assist you to improve this severe dispensation, and comply with the apparent design of his office and ministrations. It is evident, that such a providence loudly proclaims the vanity of human life, the unalterable law of mortality, which must be executed on the very best inhabitants of this world ; so that neither the brightest virtues, or greatest serviceableness, neither the use of the most promising means, or the most ardent and united supplications for the prolonging of life, can exempt any from the end of all the living ; which therefore ought to be laid to heart : but I judge it most useful, that our meditations correspond with the character which was eminently peculiar to him, whom God hath taken away from us ; and whose long excellent ministry bespeaks every one of us, in the language of the text. But continue thou in the things, &c. knowing of whom thou hast learned them.

It is generally agreed by interpreters, that the apostle, in the latter part of the verse, intends himself, and that, not only, or principally, as invested with the apostolic office, but as distinguished by something in his temper, conduct, and condition, which did strongly oblige his disciples to continue in the things they had learned, and being duly considered, would effectually engage him, unto this practice.

The preceding context leads us to this explication, where, without once mentioning his apostolic commission, or the miraculous gifts by which he confirmed his doctrine, he only represents to Timothy, verse 10. 12. Thou hast fully known,

(or for a long time hast fully observed) my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me; plainly intimating, that the life and practice, the sufferings and afflictions of one who teacheth the gospel of Christ, carry a most cogent argument, and strong efficacy to engage them who are taught, to a firm persevering in the truth, and duties of the Christian religion; which were (without all doubt) the things which Timothy had learned of this apostle, whose office and design led him to teach the holy doctrine and rules of the gospel.

The text thus cleared, offers to our consideration, a two-fold important instruction.

I. The possibility and danger of departing from the truth, and rule of the gospel, is supposed.

II. A suitable, and (in its own nature) effectual preservative against this evil is provided, namely, the actual knowing, and due considering of the character of him, of whom they have been learned. As to the former,

I. The possibility, and danger, of forsaking the truth, and rule of the gospel: the supposing of such a thing (in the text) might seem to carry an affront to one of Timothy's excellent piety. Him, this apostle calls his own, (or legitimate) son in the faith, 1 Tim. 1. 2. And his dearly beloved son, 2 Tim. 1. 2. Yea, (as some learned men, with great probability conclude) the pillar, and ground of the truth, 1 Tim. 3. 15. For there is no necessity of giving this character, either to a particular church, or even the universal. However that be, it is unquestionable that Timothy was not only a sincere, but a very eminent believer, who had made an uncommon proficiency, under the teaching, and institution of the apostle Paul; who, thereupon did give him the office of an evangelist, (far more considerable than that of a bishop, or even a metropolitan, which hath been assigned to him without ground,) yet, notwithstanding, this exhortation to him, carrieth a plain supposition, that it was (considering the case abstractly from the divine purpose) possible, even for him, not to continue in the things which he had learned of such a teacher as the apostle Paul: who therefore, judged it necessary to fortify him, by this earnest advice and suitable direction. And we shall perceive just reason to extend the supposition unto all, who have learned, even of the best instructors, the sacred truths and duties of the gospel, if we reflect on the various causes of departing from them; As,

1. The native vicious inconstancy and instability of human minds. None are, by renewing grace, made perfect and delivered from all remaining defects as to the Christian state: if we

are not kept and guarded by divine power, we are in continual danger of departing from the living God. Who would have suspected any mutableness in those Israelites, who heard the majestic terrible voice of God promulgating his law on mount Sinai? (whom some * Jewish authors have magnified, as if they had all been advanced above the ministering angels) on which occasion, they most solemnly obliged themselves to hear, and do all that the Lord their God should speak, Deut. v. 27. And yet so unstable were their hearts, that they quickly (within less than forty days) turned aside out of the way, which God had commanded them, Exod. 32. 8. Yea, when the Son of God, the great prophet, was raised up, and sent to the same people among whom he was approved of God, by the most stupendous miracles (such as none other had ever wrought,) one of which, namely, the multiplying of the loaves (by which many thousands were fed) carried such convictive evidence, that the spectators professed, This is of a truth, that prophet that should come into the world, John 6. 14. Yet the very next day, many of these very persons, who were Christ's disciples, departed from him, and walked no more with him: verse 66. On this supposition of our vicious instability, the apostle grounds the earnest advice, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall, 1 Cor. 10. 12.

2. The strong delusive workings of remaining unbelief. This root of apostacy is not totally killed, and destroyed, even in those who have the spirit of faith. Hence we find the apostle cautioning them, whom he styles holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, (Heb. 3. 1.) to take heed, lest there be in them an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God, verse 12. How apt are we to admit into our minds, a suspicion, lest the gospel-revelation should be a cunning devised fable, a mere invention of deceivers, who for their own interest have framed this doctrine, especially, when any are observed to pretend a zeal for it, while they deny it in their works, and turn it into an engine of advancing secular power and advantage: like those, whom the apostle describeth by this infamous character; (1 Tim. 6. 5.) counting religion to be an income, or gainful business, as that passage ought to be rendered.

3. The various discouragements which attend a constant belief and practice of the gospel; which the apostle had his eye upon in the immediately preceding context; where he mentioneth the persecutions and afflictions, which still followed him in the discharging of his office, and subjoins verse 12.

* Pirko R. Elies, C. 47.

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution, by the reviling tongues, or, (when God permits) by the oppressive hands of evil men: these lions, in the way of our duty, have terrified many out of it, who have been ashamed or afraid to continue in that course, (which, though most unjustly) hath the reproachful name of a sect, and is everywhere spoken against, Acts 28. 22. The experience of all places and times, informs us how strong and dangerous impressions have been made, by the reproach and contempt, the cross and sufferings which attend the faithful service of Christ; even while the memory of our Redeemer was recent, his blood as it were, yet warm, and his apostles alive, and shining as lights in the world. there was cause of a sorrowful complaint of this kind, 2 Tim. i. 15. Thou knowest how that all they that are in Asia, be turned from me. The true reason of this inexcusable deserting may be discovered in the following part of the chapter, namely, they were ashamed of the apostle's chain, they judged it both dishonourable and hazardous to persist in the communion of one, who gained nothing among men but disgracing bonds, and distressing torments.

4. The strong impressions made by worldly allurements. There is not a more dangerous enemy to our souls, and which so powerfully dissuadeth from continuing in the things they have learned (of the most excellent teachers.) than the love of this world. Wherever this prevails, it stiflcth all the convictions of reason and conscience, it bafflcth the force of all the arguments which demonstrate the divine original of the gospel, and the unspeakable importance of the truths and counsels contained in it. There have been, and will be many, to whom the account given of Demas. is justly applicable. 2 Tim. 4. 10. Demas hath forsaken me, (and consequently, the things he had learned of me) having loved this present world. And never, I think, was there greater danger from this snare, than in the age wherein we live: in which a paganish esteem and admiration of riches and greatness renders all the vast concerns of the other world despicable, and without force. It is most amazing, that christians should be so blinded, as not to discern, what the pagan Cicero has complained of, *corrupti mores depravatique sunt admiratione divitiarum: the manners of men are corrupted and depraved, by the admiring of riches.*

5th And last cause of this danger is the seduction and enticement of wicked men, which the apostle remarks in the verse immediately preceding. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, &c. It is a sad reflection, that too many good men seem contented, only to save their own souls, with-

out seeking to allure and draw others into the path of life ; but evil men set themselves to infect others, and engage them in the same pernicious courses : those who want learning to dispute and reason against truth and holiness, fail not to employ the little wit they have, in ridiculing the most sacred things, like the scoffers predicted by the apostle Peter, 2. Ep. 3. 3. Ungodly men, walking after their own lusts, who supply the want of argument by profane jests and raillery on the gospel, and those who seriously and heartily believe it. To which they often add the enticing baits of liberty, pleasure, and gain, which carry a mighty force, especially with younger persons, whose age makes them unsuspecting and inconsiderate. Hence, so many in their youth quite cast off all the bands of a pious education, whilst they guard not against the dangerous enticements of sinners, which is earnestly enjoined by the royal preacher, Prov. 1. 10. whose notorious defection from the worship of God, is assigned unto this cause. 1 Kings 11. 5, 6.

Having thus represented the danger of not continuing in the things which have been learned of those who have instructed us in our holy religion ; we proceed,

II. To consider the preservative against this danger, laid down in the latter part of the text, knowing (or considering) of whom thou hast learned them, as though he had said, I apprehend thou wilt be strongly tempted to desert the doctrine and practice which have been delivered to thee ; but if thou duly rememberest my character and conduct, how I have demeaned myself, in my whole course, this will be an apt and suitable means to establish thy resolution of adhering to the things thou hast learned of me. In discoursing on this apostolic prescription, we shall,—State the proper efficacy of the preservative in its general nature, and—Lay down the particular characters of a teacher, which most directly contribute unto the preserving from the danger mentioned. The former is necessary to prevent mistake, the latter to engage and animate our holy purpose of continuing in the truth and duty of the gospel. As to the

1. The stating and explaining the proper efficacy of what is prescribed, to preserve us from the danger above related, it will be useful to observe the following particulars,

(1.) That this is not to be understood, as if the bare authority of any ordinary teacher, were a sufficient ground of obligation to continue in the things we have learned of him. This cannot be supposed, without a most dangerous altering the very nature of faith, which is always to be built on a divine testimony, as the apostle asserts, Rom. x. 17. So then faith cometh by hearing, (or testimony) and hearing by the word of God.

We ought not to give this deference to an angel from heaven, much less to the most excellent teachers, that their single authority should oblige us. We are commanded by our Lord, in this sense, to call no man our father upon earth, Mat. xxiii. 9. that is, not to admit any one whomsoever (who acts in his own name) to have a dominion over our faith: only the supreme original truth, the blessed God speaking by his Son, and those whom he commissioneth, is absolutely to be relied on. The Bereans are dignified with the title of noble, or high-born persons, because when the apostle Paul first preached to them, they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so, Acts xvii. 11. Much more is it our duty to examine all that we learn of our ministers, by the same infallible rule, that we may not be the real disciples of any other master besides him whose name is put on us in our baptism. Our faith, and persevering obedience to the gospel, must not stand in the wisdom, (or authority) of men, but in the power (and veracity) of God, 1 Cor. ii. 5.

(2.) This is to be understood in subordination to the internal effectual agency of the Divine Spirit, by whom, as the principal efficient, God doth stablish all believers in Christ, as the apostle asserts, 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. The sealing and impressing of our minds and hearts by the heavenly signet, is absolutely needful unto our continuing in the things we have learned; all our own efforts and endeavours will never preserve us from defection and drawing back unto perdition, without the powerful working of the Holy Spirit, who alone can fix our wavering minds, and furnish with strength to resist, and overcome, the most dangerous assaults that we can be exposed to: therefore the apostle, besides this seasonable counsel to Timothy, earnestly prayeth for him; last verse of this epistle, The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit; as knowing, that without the inward vital presence of the Redeemer, all other helps will be insufficient and unsuccessful; and we are obliged to add unto our use of the means here prescribed, fervent and continued supplication, for obtaining the mighty aid of the Divine Spirit, whom God hath graciously promised to give to those who ask him, Luke xi. 13. But,

(3.) The efficacy of such a knowing and considering of him of whom we have learned, deriveth (in the usual method of providence) from the native prevalent force of example: when the practice of a minister agreeth with his doctrine, this doth strongly recommend and impress the things that are taught by him: whereas a practice that is contrary to the most holy rules and instructions, shuts up and bars the hearts of those who observe this disagreement. Hence the blessed God, while he

spake by prophets, called none to the prophetic office but holy persons, as we read, Luke 1. 70. 2 Pet. 1. 21. And it is well known, that where the qualifications of officers in Christian churches are described, the principal stress is laid upon a holy and unblamable life. 1 Tim. 3. 2. Tit. 1. 7. On this design, that the example of those who teach others, might powerfully convey their doctrine into the very hearts and consciences of men : and this consideration gives a sad occasion of observing, how great a judgment and tremendous plague, a vicious ungodly ministry is to a people, who usually are much more influenced by the manners of their teachers, than by all the arguments and counsels which are proposed by them : one straying guide, who himself leads the way in a course of sin, draws many after him into the same destructive path. This provoked the terrible displeasure of God against the Jewish priests, against whom he draws a most severe charge, Mal. 2. 8. But ye have departed out of the way ; ye have caused many to stumble at the law. Not the greatest learning, or moving eloquence, not the most accurate observing of external forms, can compensate for a defect as to holiness of conversation ; which leads to the

(4.) And last reflection, namely, That the knowing and considering of the Christian practice of a teacher, is a most apt means to prevent or remove prejudices against the things which have been learned. Constant experience attests the truth of this. Many have acknowledged that it was their observing the justice and temperance, the patience and humility of those who suffered as evil-doers, which convinced them of the divine authority of the Christian doctrine. Therefore the glorious Founder of the Christian church, did not only furnish the first publishers of the gospel, with the prophetic spirit, and miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, but replenished them with all the fruits of righteousness and universal goodness. They could make a just and safe appeal to all who had opportunity of observing in the apostle's language, 1 Thes. 2. 10. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe. It is a very memorable passage which I have met with in a learned and judicious author,* “ If the gospel (saith he) were now to be planted again, all the miracles in the world, I think, would not make it take, while our morals are as they are. A miracle may strike a little wonderment at first, but good morality, (that is, a holy conversation) it sinks, it soaks to the heart : perverseness may say a miracle is from the devil ; but who can say that good morality is from

* Garbutt.

the devil?" This will be sufficient, I hope, to prevent mistake, concerning the nature and kind of that efficacy which belongs to the means here directed to; I now proceed,

2. To lay down the particular characters of a teacher, which most directly recommend, and impress the things which have been learned of him; which will bring the discourse to the sorrowful circumstances of our present state; where (as I have before signified) I shall not attempt to draw a full description of him, whose decease we justly lament, (which is always a considerable part of a funeral discourse;) but confine myself to some short memorials of him, which agree with my present design; which will be of far greater advantage to you, than to hear his just praises set forth by the tongues of men and of angels: this latter could only yield an evanid delight, which can no ways contribute to our chief interest, I mean the salvation of our souls, which through divine assistance, will be furthered by the following account of those special characters which are most apt to engage unto a continuing in the things that we have learned: As,

(1.) Knowledge in the mystery of Christ, a clear understanding of the council of God, that relates to the salvation of lost sinners. Without this, an honest mind may deceive others, because itself is liable to be deceived. This our apostle appeals unto, in the first place where he makes a description of himself, ver. 10. Thou hast fully known my doctrine, (that is, how consonant to the Scriptures;) and puts the Ephesians in mind, that he was furnished with this sacred knowledge, (Eph. 3. 3.) by which he was rendered a wise master-builder in the house of God. I shall not flatter your late teacher, when I affirm, that God had given him an uncommon skill in the word of righteousness, from whence he always drew all that he taught. He had peculiar advantages for understanding the oracles of God, a large fund of natural endowments, improved by superadded preparatives unto the study of the Scriptures; a rich treasure of human learning; (despised by none but the ignorant,) particularly, a thorough knowledge of pagan theology, by which he was enabled to descry the shortness and mistakes of human reason; which faculty he very well understood to use, in subordination unto Christian faith, whose mysteries he was able to free from the objections of cavillers.

But that which most of all assisted his searching and right understanding of the Scriptures, was his very early and growing exemplary piety, which hath the promise of divine teaching and illumination. He took care to wash the vessel, that it might be receptive of divine communications. To all these, he added unwearied diligence, humility, and prayer, which was the delight

and solace of his whole life. In such a course, he was safe from the illusions of fancy, and the specious errors that many great wits have been entangled with. His very excellent useful writings are a public testimony of this thing: most justly might he use the apology made by the apostle Paul, when he was censured and reproached with being mad; I am not mad, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness, Acts xxvi. 25. This wisdom enabled him to confirm the truths of the gospel with proper and most convincing evidence, and represent the Christian scheme in its native unexceptionable comeliness. And should we not continue in the things we have learned of such a scribe, instructed unto the kingdom of heaven?

(2.) A second character, which has a peculiar aptness to recommend and impress divine things, is godly sincerity, with which all the first publishers of the gospel were adorned, and it did most eminently shine in the conduct of the apostle Paul, who takes frequent occasion to mention it, because some, either from ignorance or malice, taxed him with the want of it, as if he had acted according to worldly politics, 2 Cor. 1. 12. Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom,—we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. And he more largely insists on this qualification of those who have the office of instructing others, 1 Thes. ii. 3, 4, 5, 6. I know the imputation of insincerity, and hypocrisy, hath been very frequent, against the most upright excellent servants of God; thus when the accuser could not fasten a charge on the life of holy Job, he taxeth him with a mercenary and insincere disposition of mind, Job 1, 1. Doth Job serve God for nought?

* The wise counsel of God permits these unrighteous and very uneasy accusations, to exercise and demonstrate the reality and truth of his servants love and devotedness to him: of which your deceased pastor gave most convictive evidences throughout the whole course of his ministry; by a noble and

* F. Paul. relateth that pope Adrian, (one of the honestest of his order) charged Luther, and his followers, with hypocrisy—in sua conscientia tenessero per indubitata l'opinioni Romane fingendo altrimente: E pero essere cosa facillima estinguere quella doterina, che non era fondata, salvo che sopra gl'interessi. *and acting against conscience, in which they were persuaded of the certain truth of the Romish tenets, but dissembled their sentiments: and yet that it was a very easy thing to destroy that doctrine which was founded on nothing but interest.* Istoria del Concilio Tridentino. L. 1.—
That pope hath not been singular in his censure, than which nothing could be more unjust.

generous contemning of the world, and secular advantages, and a steady aiming at the honour of God, in all his conduct and ministrations ; so that the character given of a learned and excellent defender of the † Protestant cause, doth truly belong to him, namely, Many excellencies there were in him, for which his memory remains ; but above all was his crown, that he unfeignedly sought God's glory, and the good of men's souls ; and nothing doth so strongly recommend the things that we have learned, as an assurance of the holy sincerity of the teacher, who can have no design to corrupt the word of God, for the sake of the greatest worldly advantage. 2. Cor. 2. 17. For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God : but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ. We have known few in our age, to whom, this solemn protestation of the apostle is more truly applicable than to him, of whom you have learned ; and what can justify the not continuing in the things taught by him ?

(3.) Another character, which directly contributes to this purpose, is an ardent affection unto them who are taught. Nothing doth so certainly open and captivate the hearts of men, as love when it is apprehended. Very eminent were the apostle Paul, and his fellow-labourers, for this disposition, 1 Thes. 2. 8. Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to impart to you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, (that is, lives) because ye were dear to us. Nothing could rise higher than what we read, Rom. 9. 3. For I could wish that myself were accursed for my brethren : where it is not to be supposed, that the apostle, a most sincere and fervent lover of Christ, could intend an eternal separation from Christ, which is all one with damnation, but he only meant a bodily destruction for the sake of Christ, such as they suffered who were accursed or devoted unto death. v. Lev. xxvii, 29. Numb. xxi. 2, 3. I can truly profess, that I have not known any one, who hath so nearly resembled this pattern as he whom we lament. How naturally, and with inward solicitude did he care for your estate ? How often hath he ministered in this place, when his infirmities made such a service hazardous to his life ? Which he did not count dear to himself, that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry he had received for the saving of souls ; for which he had the most tender regard, to the disregarding of all other and lower interests. We may justly apply to him, the account given by this apostle, of Epaphroditus, Phil. 2. 30. For the work of Christ, he was nigh unto death,

† Chillingworth.

not regarding his life. I might mention various instances of this most tender and fervent love to souls, as his impartial and faithful reproof of sin, without respect of persons; his easiness of access, his condescending to the lowest, and indeed becoming all things to all, that he might gain the more. But I must not omit that bright evidence of his divine love to men, I mean his readiness to assist all the necessitous and distressed, that he had opportunity of doing good unto: Very few have been so governed as he, by the apophthegm of our Lord, It is more blessed to give, than to receive, Acts 20. 35. His charity was not a narrow spring, limited and confined to a small spot, but like an ocean, sent forth refreshing streams without distinction. How often have the bowels of our persecuted brethren in a neighbouring kingdom, those generous confessors of the faith, been refreshed by his concern for them? When it is the reproachful character of our age, that all seek their own things, are intent on building their own houses, and raising their families, he was intent on building up living temples, unto God, in all the ways which might contribute to the present and everlasting happiness of men. In this course he not only laid up for himself an undecaying treasure in heaven, but used the best method to entail a divine blessing on all his offspring. Surely the instructions, the counsels and exhortations of such a one, ought never to be forgotten or slighted, when they could proceed from no other principle than a most unfeigned love to God, and affection to those among whom he laboured.

(4.) Another recommending character of a minister of the gospel, is Christian patience under afflictions and sufferings. When any suffer death for the truth of Christ, they gain the glorious titles of martyrs, or witnesses of Christ, whose doctrine they seal with their blood. The divine providence hath taken care that the Christian faith should not want this evidence, both at its first planting, and at the time when it was rescued from anti-christian corruptions. The apostle in the preceding context lays a great stress on this thing, verse 10. 11. Thou hast fully known my—long-suffering, patience—persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me,—what persecutions I endured, that is, was not a mere compelled patient, but underwent them with becoming submission and fortitude. Indeed, God was not pleased to call forth his servant (lately withdrawn from us) unto the fiery trial, but he was furnished with patience, and fortitude of mind, able to encounter the most grievous sufferings. It is reasonable to conclude, that the afflicting hand of God did so long, and variously chasten him, not so much for his own profit, as that he might be an eminent example of a truly Chris-

tian patience, under very sharp afflictions. All the violent pains he endured, all the tedious hours he passed in his former, and last sickness, did not draw one impatient expression from him, but even then, his adoring praises of God, did instruct, and confirm others. This was a seal which he affixed to the doctrine taught by him, which therefore we ought to continue in.

(5.) and A last character, which strongly recommends the things which we have been taught, is a final joyful perseverance in the Christian course. It was on this design that the apostle giveth this account of himself; 4 chap. of this epistle, verse 7. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. That very same language did agree to your excellent pastor. If he had fainted, or retracted at last, this must have much weakened the force of the things he taught, and your obligation to continue in them. But the divine grace enabled him to finish his course with uncommon joy. As he had always exercised an inviolable reverence for his own conscience, whose purity and peace he preferred above the most tempting advantages, so few ever more experienced a divine peace, and serenity of mind, at the nearest approaches of death: the sentence of it, when he received it in himself, did not dismay him: he needed no consolations from men; but as aged holy Simcen, (Luke 2. 29.) only leave from his Lord to depart, and be admitted into his immediate presence, who hath now openly approved this good and faithful servant, and caused him to enter into his own joy.

Let us now, in the fear of God, lay these considerations to heart, that such excellent labours as we have enjoyed, may not be lost, or turn into accusing witnesses against us another day. Our continuing in the things we have learned of him, will be the best improvement of our unspeakable loss, and hereby shall we shew the truest respect to his memory, that he may not only live in his offspring and useful writings, but in the truly Christian conversation of those who were related to him, or had opportunity of learning of him. In order to which, I shall subjoin a few persuasive considerations. As,

1. It ought to have great weight in your minds, that the things you learned of him are the most important and uncontroverted truths of the gospel: he did not entertain you with doubtful disputations, or debates concerning external forms and modes of religion. His great soul could not descend to these little things. He hath expressed himself fully on this subject, in the dedication of *Delighting in God*, and preface to the *Carnality of Religious Contention*, which latter breathes so

heavenly a charity and concern for the truly Christian Interest, that a very eminent divine of the established church, did profess a willingness to lay down his own life, in such a state of things, as is there described, might obtain among Christians. God is witness, and you with many others also, that his public ministrations were wholly taken up in opening and applying the principles of the Oracles of God, (which he did with inimitable clearness and judiciousness) and in describing and pressing the unquestionable duties of men and christians; such as love to God and our neighbour, repentance, faith, Christian vigilance, prayer, humility, and holy fear, with which our salvation is to be wrought out, still inculcating the absolute necessity of Christ's mediation, and the renewing, assisting influence of the Holy Spirit, which he shewed to be consistent with, yea, obligatory unto our earnest endeavours after conversion, and eternal life. Which last he largely pressed in many discourses on Rom. 2. 7. Very frequently he cautioned against those three dangerous rocks, (that prove fatal to many souls) namely, a sensual life, formality in religion, and unfruitfulness in the Christian profession. And is there any of all these, which you ought to be ashamed, or unwilling to continue in? Can the reason, or judgment of men, frame a just objection against such a course? Nay, will not that man stand self condemned, who having once learned such important, undoubted truths, departs from them, through any temptations whatsoever? Add to this,

2. The convincing demonstration he produced to satisfy reason and conscience. He was an avowed enemy to a blind implicit faith, as also to a blind devotion. And none had a better skill to set in the best light, the rational evidences, which confirm the principles and duties, both of natural and revealed religion, of which his published writings are a convincing witness; and his ordinary discourses, though clothed with familiar language, were not inferior as to strength of reasoning. So that it could not be charged on him, that he preached to the fancy, or only aimed to move the affections; for he always first addressed to the judgment and conscience, so that if the gospel which was taught by him, remains hid, to any who attended his ministry, it is hid to those who are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not—because by manifestation of the truth he commended, (or approved) himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God; as the apostle speaks of himself, and his fellow-labourers, 2 Cor. iv. 2, 3, 4. Again

3. Reflect on the very manner of his teaching, how earnest,

how moving, how pungent, how persuasive was his language and expression? It might plainly be discerned, that he spake from his very heart; not as pleasing the ear or imagination, (which his rare wit and eloquence enabled him to do) but as seeking the eternal happiness of souls. What is said concerning the famed tract of a * Stoic Philosopher, that it was so moving and operative, that if any were not wrought on, he could only be reformed by the tribunals of the other world, (the author speaks according to the † Plautonic hypothesis) is applicable in this case. It may almost be despaired, that those who refused and rejected the messages brought by him, but retained hard and obdurate hearts, should be persuaded to repentance, and holiness, by any other ministry.

4. It ought further to be considered, that the things learned of him, were a most precious trust or *depositum* committed to those who have learned them. The original term επισωθης, which is translated, hast been assured, in some Greek copies, by a small variation, is changed into a verb that signifieth to commit or intrust; and this reading hath been preferred by some translations. This cannot be questioned, that divine truths, and instructions, have the character of a sacred trust, which is to be preserved with utmost care and fidelity. The very light of nature, the dictates of reason, discover this obligation: so that all agree in condemning the base injustice of him, who betrays a trust, and is negligent in preserving that which is deposited with him, and the crime is judged the more heinous, and inexcusable, by how much the *depositum*, the thing committed to another, is more precious and valuable. Who but a blinded infidel, will deny the incomparable value of sacred and divine truths, which are of a heavenly original, and are a principal treasure committed to the church. How solemn a charge was given to Timothy, 1 Tim. 6. 20. O Timothy keep that which is committed to thy trust. And it is repeated, 2 Tim. 1. 14. That good thing which was committed to thee, keep. As though he had said, give all diligence to guard the excellent *depositum* of the gospel, which thou hast been intrusted with. The same obligation is laid on us, who learned the same gospel, which must deserve a far more solicitous concern than any of the precious and admired treasures of this earth, which are guarded with greatest care. But if we continue not in the things we have learned, we are guilty of the worst injustice, and unfaithfulness to others, and of greatest unkindness to ourselves; for the things we have learned, are not made our property, to do with them as we please; but we

* Epictetus. † Simplicius ‡ επισωθης 22. V Latin, French

are obliged to transmit them to others of the succeeding age, that they who rise up after us, may enjoy the same blessed advantages, Psal. 78. 5, 6. How great is the crime of a parent, who having received a fair patrimony, or honour, doth waste the estate, and forfeit the honour, which he ought to transmit to those who are to succeed him. If those of this generation should betray the civil rights and liberties of the nation, which have been transmitted by their ancestors, and entail poverty and slavery on the succeeding generations; how unpardonable would such a conduct be judged? But the depriving of posterity of the light and efficacy of gospel truth, is an injury, an injustice unspeakably greater: because the former only affects the temporal, and lesser interests of men, but the latter endangers their souls, and eternal felicity: and who would not tremble at the thought of such guilt, if he really believes, and expects a future judgment, in which a severe account must be given of this sacred talent, that hath been intrusted with him? What answer shall he give in the day of accounts, who was very solicitous and diligent to guard every other trust, to transmit with great fidelity, houses, lands, trade, and such low matters, but was unfaithful to his principal charge, and (as much as lay in him) by not continuing in the things himself had learned, suffered the gospel to fail and be lost out of this world? In the

5th And last place; Without continuing in the things you have learned of your deceased pastor, you cannot come where he now is. The present separation is matter of just sorrow, that we shall see his face (on earth) no more: but what must an everlasting separation be? To behold him shining as the sun in the kingdom of his Father, and yourselves cast into outer darkness: to see him crowned with never-fading life and glory, and yourselves shut up in the place of torment: what heart can bear the very thought? But nothing is more unquestionable, than that there is but one passage, one path to heaven, where he had never come, if he had not continued himself in the things which he first learned, and afterwards taught. Nay, if you should depart from the holy truth and duty, in which you have been instructed by him; notwithstanding the tender love he bore to you, he must stand forth as a witness and accuser, to aggravate your guilt, and greaten your condemnation. I shall conclude with the advice of the apostle, to his dearly beloved Phillippians, applied to the present subject, Phil. 4. 9. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in him, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

LETTERS.

TO A FRIEND ON THE LOSS OF AN EXCELLENT WIFE.

I Seriously lament your new affliction, whereof I lately had the surprising account. And I should be the more concerned for it, if I did not consider it hath befallen one, who can with judgment estimate and suffer it. He hath enough to relieve him against the ungrateful events which our present state is liable to, who is serious in the belief of God's universal government over this world, and that there is another. The former of these is a principle much abused by some; which no more proves it false, than the gospel, out of which some have the mischievous skill to extract a deadly savour. It is our great privilege, for which we ought to be thankful, that by such arguments whereby we can most certainly demonstrate to ourselves, that there is a God, we can as certainly prove that he is not an Epicurean God; unto which imaginary idol only that could belong, to be disturbed by being concerned about human affairs. But if he knew the true nature of God better, who came forth from him into our world, on purpose to make him known, we are sufficiently assured, not a hair can fall from our head without him, much less so considerable a part of ourselves.

This is not the state wherein things are to be unexceptionably well. But we have cause as things are, to acknowledge, and adore the wisdom and goodness of providence, that the wickedness of the world hath not in so many thousand years quite confounded families and all human society long ago: but that as wise counsel did first settle the institution of those lesser societies, God hath from age to age renewed the impression of that part among others of the law of nature, by which men are prompted as by instinct to preserve them; besides the positive precept he hath given, setting out to each relative, the duty whereby order is to be preserved in them. And when we know his government extends so low, how gladly ought we to submit ourselves to it, and allow him to determine how long we should enjoy such relatives, as well as that there should be any such. For we know that they were appointed but for this tem-

porary estate, not for that wherein we are to be as the angels of God in heaven, where each one hath a subordinate self-sufficiency, and needs not the meet helps which the exigency of this state makes so useful. And therefore the reason as well as the authority of such precepts, is most entirely to be subscribed to, that because the time is short, they that have wives be as though they had none; they that rejoice (in having them) as if they rejoiced not; they that weep (in losing them) as though they wept not. So our affections will correspond to the objects, which are of the same make; for the fashion of the world passeth away. And it were a gloomy thought to consider all as passing and vanishing, if we did not seriously believe, that it vanishes to make way for another, that shall never vanish, and that shall shortly enter in its perfect glory, and fill up the whole stage. Scaffolds are taken down, when the eternal building is finished.

TO A GENTLEWOMAN, ON THE LOSS OF A
BELOVED DAUGHTER.

Dear and Honour'd Madam,

DID you think two or three months ago, such a trial was so near? Such sad futurities God in mercy to us, hides from us, that we may not afflict ourselves, before he afflicts us: and that when he intends we should suffer that particular affliction but once, namely, When it comes, we may not impose so hardly upon ourselves, as to suffer it a thousand times over before it comes. Sufficient is the day, &c. If he should have made us all prophets, in reference to all the events of our time, we should bring all the evils of every future day, into every former day; as if the evil of the day were not enough for the day.

But though he gives us not certain predictions of such evils, lest he should torment us, he gives forewarnings lest he should surprise us. He hath told us we must all once die, and not when: that life is a vapour; that all flesh is grass; that the beauty or glory of it is but as the flower of grass; withering things! He hath asserted his own dominion over lives, and over the spirits of all flesh as the God of them, to lodge and dislodge them, where and as he pleases. And who are we, that we should grudge him that dominion? or so much as wish we could have wrested that part of his empire out of his hands? But when he afflicts, it is good to consider, what it is for? It comes not out of the dust, though it may reduce us or ours thither. And if our utmost search cannot find out a particular cause, (wherein we should take heed of being too indulgent and partial to ourselves, but should beg that what we know not he would teach us) yet we should however more earnestly endeavour to improve the affliction to the general end, which we may

be sure he aims at ; to withdraw our minds from this present world, and state of things ; to take heed of being peremptory in laying any desigus that must be measured by time, and be subject to the uncertainties of it ; to determine nothing but with that reserve, If God will, we shall do this or that, (James 4. 15.) to have our minds ingulphed and swallowed up, not of the stream of time, but of the ocean of eternity ; to be easily taken off from any purpose, the scene whereof must be laid on this earth, or lower world ; to have our hearts more entirely and more strongly set upon God, so as to be able to say, Whom have I in heaven or earth besides thee ? that the true end may be gain, though such a comfort be lost, and the particular offending cause cannot be found.

We may err, in thinking some such particular offence must be fastened upon. If it clearly can, it ought : if not, it is better forbear judging than misjudge. Possibly chastening for a particular sin may not be in God's design : it is not always. We may be sure it never is his principal design in taking away one relative from another. He made all things (principally) for himself ; he made us but secondarily for one another. If his principal design in making such a creature was not to please me, his principal design in taking it away was not to displease or afflict me. He hath his own greater and higher end concerning his own creature, to glorify himself upon it, and by it, in a greater world than this. Many afflictions are for trial ; and that in such a case is an awful thought.

The jealous God hath me now under trial, how I can bear, how I can submit, how I can reverence his hand, how I can behave myself towards him when he afflicts ; whether I will venture to contend with him, or be sullen and morose towards him ; because he hath bereaved me of a child I delighted in, whether I better loved him or my child. The trial may be manifold ; of my faith, of my patience, of my fear of him, of my love to him : and I may add, it may be intended for a trial of gratitude, and a mighty trial that is. We are required, in every thing to give thanks. And Job did it, and said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord," when with all his substance he took away all his children at once : The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken. The injunction, "In every thing give thanks," signifies there is in every thing some matter of praise. I know not so immediately what was in this case : but if there was what I have heard, great indications of early piety ; if there were grounds to hope there was a work of regeneration wrought, there is infinitely more matter of thanksgiving than complaint. What had the life of a child been worth without this ?

when better never to have been born ! It is a far greater thing if he have taken her as his own child, than if he had left her to you, only as yours. If you have faith to look into the unseen world, and behold her taken into the society of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect, how much more hath God done for her and you, than if he had left her to your care and provision in this wretched world ? We are told there is joy in heaven for the conversion of a sinner : much more for the glorification of a convert ! That joy ought to swallow up in very great part your sorrow. The good Lord frame your spirit suitably to these things, in whom I am

Your truly respectful servant (very sensible of your case)

Love Lane, Aldermanbury,
London, Sept. 29, 1694.

J. HOWE.

THE TWO FOLLOWING ARE TO A NEW MARRIED
COUPLE.

(Who were persons of distinction,) that were written on the same sheet of paper, that was directed to the Lady with whom Mr. Howe had been long acquainted.

Most Honour'd Sir,

I Thankfully acknowledge the favour of your welcome lines; which ought to be most entirely so, both upon the account of the author, and the matter of them. For though my opportunity for so desirable an acquaintance hath been but little as to the circumstance, it hath been much as to the substance of what I know of you, in ways that gave me greatest assurance, before I had the happiness of oral converse with you. Nor could any thing be more grateful to me, than to read you from your own hand so related, and so well pleased (as I doubt not you will be daily more and more) with your relation, and the other accessory correlates, with whom God hath cast your lot.

I believe you have much reason to bless God (who orders all things to the best advantage to such as sincerely give themselves up to his conduct) that he led you not into such a condition and state of life as he now at length hath brought you into, before you were well acquainted with the rules and duties of it, better than to need help from such a one as I. But among the many other precepts that concern that case, I dare adventure to recommend those of 1. Cor. 7, 29, 30, 31 : and pursuantly thereto, to offer to your thoughts, that this can be but a partial temporary felicity, and so far only so at all, as it is enjoyed only as mediate, and subservient to the full and final felicity which we are professedly seeking and waiting for : so far ought it to be, to oppose it, or let it be an obstruction thereto. Which is the nature of all good things that have only the goodness of the means, and not of the end, that their goodness is variable,

and by misapplication may degenerate into a hurtful evil. Within the compass of such things is the truth of those words, to be confined; *nil prodest, quod non lædere possit idem*. It is beyond the measure of any created good to be universally so. That therefore which in its own place is a real good, applied to the particular purpose which it is capable of serving, out of that place, and being trusted, valued and delighted in beyond the measure which God and the nature of the thing have stated and set, may become a hurt to us.

But there can be no greater or more endearing obligation to use any mercy for God, than an habitual fixed sense of its having been received from him, and a deeply radicated and often repeated agnition of his sovereign hand in ordering it to be our lot, with all the circumstances that have had any reference thereto. For what ingenuous heart can endure to oppose to him, or employ against him, the (apprehended) fruit of his own favour and kindness? a pledge of his paternal love and care so understood! And therefore the greater the gift is (still considered under that strict notion) the stronger is the inducement to honour and serve the giver with it, and to enjoy according to prescription, what we enjoy not but by his vouchsafement.

If to all this I should add a request to you to be exceeding kind to my most dear and honoured friend, it were the greatest impertinence in all the world. For she having such a temper to work upon, will make you so whether you will or no: and I might as well use arguments to persuade a fragrant flower to send forth its grateful odours, when a most benign orient sun is plying it with its cherishing morning beams. Such may you long be, both of you mutually (sun and flower) to each other, shining and flourishing with all the influence and under the continual blessing of heaven. So shall you communicate a part of that joy, which I most sincerely wish you, to

SIR,

Your very faithful and affectionate humble servant,

J. HOWE.

WHATSOEVER leisure (most dear and honoured madam) you may suppose me to have, I had little reason to suppose — and yourself to have much, from the reading of one another, to cast your eyes upon any thing I could write. But if after this paper shall have lain one quarter of a year somewhere near your dressing-box, you find it not unseasonable to bestow a glance upon it, you will then at length find your disappointment. For it will tell you nothing but what you well knew, or might easily guess before; that having a constant most affectionate respect and honour for you, I cannot but be highly pleased, that you are so.

And methinks it should not much surprise you, if I farther say, I would have you somewhat to alter (or make your exception to) your own rule, and not shew the less kindness to— for that he is a married man. This will not be strange to you, if you remember some of your last winter lines.

After this hath made you smile a little, as that of yours did me, then think that this novelty in your condition will neither make nor allow you to smile always, though I hope it will add a great deal to the comfort and pleasantness of your days.—And you may sometime have occasion to think seriously together, of the sense of those words, Luke 14. 26. And always remember the subordination that all creature-love must be in, to that of the supreme object of our love. How pleasant a thing will it be to have hearts united and consenting in the resolution of loving him perpetually above all, to whom we owe our all, and who is altogether lovely! to consult and conspire together, how most to promote his interest, and improve in acquaintance with him, and conformity to him. This I believe your heart to be much formed to before-hand. The great care must be, that such resolutions do not gradually languish. We find many are apt by unobserved degrees to starve the good affections and inclinations, which they would abhor to assassinate by a sudden violence. I write securely, that such an intimation will by so great a kindness as yours, be very well taken, from

Your Ladyship's

Most affectionate humble servant,

J. HOWE.

THE FOLLOWING,

Was written upon occasion of the decease of both the Parents of the Lady aforesaid, within about eight months of each other.

Most Honoured, Dear Madam,

WHEN I heard of your former great loss, I was confined by distemper to my bed: and I received information of the other, when I was going a great journey to accompany my wife and daughter to the bath, from whence they are not returned as yet, and I came home from my journeyings but last week. I have not in the mean time forgot your Ladyship's affliction, nor been without the apprehension how tender a sense your loss of two such parents must be accompanied with. Nor should I now mention it, did I not apprehend it may yet be reflected on to better purpose, than only to renew your sorrow. And that it may, I pray you, let it be remembered in the first place, with serious gratitude, (for we are required in every thing to give thanks) that God continued to you the comfort of

such relations so long, and for the many mercies he made them instrumental of to you, in your tender years: that he vouchsafed to you the blessing of so excellent an education by their means: that you were thereby brought to know him and his Christ; that by their care you were so comfortably settled in the world, and in a station wherein he hath given you the opportunity of being so serviceable in building up a family for him, and of contributing to the planting and propagating religion in it; and that you see so much of a blessing from heaven upon the plantation. Your part is that of a mother, and you have had a great example before your eyes. That may still live, (and I doubt not will) in your mind and heart, while the person that gave it still lives in a higher region, whither following such steps, you also will be translated in the fittest season.

I pray for the welfare in all valuable respects, of your Ladyship, and all yours; being in great sincerity, your Ladyship's

Most respectful, and most faithful, humble servant,

Love Lane, Aldermanbury,
London, Sept. 5, 1695.

J. HOWE.

THE FOLLOWING WAS TO THE SAME, ON THE DEATH
OF A MOST PROMISING SON.

*Most worthily honoured Sir, with
My dearest and most honoured Lady,*

IT would be incomparably more grievous to me at this time to write to you, if I were under a necessity of writing nothing but were mournful and sad. The same thing if we turn it round, will be found to have a double aspect. That dispensation that represents you deprived of an earthly son, speaks you the parents of a glorified child, more highly dignified, than it was possible he could have been on earth. This post brings you greater news than if it had informed you, your son is created emperor of Germany, or king of France or Spain. Let us speak and think of things as we believe, and profess to believe. Indeed if our apprehensions of their state in the unseen world, who were true lovers of God, have nothing of solace and pleasure in them, it is mere useless empty profession they are all to be resolved into, and not faith.

My heart bleeds for you, and with you both, but it can do you no good to tell you so. I believe your lovely son unfeignedly loved God: and then read the rest, 1 Cor. 2, 9. James 1. 10, 12. Of how great use might he have been in this world! But are those glorious creatures above, to whom he is now joined, inactive or unemployed? And are not their employments more noble and sublime, according to the more enlarged capacity of their faculties, and the higher dignity of their state? He was

born to very considerable things as your heir: but he was begotten again to a more glorious inheritance, and the lively hope of it, 1 Peter 1. 3. They that were about him, before it was possible for me to see him, told me he was insensible, as he was before I heard of his illness: but at my coming to him, he knew me at first sight, and seemed to have the use of his understanding for nothing but religion. He then spake not one misplaced word; said, He doubted not God was his Father, and that his present affliction was from the hand of that Father, not of an enemy. He desired me to pray with him, and seemed understandingly and affectionately to concur. This was on the Lord's-day, and the next was the day of his glorious translation, near noon, before I could reach him a second time.

Mr. C—came to me presently after, to advise with me about disposal of the body; who could give no advice but in the general, to have it prepared for interment, in a way that might be decent, and not profusely expensive: not doubting but that there might be more particular direction from yourself before actual interment, sent to Mr. C—. &c. who is willing to take the care upon him of seeing instructions fulfilled.

The Lord support you both, and abundantly bless the rest of yours.

I am, most honoured Sir and Madam, your most affectionately sympathizing servant in Christ our Lord,

St John's Street,
London, Jan. 14 1659.

JOHN HOWE.

The two following were written by Mr. HOWE, to his dear and intimate friend, Mr. SPILSBURY.

My Dear Brother,

HOW hard a matter is it to keep up converse at this rate? when all that is pleasant and gainful in it lies on one side only. I read thy lines with fruit and delight; but have nothing to return of any value. And if a conscience is to be exercised in this sort of traffic, or indeed but a tolerable ingenuity, it cannot but occasion some regret, to barter away things of no worth for good commodities. If I tell thee I live, what doth that signify? when life itself is so little worth, how despicable is the notice of it! If I tell thee I love thee, thou knowest it before as to the *quod sit*; but for the *quid sit*; no words can express it; therefore the offer at it is vain. When, when shall we meet above! That will make us pure good company, when dulness and sluggishness are shaken off and gone, and we shall be all spirit and life! yet we shall be doing our Lord some service here, or that he will accept as

such, if we be sincere. Thou wilt be visited by a worthy person ere long, that is gone first to Kidderminster, and means after he hath seen the son, to come to the father.

Cordial salutations from me and mine, to thee and thine. Farewell in our dear Lord: and still remember,

Thy entirely affectionate,

J. HOWE.

St. John Street
Jan. 25 1698.

May I once more hope to salute my dear brother in this world! whether I shall or not, I must leave to him to whom greater, and all things must be left. Thou mayest have taken thy flight before this reach thee, but the soul and spirit from whence it comes may in due time, through the infinite riches of freest grace, and the atoning blood of that sacrifice which once for all was offered up. We come to the general assembly, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, but as we come to Jesus the mediator of the new testament, and to the blood of sprinkling. By his own blood he is entered into the holy of holies, as the forerunner, and for us. Upon such terms may sinful unprofitable servants hope to enter, and be received under the notion of faithful, and as those that are graciously counted such, into the joy of their Lord. Thou art ready to enter, and wilt shortly be adoring before the throne: Oh with what complacency! receiving the end of thy faith, having fought the good fight of it! And must thy poor brethren left behind, sigh and groan still? amidst their drowsy hearers, and too drowsy fruitless labours? But I envy thee not: and those that are dearest and nearest to thee, owe thee so much as to rejoice in thy joy, while they cannot as yet in their own, John 14 28. Thou art upon my heart, if God saw it good, to live and die with thee. This day sen'night thy worthy brother B. and my brother F. dined with me, when thou wast most affectionately remembered; but art no day forgotten, by thy sincere lover, and of all thine, hoping and aiming (though faintly) to be thy follower,

J. HOWE.

If there be joy in heaven for a converted sinner, shall there not for a glorified saint! and the leader and teacher of many such! some that are in glory, and others that shortly shall be! O the triumph at thy abundant entrance!

Worthy Mr. Spilsbury, to whom this letter was written, died the 10th. of July following.

THE fragment out of Mr. Howe's notes, about a particular faith in prayer, contains only brief hints, which he enlarged on in discourse : but I thought it worth preserving ; and I believe there will be several of my mind. It is very concise ; and the writing being a mixture of long-hand and short-hand, and the ink in some places almost worn out, it is a very difficult thing to read it : but having got what assistance I could in order to the right reading it, I shall here subjoin it.—Dr. Calamy.

James 5. 15. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick ; and the Lord shall raise him up.

It is to be inquired how this is to be understood and applied.

1. How to be understood. Where in the general we must know, it is not to be looked upon as a universal maxim, admitting of no restriction or limitation ; for then prayer might make a man immortal, if in every case wherein life were in hazard, any could be procured to employ their faith in prayer on his behalf. Unless we should say, that wherever the desired effect follows not, the faith was wanting, which ought to have been exercised in the case. To say that every prayer that has faith in it, shall save the sick, is false : but that every prayer that has this special faith in it, shall save the sick, is true.

That therefore we may speak the more distinctly, we must understand,

1. That there was somewhat in this matter extraordinary, and appropriate to that time.

2. Somewhat ordinary, and common to all times. We are to distinguish the one and the other.

1. There was somewhat extraordinary in this matter, and appropriate to that time : and that both as to the faith to be exercised, and the effect thereupon.

1. As to the faith to be exercised. The prayer of faith shall save the sick : that is, in those days, when the state of things did to the divine wisdom make it necessary, that frequent miracles should be wrought for the confirmation of christianity, faith was necessary to be exerted in prayer, that should according to the tenour of the promise made in reference to those times, engage Omnipotency, in reference to the thing prayed for : the promise then was, whatsoever ye pray, believing, ye shall receive ; or it shall be done.

2. As to the effect,—that also was supernatural.

Ques. But it may be said, What ! universally ? What work might the disciples have made in that case !

Ans. The divine power did go forth two ways.

1. In working the faith to be exercised : and,

2. In effecting the thing. So that the matter was always in God's own hand. The Spirit of God could be the author of no vain or imprudent faith, or consequent of it.

This faith of miracles was such a fiducial recumbence on the divine power, in reference to this or that particular work, as whereby that was by his rule engaged to go forth, in saving the sick. This and common faith differ, in respect of the end, and the nature of the influence:—not holy, but physical.

2. There was here also somewhat that was ordinary. The instance of Elias is mentioned, who, ver. 17, 18. it is said, Was a man subject to like passions as we are, and yet he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought her fruit. There is somewhat from that extraordinary case to be learnt for common use, namely, that what the promise says to us now, we ought as confidently to believe, as they then, what it said to them.

Therefore take some propositions, concerning the nature and operation of the faith to be exercised in such a case, and the way wherein prayer ought to be managed and guided, so as that it may be expected to have influence in reference thereto.

1. Prayer is a great and indispensable duty. (There is here some reference in the manuscript: but after the utmost search, I know not what to make of it.)

2. That therefore we must conclude, whatsoever tends to render it an impertinence, must either be false or misapplied. For it is most plainly a great part of our duty; and it could not consist either with the wisdom or truth of God, to have us enjoined such a duty, and have put energy incessant into the nature of it in vain. We must therefore resolve what is doubtful, by what is plain. It is more plain that prayer is a duty, and more known, than what changes the nature of God can admit.

3. The argument from God's unchangeableness, would conclude as well against the usefulness of any other duty, that never so directly concerns our salvation.

4. Prayer is to be considered, not only as a means to obtain from God what we would have, but as a becoming homage of an intelligent creature.

5. Whatsoever unchangeableness we can suppose in the nature of God, (here there is something added in the manuscript which I can make nothing of; and then it follows) and it is unreasonable he should lose his right, by his perfection.

6. Yet also it is to be considered as a means to obtain good things, Job 21. 15. (by which I suppose, it was intended to be intimated, that it would be very wicked language in any, to offer to say with those whom Job speaks of in the text cited:

What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?)

7. We are not to think prayer, though never so qualified, hath any proper efficacy, to move God this way or that: not so much as instrumental.

8. It is only a condition, upon which it seems good to God to put forth his power.

9. It is a condition that hath not always equally certain connexion with the thing we pray for, or other than the promise hath made.

10. The promises of God are or must be understood, proportionally to the nature of the things promised: which may be either of such a nature, as &c. (Here the sense is incomplete. I suppose that which may be meant, is, that the things which God has promised, may either admit, or exclude a change. And then it is added "make men immortal." That is, I suppose, as to this present life.) And then the manuscript goes on, Things of a variable goodness cannot be the matter of a universal absolute promise. Miracles, &c.

11. Prayer may yet be the prayer of faith that God will do what is best. We should not make light of this more valuable object of faith. Suppose two children, which is the most privileged. (This I apprehend refers to the case of Esau and Jacob, so often taken notice of in Scripture.)

12. If God will do the thing, prayer in reference to it is not vain. For perhaps he hath wisely and rightly determined, that he will not do it but upon trust of his being acknowledged. This is a great piece of his sovereignty: his dominion and power over lives. I kill, and make alive, as though he had said, God of every life: universal cause.

13. It is very absurd to think, it were vain to pray unless we were certain it contradicts the nature of prayer. For that supposes the thing in the power of them to whom we pray, and implies a referring it to their pleasure.

14. It must be submitted to him to judge what is most honourable for himself. It argues base thoughts of the invisible world, to think, &c. (that is, I suppose, to think we should be able to keep people from thence at our pleasure.)

15. What if he had said, pray not. (I take this to be designed for an intimation, that had intercourse between an all-sufficient God and us, by prayer, been prohibited, we should have been left in a very helpless and hopeless, miserable and destitute condition.)

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.

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