

WRITINGS OF JOHN HOWE

by John Howe

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by John Howe, compiled for study and devotional reading.

3 Chapters

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S. Funeral Sermon on the Death of Dr. William Bates

Funeral Sermon on the Death of Dr. William Bates, by John Howe.

It is grievous to me to tell you, in whose room and stead I do now stand, in this place this day. Nor do I need; you can tell yourselves, observing the stated courses and alternations, held in this lecture, that if the counsels of heaven had agreed with our desires and hopes on earth; this is the day, this is the hour, wherein you had again seen the face, and heard the voice of that excellent servant of Christ, whom we now lament as lost to us, and dead out of the world: not absolutely dead. For God, who is his God for ever and ever, is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Dying out of this world, he was born into the other. But in that sense wherein he is dead to us, and this world of ours, what remains? But that we agree to say, "Let us die with him." And these are the words, which if God will graciously afford us his help and presence, we may fruitfully entertain ourselves with, upon this sad occasion at this time; you will find them in -

John 11:16.

'Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him.'" The history to which these words belong, contains so illustrious, and instructive an instance of the Redeemer's power over both worlds, and so plainly shows, that he could, at his pleasure, translate men out of the one into the other, as might best serve the proper purposes of his redemption, that it can never be unseasonable to us to consider it, who are always subject to the same power. And it is very especially seasonable at this time, when we have reason enough to re-consider his late use of this power, in another kind, less grateful to us, but not less wise, or just in itself; not the recalling of one, out of the other world into this, but the calling away of one, out of this world into the other, the translating of this excellent person from among us, whose longer abode here had been highly desirable, as his removal is most bitterly grievous, and must have been intolerable, were it not that though this is not the same act, it is an act of that same power over lives, which in all its exertions, we are always to behold, with the same profound, adoring silence, and disposition of mind, to receive instruction from it, whether it be pleasing to us, or displeasing.

I will make no apology for my recalling your thoughts, so long after to this sad theme. Our mutual endearedness, his condescending affection to me, and my reverential affection to him, were so generally known to those that knew either of us, that it might be expected I should take some public notice of this severing stroke; and I may suppose my circumstances to be so known, that it is obvious to every one to understand I could do it no sooner.

It will not be unuseful, to make some brief reflection, upon this miraculous work of our Lord, and thence return to the special subject, which I desire your thoughts may be fixed upon, as mine have been. It was the most memorable of all our Lord's works of this kind, yet not mentioned by the other evangelists; lest, as is supposed, it should revive the Jewish malice against Lazarus; who, as Epiphanius tells us, was reported to have lived thirty years after, within which time the others had

all writ, whereas this evangelist wrote not, till after his final decease. It was wrought for the same great end, for which all his wonderful works were done, and written, generally, for the glory of God, as is intimated, John 11:4 and particularly, as this evangelist tells us, John 19:1-42, John 20:1-31, John 21:1-25. 'That we might believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God ;' and that believing we might 'have life through his name.' And though they all had this design; this, toward the end of his course, seems meant for the last, and conclusive, stroke, having a brighter, and more conspicuous appearance of the divine glory in it, for a fuller, and more convictive, demonstration, that he was the Son of God, and the Messiah, as he gave himself out to be. And all things were designed in the aptest subserviency hereto; that, once for all, this long disputed point might be put out of all doubt. For this end it is ordered, that Lazarus should at this time fall sick. Nothing more appeared to human prospect, but that the disease befell him according to the common course of natural causes but says our Lord, 'This sickness is not unto death,' viz as the final and permanent event, or design of it, 'but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby,' John 11:4. God's counsels lie deep, not obvious to common view. When such a servant of God is fallen sick, we know not, what he intends to bring out of it. His glory, may in his own way, and time, so much the more brightly shine forth, though we yet distinctly know not when, or how. Upon this account, when our Lord not only heard of Lazarus' sickness, but knew he was dead, he yet defers two days, even though he knew him to have then been at least two days dead before: so that when he now comes to the place 'he finds him to have lain four days in the grave ;' John 11:17. he resolves to give so much the greater scope, and advantage, to the glory of the divine power, to display and evidence itself. He defers till now death, and the grave, were in full dominion, that his conquest might be the more glorious. He had before raised some from death, none from the grave. The lamenting relatives were now in despair: the thoughts of restitution were quite laid aside. All their hopes were buried with the deceased in the same grave, as may be collected from sundry following verses. In the like despair, not long after, were the mournful disciples, concerning their not only deceased, but entombed Lord, unto whose surprising resurrection, this seems a designed prelude, the bereaved relations, and their comforters were now all abandoned to sorrow, and drenched in tears. And with the rest we are told, John 11:33 that 'Jesus wept.' But why was this? Was it that he knew not his own mind, or distrusted his own power? He had given sufficient intimation of his own purpose, and of the foresight he had of the certain, glorious issue, of this gloomy dark providence. It is evident therefore for what he wept not. It is not so obvious to conclude for what he wept. It is most unworthy of him to suppose his was feigned sorrow or that he shed hypocritical tears. Nor was this the only instance of his weeping; no, no, he was 'a man of sorrow, acquainted with griefs ;' and had always in view, sufficient cause of real soul-trouble, as this is called, John 11:33. 'He groaned in Spirit and was troubled ;' it must be, by the contexture of the evangelical history, near the time of his weeping over Jerusalem when his soul was filled and taken up with sad and mournful themes. But who can tell what thoughts lay deep in that large and comprehensive mind! We are sure, though he wept with the rest, that it was not as they wept, nor from the same motives. His thoughts were not as their thoughts, but as far wider, and higher, as the heavens are than the earth. We have no way to know what his thoughts were, we know what they might be. He saw not Jerusalem only, but all this world buried in sin and death. He could not as the second Adam be, 'the resurrection and the life,' as he speaks, John 11:25. without beholding, with a compassionate heart, the impurities, and miseries, wherewith it was deluged by the first. And he had now enough in view, to discompose his pure mind, intent

upon high and great things; that when his business into this world was to prepare men for another; and, when they were fit, to translate them thither : even they that professed to believe on him, should no more understand him; that his kind, and great design should be no more grateful to them, and so slowly enter into their minds and hearts, that when they saw one such translation, it should so much displease them, and they so little relish it, as to be all in tears and lamentations thereupon; and thereby discover such an affixedness of heart and spirit to this present world, and state of things, as to prefer the enjoyment of a friend on earth, before all the glories of the heavenly state; so might their immoderate weeping some way cause his tears. But when he expressed his trouble by groans, and tears, he suppressed the causes of it, and goes on to his present intended work. In order hereto, John 11:39 he commands the grave-stone to be removed; neglecting the objection, John 11:39. ['by this time he stinks.']

He observed, with a compassionate indulgence, the diffidence, which he meant speedily to refute. Nor, because we also are too prone to prescribe limits to the divine power, ought we, for his indulgence, to be the less severe to ourselves. Forgetting the transcendency of that power, we think this or that strange, and scarce possible to be done, because we too lightly, consider the equal, Or greater, strangeness, of what we see is done. We count things easy, that are by use become familiar to our senses, and apprehend we have the notion of them clear, and how they can come to be as they are; not having examined, or inquired, whether our apprehensions were right, and congruous, or not. Things that have not struck our sense, making ourselves, and even our sense, the measure, we count impossible, and inconceivable. By the course of nature, our sense hath told us, a body so long in the grave, must be putrid, and stink. But who settled that course of nature? If we ascend not to the original cause, the fixation of that course is as admirable and unaccountable; if we do, a departure from it is as easy. What can the wisest philosophers conceive of the difference between an offensive smell, and a grateful; but the different disposition, or texture of the particles of matter, in relation to the sensorium, or the receptive organ? When, what that different disposition is, remains altogether unapprehensible, and what no man can tell. We go away well satisfied concerning what we see happens every day, because we never inquire how things came to be as they are; when what we have not known to come to pass, though not more difficult, we say, can never be. Otherwise we should think it no more admirable, or difficult, to reduce in a moment, the parts of matter to such a situs, as that they should give no offence to the sense of smelling, though before they did, than it was, to the same power, so to dispose, that, in one sort of location, they should give that offence, in another, they should not, and perhaps, in a third, highly gratify and please! Thousands of like instances might be given, but this comes now in our way. The world is full of miracles, we are compassed about with such, and are such. There is, it is true, a peculiar notion of them, as necessary as they are themselves; signifying, not what is done by a greater power, but less usual. As such, the use, and need of them only argues the infirmity of our minds, sunk into earth and sense, and grown somnolent; whence they need to be roused, by surprising, and uncommon things; and brought to consider, that he only, who could fix and settle the so steady course of nature, could alter it, and make it forsake its wonted tract: which he must always be supposed to do, for some very weighty, important end, and reason, So absolute power, being ever in strict connexion with the most perfect wisdom, and therefore claiming to be the most earnestly attended to, and considered the more deeply. To that power that could create a man, it was equally easy to perfume a grave; or to make a new man spring up out of it, in fresh strength, comeliness, and vigour. To recompose the disordered parts of a body

turning to dust, and refit it, for the union, and use of the returning soul. This he will not do often, but he saw a just and valuable reason for his doing it at this time.

He was now to give, and leave behind him, a full conclusive demonstration, once for all, of his being the Son of God, by whom the worlds were made. And the Christ, or Messiah (the great controverted point of that time) which John 11:5 is called, 'Glorifying the Son;' who for asserting this, was calumniated as an impostor and 'deceiver of the people.' He was to give a specimen of his power, as such, over universal nature, and that he could at pleasure control, and countermand the most established law of it. All things being put under that notion, as he was the Christ, into 'his hands,' John 13:3. and 'all power given him, both in heaven and earth,' Matthew 28:18. so as that, 'by him, all things must consist.' Colossians 1:17. A power he was to use, being gradually, and at last, perfectly, 'to make all things new.' Revelation 21:5. He was to make good his own title, 'I am the resurrection and the life,' Revelation 21:25. which he assumes in this context; to let it be seen he was no vain pretender; and that it was no vain faith that should be placed upon him, in this respect; but that, what he should now do, as to one, he was able equally to do, in the fit season for every one, when 'all that are in their graves should hear his voice.' John 5:28. He was to show forth a resemblance of that more peculiar act, of his most graciously undertaken office, to be a spring of life to souls morally dead, viz. 'in trespasses and sins.' Ephesians 2:1. To give this divine, and most noble kind of life! to do that, most merciful, and most godlike work! He was to take away all cause or pretence for despair, but that, whereas a death was to pass upon himself, and upon his Church on Earth, both he himself, and it, 'with his dead body, should arise.' Isaiah 26:19. Therefore he utters that mighty commanding voice, at which rocks and mountains tremble, and shiver, and which all the powers of nature must obey; 'Lazarus come forth!' and he comes forth. Where Lazarus' soul had been in the mean time, was too light a matter, to weigh against these mighty things our Lord was intent upon. His concerns were to yield and bow to his Lord and Master's great designs; he could not be unfitter for his own business afterwards, than the apostle in the like case (for ought that he himself knew) was for his. The consideration of this did not divert our Lord Christ, from what he was intent upon, nor let it divert us, but as a lighter matter, be left for the exercise of lighter minds.

These things we now lightly touch, hoping they may be of further use to us afterwards. We expect not the like thing in our present mournful case; but we expect greater things; for which we are to await our Lord's season. In the mean time, let us return and consider, what is overtured in the case the text refers to, when, as to any such remedy, the mourning friends expected as little as we. Here was a worthy good man gone. A friend of Christ, and of his friends. Christianity gives no man a terrestrial immortality. Christians, even the best of them, must die as well as other men. This was a matter taken to heart by Christ himself, as we have seen, in a way becoming, and worthy of him. His disciples also are deeply concerned, and they consider, and discourse it, their way. One of them, Thomas, who also was called Didymus (wherein is no other mystery, than that his name is first given us in Hebrew, then in Greek, as is not unexampled elsewhere) proposes, as you have heard; 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.' Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. There was, no doubt, an abounding fulness of sense, in this good man's soul, from whence these words did proceed. And it might be two-fold: either, 1. Good and commendable, fit for our imitation, and whereto the temper of our spirits should be conform.

2. Faulty and reprehensible; such, as against which, we should arm and fortify ourselves.

Such mixtures are not to be thought strange. It is little to be expected, that in what is hastily said, by the best on earth, on an occasion apt to stir passions, there should be nothing but pure breathings of heavenly wisdom, and goodness. Under the former head, we shall speak of divers things which we cannot, indeed, be sure were the explicit, distinct sense of this good man, at this time, but which might be; and should be ours on a like occasion. Which well agree with christian principles, and which his words serve aptly enough to express; as,

1. A firm belief of a future state. Did this good man only desire to partake with the other in death, and no more? Did his wish terminate here? Can we apprehend any thing good, or desirable, in mere death, that one would covet to share in, with another? Or which one would be loath he should engross alone? Nor could Thomas mean this, having heard that Lazarus was already dead. It cannot be thought, that one who had been some years in immediate attendance upon the Son of God, the Lord from heaven, and under his instructions, and who had so much opportunity to observe, that his whole design lay for another world; and that he never encouraged his followers to expect from him any advantages, above others, in this world, but forewarned them of troubles, and sufferings, to which they would be always liable from it, and that they must be content to await for their rewards in another state. It is not to be thought that such a one was an infidel in reference to any such state: or that he thought his friend extinct, by dying: or that when he wished to be with him, he wished to be no where, or nothing.

2. A mind loose, and disengaged from this present world. He could be intent upon no great designs for this earth, who with the next that leaves it, was willing to go too.

3. Easy, placid thoughts of dying. He looked upon death as no such frightful thing: that could so familiarly, and off-hand, say, when he thought of such a one's dying; come, let's go, and die with him.

4. A distinguishing judgment concerning the states of men hereafter, remote from thinking it fares with all alike, in the other world; but well informed, that it could only be ill, with ill men; and well only, with the good. A settled persuasion of a judgment to come. According to declared rules of which judgment, this present judgment is formed. That they who 'continue in a course of well-doing, shall have eternal life; evil-doers, indignation and wrath.' Romans 2:7, Romans 2:8. This wish could not be thought less caution than his, who says with distinction, 'Let me die the death of the righteous.' Numbers 23:10. It must be far from him to be content, 'God should gather his soul with sinners.' Psalms 26:9. The future state was, no doubt, considered as a state of separation between men and men. He could not covet to be associated with good and bad, promiscuously, and at random.

5. A rationally charitable opinion, and estimate, that he was sincerely good, and happy; with whom he coveted to be united in death. Such an opinion, is all that is here requisite. Faith it cannot be, for the object is not a revealed thng. Knowledge it is not, for we have no medium to know it by. That we have more reason to think this, than the contrary, of such a one, is sufficient, and that this should be implied, in this wish, is necessary. Here was an apprehension, of an happy state, the other was passed into. That saying, Sit anima mea cum philosphis, implied, that he who said it, thought their state better, than some other men's. And Thomas could not but have sufficient reason, for his apprehension of Lazarus' sincerity, so as not to doubt of his felicity. His house, he observed, was our Lord's resort. Here he was received gladly, by him, and his good sisters. His

doctrine, we have cause to think, he entertained as well as himself, and himself, for his doctrine's sake. The peculiar affection our Lord had for him, observed by the domestics, that say, 'He whom thou lovest is sick,' John 11:3, noted by the Jews, with a 'behold how he loved him,' John 11:26, could leave Thomas no ground of doubt, but he was a sincere believer on the Son of God, and now, in a blessed state: so are christians, visibly such, to esteem one another, and accordingly to have communion with one another, in grace; and hope, and wish for it, in glory. A temper, now, very alien from too many, that go under that name; who make not the great substantial of Christianity the measure of their present and hoped communion, but devised additions of their own: or rather, not what they add to, but substitute in the stead, of faith, mercy, and the love of God; and license themselves, to ascend the throne, usurp the seat of judgment, and boldly damn all them, who are not of their own complexion, and party; and that cannot so far conform to their humours, passions, prejudices, and interested inclinations, as to say, and act in every thing, just as they do.

6. A most ardent, and most generous love to such good men, upon that just, and reasonable apprehension of them. For what love can be greater? How can one more highly express love to any man, than by a declared willingness to live, and die with him; and simply to die, when he can no longer live with him. Love raised to this pitch is stronger than death. Heathen story is not without some instances, of some, whom no dread of death could sever from each other; but that they have been willing, as the case should require, to die with, or to die for, another. To be either each others companions, or substitutes in death. The tyrant Dionysius having sentenced to death one of that admirable pair, Damon and Pythias, and fixed the day of execution, the condemned person petitioned for leave to be absent upon important occasions; in that interval, his friend offering himself, as his sponsor, to die for him, if he returned not by the appointed day. He returning punctually with all diligence, knowing his friend's life to be, otherwise in hazard; the tyrant, in great admiration of their mutual love and fidelity, pardons the condemned, and requests of them both, that they would admit him, as a third person, into society of their friendship. What they tell us of divers others, I mention not, whom no death could sever: whom dangers did more closely unite.

Such as are conjoined in the same common cause, their mutual love, mutually animates them, even to face death; because each finds the other will not flinch, or leave him in danger alone. 'Many waxed bold by the apostle's bonds,' Php 1:14. when they could not but be thought bonds of death. No doubt, because he was dear to them. So that they were willing, even to run into the same bonds, because he was bound by them. Even in this sense, love casts out fear. And what could more either express his own love, or tend to inflame other men's, than when that great apostle bespeaks the christians of that time, as having his life bound up in theirs? 'I live if ye stand fast' 1 Thessalonians 3:8. that he was 'ready to impart, with the gospel, even his own soul to them, because they were dear to him.' 1 Thessalonians 2:8. And that 'they were in his heart to live and die with them. 2 Corinthians 7:3. There seemed to be but one life, common to him and them. When there are such unions, that each, is to the other, an alter ego, another self; and another's soul, is to a man as half his own; as he pathetically phrases it. Here is the height of affection! And that affection mutually heightens each others courage, and is a continual and reciprocated source of a generous magnanimity, springing from the one, into the others breast; while they perceive in one another, a mutual vying, who shall the more adventurously rush upon death, for, the

conjunction with, the other. This seems not alien from the temper of Thomas' mind in his uttering of these words. For when our Lord proposed going into Judea, other of the disciples objecting that the Jews had there lately sought to kill him ; he, when he understood Lazarus was dead, whom he knew to be a friend to that cause, though he died not for it; come, says he, let us now fear no death, let us rush, throw ourselves into the midst of death, and there breathe forth our souls, full of love, to God, and Christ, and him, and one another; even upon the same spot, where this friend of our Lord, and our common cause and interest, breathed forth his. These noble principles, fortitude and love, might have made two distinct heads of discourse; but they are so complicated, and interwoven with one another, that they were scarce to be considered apart. And this complication, these words more than intimate. 'That their hearts may be comforted' (or incited, and stirred up, as the word there used signifies) 'being knit together in love.' Colossians 2:2.

7. A lively apprehension of the large, abounding diffusion of the divine fulness; sufficiently able to replenish, and satisfy, all that shall be prepared to partake in it. That this good man's eye was upon somewhat else, than mere death, and that he coveted not to die, for dying sake, must be out of doubt with us. He certainly aimed at a blessed state after death. And who can suppose his mind void of that so common notion, that the blessedness of souls must lie in God? But this could not be all. The faint, spiritless notion of a felicity to be enjoyed in God, could signify little to the present purpose. Here must be a lively, gustful apprehension of it too. For here is intervening death to be gone through. And he expresses himself willing to attempt this difficult pass. 'Let us go - that we may die -.' How few do you know, or converse with, that are without this notion, that God is the blessedness of souls? Or that assent not to it as soon as they hear it? Yet how few do you know, that are willing to die, to enjoy him? no, no, they are generally willing, rather to 'eat the dust of the earth,' and 'feed upon ashes,' thousands of years, than go to God for a better portion ! Notwithstanding their dead, spiritless, inefficacious notion of a divine heavenly felicity, they had rather want it. A blessedness not to be had on earth, or that must come by dying! They bless themselves from such a blessedness! It is plain then, there must be more than a dead notion, to overcome their aversion to dying. And what can be that more? It is as plain, it must be a vivid apprehension of such a blessedness in God, after death. And that imports two things.

(1.) A divine faith of it. It must be the apprehension of faiths and of a divine faith. Almost every one pretends to believe it; but it is generally, with an human faith only. Because their parents, or preachers, or the common voice of the country, hath told them so. A divine faith, is full of divine life, and vigour. The substance and evidence of what is believed. The soul being overpowered into this belief by the majesty, and authority of the great God revealing it, and the awfulness of his testimony; the 'word of God' revealing this, as other portions of sacred truth, works effectually in them that so believe it : that is, that 'receive it not as the word of man, but as the word of God.' 1 Thessalonians 2:13. They that live in the hope of eternal life, which 'God that cannot lie hath promised,' Titus 1:2. would break through a thousand deaths to obtain it. This is more than a spiritless notion. And

(2.) Such a lively apprehension hath in it somewhat of a present sense, and foretaste of that blessedness. An heaven begun. Which is of the same kind with their future heaven. They have the 'kingdom of God,' in them, 'which stands in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' Romans 14:17. Such an earnest speaks their own right, while they are yet sensible of the great imperfection of their present state. They are therefore willing to die, that they may be made

perfect. They now know by taste what it is to enjoy God. 'O taste and see that God is good! Psalms 34:1-22. A mere notion informs us not enough, so as to actuate our minds what that means. Notwithstanding it, the carnal mind can frame no distinct heart-moving thought of felicity; other, or more grateful, than the relishes of meat and drink, or the satisfaction of some, or other, mean, or carnalized appetite. They that have tasted somewhat of an higher kind, long for more, and most of all that most perfect fruition, which they must pass through death to attain.

We will not suppose this good man to have been destitute, of such a faith, and of such tastes, of the heavenly felicity. And as, hereby he was not without a lively apprehension, of the kind and nature of it, so we must suppose him, to have a like apprehension. O the large, copious, abounding, and diffusive fulness of it. Whereof his words give some intimation. 'Let us go, and die with him.' He doubted not of a sufficiently extensive communion in this blessedness. As if it had been said, There is enough for him, and us all. And such an apprehension, we all ought to have, of the blessedness of the heavenly state, into which we are to be introduced by death, that it is enough for all that can be in any possibility to partake in it. So that the abounding plenitude of no one's portion, can be any diminution to anothers. The kind and nature of material, sensible good, hath a remarkable, and most agreeable affinity to what is said (and what upon very strict inquiry, one knows not how, not to say) of matter itself, that it is perpetually divisible; but so, as that every part, and particle, is still less and less. Whereupon it cannot but be, that whatsoever any enjoy of terrene good, so much is detracted from the rest. Of intellectual, spiritual good, knowledge, wisdom, grace, glory, the case is quite different. Let any possess never so much, it nothing diminishes anothers possession, in the same kind. If another man be never so wise, good, and happy, it takes nothing from me, I may be as wise, good, and happy. At least, that hinders not, but I may.

How pleasant a contemplation is this! that in the vast, and numberless, regions of light, bliss, and glory, the blessed inhabitants are all drawing from the same fountain, solacing themselves in the 'fulness of joy,' drinking in from those 'rivers of pleasure,' that flow from the divine presence, for evermore! All deriving, unto satiety, from that fulness, 'that filleth all in all.'

8. Preference of the society with holy ones, in the heavenly state, above any to be enjoyed on earth. The words, as to their most obvious sense, seem to be full of this. With whom I would live, with him I would die. Is not this our common sense? Not that we can apprehend any thing in the very act, or article of dying, that can make dying with one, more desirable, than with another, but it must be meant, of what is to follow. We would not have death to part us. We would enjoy one another, after death; but so, as we did not before. It is very probable, our Lord, and his disciples, had formerly enjoyed pleasant hours with Lazarus, in his own house. But why doth Thomas, therefore, desire they might die, to be with him? Excepting him, he might still have enjoyed the same society on earth, and of many other christian friends besides. But we see his proposal concerned not himself only. It is, 'Let us go die with him.' He reckoned they should all die, and be with him together. And that the state they should then be in, would have, in point of society, and conversation, such advantages, above what their present state afforded, as were worth dying for. And how can we but apprehend the vast difference? Whatever delight good men, on earth, have had in one anothers society, they must, then, be better company than ever. How hard is it now, to communicate our sentiments! We know not what our ways of converse shall hereafter be, but we know that such words as we now use, are very slow, defective media of conveying, our minds and

sense, to one another. What a difficulty do we now find, if we apprehend a thing clearly ourselves, to make another master of our notion? What circumlocutions do we need! What explications, to make another understand our meaning! And then those explications need further explication! And so we run ourselves into new difficulties, and entangle one another more, and more. Most of our controversies arise from our mistaking one anothers sense; though too often those mistakes are wilful with them who love strife more than truth: and it is industriously endeavoured, to pervert each others words, and put senses upon them quite besides, or against our true intent. But if we speak and hear with the greatest candour, and sincerity that is possible, we are frequently not understood aright, either through the unskilfulness of him that speaks, to choose the aptest words, and forms of speech, or unattentiveness, incapacity, and dulness, in them that hear: frequently from both together. Hence is the conversation of christians so little edifying, though their discourse of useful subjects, which, God knows, there is little of amongst us! Though much more than I commonly apprehended, proceeds from want of love, that should let us into one anothers minds, and hearts. Our very sermons, when we study to make important things as plain as we can, are lost upon the most. Though here we see the advantage of a people's having a love to their master, which is a mighty orator within themselves, and will make them endeavour to take in his heart, and soul; as on his part, his love to them will make him willing, as we heard from the apostle, to 'impart, with the gospel, his own soul.' 1 Thessalonians 2:8. But as to christian converse in this our present state, besides the difficulty of understanding one another, all, even of them who have great treasures of knowledge in them, are not alike conversable, and communicative, nor any, at all times. The dearest friends often find one another indisposed, otherwise busy, morose, sour, and out of humour; apt to take, and perhaps, to give offence, on one hand, and the other. And whereas we should most intimately converse with ourselves; upon the mentioned accounts, we are, now, very often the worst company that can be, to ourselves; through the darkness, confusion, intricacy, and incoherence of our own thoughts; the fervour, and tumultuation of ill affections, and the sluggishness, and drowsy torpor of good. And in what case are we to please others, by our converse, that have so much cause, to be always, in a very great degree, displeased with ourselves! When death shall have disencumbered, and set us free from all sorts of distempers, and brought us, into the state of perfect, and perfected spirits, how delectable will that society be! When all shall be full of divine light, life, love, and joy, and freely communicate, as they have received freely! How pleasant will it be, to sit down with 'Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.' To converse with angels! Those wise, kind creatures! So full of profound knowledge, and benignity! instructed by long, uninterrupted, experience, and observation of the methods of the divine government, and dispensation; highly pleased with our accession to the 'General assembly; that rejoiced in the conversion of a sinner,' whereby but one, was hereafter, in due time, to be added, much more in the glorification of so many, that are now actually added to them! What delightful communings will there be, of the mysteries of nature! Of the methods of providence! Of the wonders of grace! Of the deep and hidden counsels of God! In what part it shall be agreeable to his wisdom, and good pleasure, to let them appear, and stand in view. The conferences at the transfiguration made the transported disciples say, 'It is good to be here :' when the glory, which while it oppressed, pleased them. Though this was but a transient view. But above all that is conceivable in that other state, how delectable will their society be in worship! In their unanimous adoration of the 'Ever-blessed God! Father, Son, and Spirit!' In how pleasant, eternal raptures of delight, and praise, will all those excellent creatures be, that inhabit and replenish the

vast realms of light, and bliss; when all behold, how the several kinds of being, light, life, excellency, and perfection, by a perpetual efflux, spring from the first. The fountain of all being. The parent of so glorious, and so numerous a progeny! all Godlike, and bearing the bright image of their Father! O the inexpressible pleasure of this consociation in worship, perpetually tendered with so absolute a plenitude of satisfaction, in the due-ness of it ! And the gustful apprehension of what whose words import, 'Worthy art thou, O Lord!' each one relishing his own act, with just self-approbation, and high delight; heightened by their apprehended, perfect unanimity, and that there is among them, no dissenting vote. Whence it cannot be but to 'worship God in Spirit and in truth, must be to enjoy him.' And that he is not, under any other notion, more the satisfying object of our enjoyment, than as he is the object of our worship. What room, or pretence, is there now left, for unwillingness to die, on the account of relatives, we have been wont to converse with in this world? When such an exchange as this, is to be made by dying! But,

II. We are also to consider, There might be an intermixture in the temper of this good man's spirit, when he uttered these words, of somewhat faulty and blameable. Which we are to be cautioned against.

1. There might be too little consideration had, of the dignity and value of human life; of which the great God takes so particular care, to guard and sustain it both by law and providence. And of this creature, Man, so noble a part of divine workmanship, and whom he 'set over all the works of his hands,' in this lower world. To propound throwing away, at once, so many such lives, seems somewhat too precipitant.

2. The words seem not to savour enough of that deference that is due to the God of our lives; whose prerogative it is to 'kill, and to make alive:' to measure our time, and number our days. It might have been said, at least, 'If God will,' &c.

3. There might be in them, too little gratitude for the mercies of life, or patience of the difficulties of it : somewhat like that of Jonah, 'Take now, I beseech thee, my life from me.'

4. Too little regard to the business of life, it might have been, more at leisure, considered, is the business done, I was born for! Their special business, who were to be the 'Apostles of our Lord, already called,' Matthew 10:1, &c. and instructed in great part in the work of their calling; was, apparently, too little considered, especially, how, or for what, his Lord was to die himself, so far as either from his own words, or from the prophets, might have been collected.

5. Nor, perhaps, enough; how awful a thing it was to die! to change states, and pass into eternity! This might, upon this account, be too hastily said. Good old Simeon seemed to have considered the matter more, when he said, 'Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,' &c.

6. And there is reason to apprehend, in these words, too much displicency at the providence of God, in taking away such a man, now at such a time; with some appearance of despondency, concerning the christian interest. This Lazarus, is thought to have been a wealthy man (though he in the parable, is represented otherwise.) Christianity was, as yet, a little thing in the world. Our Lord had signalized himself, by his wonderful works, and drawn many eyes upon him, that were at a gaze, by his heavenly doctrine, and the true design of his coming, had entered into the minds of but a few; and they, of the meaner sort; 'Had any of the rulers believed on him ?' It was yet a dubious twilight; the dawning of the morning. 'The Spirit, that was to convince the world, was not

yet given, for Jesus was not yet glorified.' John 7:39. John 16:8. Nicodemus, 'a Rabbi,' came to him, 'but by night.' This cause, as still, according to human estimate, depended much on reputation. 'Men loved' (till an overpowering influence bore down all before it) 'the praise of men, more than the praise of God ;' John 12:43. and 'believed not, because they sought honour one of another.' John 5:44.

It was, now, a mighty loss, to have one such man drop, 'that lived so near Jerusalem, where our Lord's great work did much lie, but where he chose not to lodge: this was in Bethany, but two miles off, a convenient retreat. The Master of the house is himself dislodged: and whereas, though the 'Foxes had holes and the birds nests, the Son of Man had not where to lay his head.' Luke 9:22, Luke 9:23. This disciple might probably think where shall be our next resort? Where is there a considerable person to be found, that will hereafter give us harbour and countenance? He might hence be induced, even to utter his conclamation est; and to this purpose, say, now he is dead, 'Let us all go die with him.' Their Lord and Master had before told them, of his being ere long to be taken from them; and that his followers must count upon 'taking up of their cross daily.' And what, might he think, is to become of us, upon whom, left desolate, the stress is to lie, of the christian cause! What storms will be raised against us, whose province it must be, to plant and propagate a new religion in the world! The tenderest concern in all the world, and about which men are most apt to be enraged at any attempt of innovation! And by us, unlearned, uninterested, obscure and contemptible men! By what he here says, he seems 'not afraid to die,' but he seems 'afraid to live,' and face the storm, and contend with the difficulties, of that (even hopeless) undertaking, which he perceived himself, and his companions, designed unto. Rather than this, he seems to apprehend a present death was to be chosen. And I, now, no way doubt, hut any serious person, that shall be at the pains to commune with himself, will judge, there may be such quick turns of thoughts, this way, and that, as those opposite senses of this passage do import; the variety, and contrariety of principles that are in us, in this imperfect state, makes it no impossible thing, but that, amidst the various agitations of a musing mind, somewhat of grace, and somewhat of sin, yea much of an holy and heavenly temper, with some degree of incogitancy, haste, and faulty distemper, might be vented together in such an expression.

III. And now for the use of it, we must have distinct respect to both these sorts of sense, which the words may admit of. And.

1. For whatsoever of good sense they have in them, let us endeavour to have it deeply impressed, and inwrought into our souls. So far as, upon good and self-justifying accounts, one may wish to die with another, eminently holy and good. Let us labour to be in that temper of spirit, that with all reverential submission to the wise, holy, and sovereign will of God, we may ever be ready to go with the first: 'A good man should need only leave to die.' Consider, are we so loose from all worldly enjoyments, and designs, as to be capable, when an holy man dies, of adopting these words, 'Let me die with him ?' Will they fit our spirits? Can we so far comport with them, as to avow it with an heart not reproaching us, that it is only obedience to the supreme ruler, nor terrene inclination, that makes us willing to survive such, as we see going off this stage before us? That if he in whose hands our breath is, will have us still live, we can submit 'with patience;' if he signify his mind, we shall die, we shall comply 'with gladness?' But, Do we find it otherwise? Doth the bent of our own spirits urge and press us downward? And fix us to the earth? Are we so within its magnetism? We have a worse evil to fear than bodily death. 'To be so carnally minded is death,' in

a far more horrid sense. This temper of mind, to prefer an earthly abode, before the purity, and bliss, of the 'heavenly society,' is so repugnant to the most constituent principles of a living christian, his faith of the unseen world, his delight in God, his love of the divine presence, and converse with the Father, and Son, in glory; his hatred of sin, and desire of perfect holiness, that he should rather take another name, than wear that of a christian, in conjunction with the allowance of so unchristian a spirit, a temper that tends to subvert whole christianity. And puts a man into a posture of hostility against the cross of Christ, and the very design of his dying. For in contradistinction to them, 'whose conversation is in heaven, from whence they look for the Saviour, are they become the declared enemies of his cross, who mind earthly things;' Php 3:18,Php 3:19,Php 3:20. preferring an earthly before the heavenly state. And the apostle tells such, (weeping as he wrote) that 'their end will be destruction.' This I must therefore say and testify in the Lord, that if any will indulge themselves in such a temper of spirit; and whosoever goes, even of the most excellent of God's saints and ministers, they would (because they love the present world more) stay with the last; 'as to such, our preaching is vain, and their faith is vain.' But if there have been any within the compass of your knowledge and acquaintance, of whom dying, or lately dead, you could say, 'Let me die with him, or die to be with him.' Of whom would you rather say it, than of the excellent Dr. Bates! But do you expect I should give you a distinct and full account of him? Many of you know, or may easily apprehend, I have not been in circumstances, by which it could be so much as possible to me. The surprising, overwhelming tidings of his death, with the signification of my being expected to do this part, first reached me, by just estimate, at about two hundred miles distance. Nor did any thing to that purpose, from such as were concerned, come to my hands, till a fortnight after his decease. At my return, towards the end of the week preceding this sad solemnity, I had my own charge, from which I had been long absent, to provide for against the Lord's Day: after which, only one day intervened, wherein thoughts that accompanied me in my way, were to be reduced into some order: but had I had never so much time and leisure, I cannot but reflect on what was said of that famous Roman, to give the just praises of Cicero, Cicero laudatore opus fuerit, there was need of Cicero himself to be the encomiast. No man knows how to speak becomingly of the excellencies of Dr. Bates, that hath not the eloquence of Dr. Bates. He did that office most laudably for divers others, for those reverend and truly great men, Dr. Manton, Mr. Clarkson, Dr. Jacomb, and the admirable Mr. Baxter. But now there is no man left to do it suitably for him, that is, that both is fit and willing. So that this part comes to be devolved, upon the unfittest among many. Yet thus, while others have declined it, out of a modest opinion of its being above them, whose abilities and conveniences, for the performance, did much more concur: this looks like an art, and contrivance of providence, to greaten him the more, that every one reckons him too great for their commendation: and, that consequently, he is to pass out of our world, as one too big for our praises, with no encomium, or that which is next to none. Though I first had the opportunity, and great pleasure of his acquaintance, above forty years ago; yet I have no present way while I am writing this, of knowing, or recollecting, with certainty, any thing of the earlier days of his life. As therefore the case is, the little I shall say of him, shall be, not by way of history, but of character. Nor in giving somewhat of that, can one well omit,

(1.) To take notice of, what must with every one, come first in view, viz. His self-recommending aspect, composed of 'Gravity and pleasantness, with the graceful mien, and comeliness of his person.' That was said upon no slight consideration of the nature of man, from unbribed common

estimate, that whatever a man's virtuous endowments be, it is the more taking and acceptable, as coming, - E pulchro corpore. From a handsome well-framed body. God had designed him to circumstances, and a station, not obscure in the world, and had accordingly formed him with advantage; so as that his exterior, and first-aspectible part, might draw respect. And though the treasure to be lodged there, was to be put into 'an earthen vessel,' yet even that was wrought, Meliore luto, of finer, or more accurately figured, and better turned clay. He was 'to stand before kings;' Proverbs 22:29. you know in what relation he stood 'to one,' as long as was convenient for some purposes; and how frequent occasion he had of appearing (never unacceptably) 'before another.' His concern lay not only 'with mean men,' though he could tell also how to condescend to the meanest. His aspect and deportment was not austere, but both decently grave and amiable, such as might command at once, both reverence and love; and was herein, not a lying, but the true picture of his mind.

I may (to this purpose) borrow his own words (and whose could I more rightfully borrow, or to so much advantage?) concerning that excellent person, alderman Ashurst, whose fragrant memory will long survive the age he lived in. And O that his example might govern in London, as long as his name lasts! Of him the doctor says, 'A constant serenity reigned in his countenance, the visible sign of the divine calm in his breast;' 'the peace of God that passes all understanding!' And who could have said this but Dr. Bates! Or so appositely have applied what had an higher author! So expressively! so fully! so truly! and justly was it spoken! But also, of whom could this have been more fitly said, than Mutato nomine, of Dr. Bates! How rarely should we see a countenance so constant, and so faithful an index, of an undisturbed, composed mind? Through that, if we looked into this, how rich furniture of the 'inner man' should we soon perceive, and admire!

(2.) His natural endowments, and abilities, appeared to every observer, great, much beyond the common rate. His apprehension quick, and clear. His reasoning faculty acute, prompt, and expert: so as readily and aptly to produce, and urge closely, the stronger and more pregnant arguments, when he was to use them; and soon to discern the strength of arguments, if he was to answer them. His judgment penetrating and solid, stable and firm. His wit never vain, or light, but most facetious and pleasant, by the ministry of a fancy, both very vigorous and lively; and most obedient to his reason; always remote both from meanness, and enormity. His memory was admirable, and never failed, that any one could observe, not impaired by his great age of seventy four: insomuch, that speeches made upon solemn occasions, of no in-elegant composition (some whereof the world hath seen, though extorted from him with great difficulty, and by much importunity) he could afterwards repeat to a word, when he had not penned one word of them before. And his sermons, wherein nothing could be more remote from ramble, he constantly delivered from his memory. And hath sometime told me, with an amicable freedom, that he partly did it, to teach some that were younger, to preach without notes. His learning, and acquired knowledge of things, usually reckoned to lie within that compass, was a vast treasure. He had lived a long, studious life; an earnest gatherer, and (as the phrase is) devourer of books. With which he had so great an acquaintance, and they that were acquainted with him so well knew it, that one, who was for the dignity of his station, and the eminency of his endowments, as great a pillar, and as excellent an ornament of the church, as any it hath had for many an age, hath been known to say, that were he to collect a library, he would as soon consult Dr. Bates, as any man he knew. He was indeed himself a living one.

He knew how to choose, and was curious in his choice. Whatsoever belonged to the finer, and more polite sort of literature, was most grateful to him, when it fell into a conjunction with what was also most useful. Nothing mean was welcome into his library, or detained there; much less thought fit to be entertained, and laid up, in the more private repository of his mind. To speak of the particular parts of his learning wherein he excelled, were to trifle, when there are so many visible effects extant, that enough inform the world. His divine knowledge, and the abundant grace of God in him, have been eminently conspicuous, the same way, in great part; but otherwise also. For his private conversation was so instructive, so quickening, in reference to what lay within the confines of religion, and godliness, that no man of ordinary capacity could hear his usual, and most familiar discourses, but either with great negligence, or great advantage. When he hath been to consider a case of conscience, I have sometimes had opportunity to observe, with what wisdom, what caution, what tenderness, he hath spoken to it, and with what compass of thought; turning it round this way, and that; most strictly regarding our sacred rule, and weighing all circumstances that concerned the case: but withal, taking occasion from thence (when the persons concerned have not been present) to magnify and adore the grace of God; which he would do most pathetically, and with great affection; for keeping us out of the way of temptation. Which he thought was too little considered by christians; and thereby saving us from the entanglements, and perplexities of spirit, as well as from the scandals that befel many. I never knew any more frequent, and affectionate, in the admiration of divine grace, upon all occasions, than he was; or who had a deeper sense of the impotency, and pravity of human nature. His discourses were usually (as our rule directs) 'savory, as seasoned with salt, and such as might minister grace to the hearers.' He was frequently visited by persons of higher rank, and that made no mean figure in the world, Of whom, some have acknowledged, that going abroad upon hazardous employments, they have received from him, such wise and pious counsels, as have stuck by them, and they have been the better for, afterwards. Though in his communing with so many friends, whom he irresistibly constrained to covet his most desirable society, he did not exclude the things that were of common human concernment, he still discovered a temper of mind most intent upon divine things. He did not look with a slight or careless eye upon the affairs of the public; but consider, and speak of them as a man of prospect, and large thought, with much prudence, and temper; not curiously prying into the arcana of government, or reasons of state, which it was necessary should be under a veil; much less rudely censuring what it was not fit should be understood: but what was open to common view, he was wont to discourse of instructively; both as lying under the direction of providence, and as relating to the interest of religion. Nor was he wont to banish out of his conversation the pleasantness that fitly belonged to it: for which his large acquaintance, with a most delightful variety of story, both ancient and modern, gave him advantage beyond most. His judicious memory, being a copious promptuary, of what was profitable, facetious, and disdaining to be the receptacle of useless trash. To place religion in a morose sourness, was remote from his practice, his judgment, and his temper. But his discourses, taking in, often, things of a different nature, were interwoven with religion, and centred in it; especially such things as were most intimate, and vital to it, of those things, he was wont to speak, with that savour and relish, as plainly showed, he spake not forcedly, or with affectation, as acting a part; but from the settled temper, and habit of his soul. Into what transports of admiration of the love of God, have I seen him break forth! when some things foreign, or not immediately relating, to practical godliness, had taken up a good part of our time. How easy a step did he make of it, from earth to heaven! Such as

have been wont, in a more stated course, to resort to him can tell, whether, when other occasions did fall in, and claim their part, in the discourses of that season, he did not usually send them away, with some-what that tended to better their spirits, and quicken them in their way heavenward? With how high flights, of thought, and affection, was he wont to speak, of the heavenly state! Even like a man much more of kin to that other world, than to this! And for his 'Ministerial qualifications, and labours;' do I need to say any thing to themselves, who had the benefit thereof? Either them, who have so many years lived under his most fruitful, enlightening, quickening, edifying ministry? 'Whether week by week,' as his beloved, peculiarly privileged charge, at Hackney, that mournful, desolate people! Who have been fed with the heavenly, hidden Manna, and with the fruits of the tree of life, that grows in the midst of the paradise of God; so prepared, and presented to them, and made pleasant to their taste, as few besides have ever had: but now sit in sorrow, hopeless of full, or any equal relief, but by transportation into that paradise itself, whence all their refectations were wont to come! Or do I need to inform such inhabitants of London, as in a 'doubled three monthly course,' have, for many years, in throng-assembly, been wont to hang upon his lips? To whose, if to any one's in our days, the characters belonged, of the wise, and the righteous man's lips, which are said to 'disperse knowledge;' Proverbs 15:7. and (which is therefore most agreeable) to 'feed many.' Proverbs 10:21. Or can it be needful to acquaint the world? Who have volumes of his discourses, of sermons in their hands! Or tell them of their singular excellencies, who can as well tell me! I can speak to none of his great worth and accomplishments, as a richly furnished, and most skilful, dispenser of divine knowledge, and of the mysteries of the gospel of Christ, an 'instructed scribe, able to bring forth of his treasury things new and old;' but who may say to me, as those Samaritan christians, 'we believe him to be such; not because of thy saying; for we have heard (or read) him ourselves.' And they may say so, with judgment, upon this proof, that shall consider both the select, choice, and most important matter of his tractates, and sermons, published, or unpublished. And the peculiar way and manner of his tractation thereof. For the former: 'The choice of subjects;' and of such materials of discourse, as are to be reduced, and gathered in to them, discovers as much of the judgment, spirit, and design of the compiler, as any thing we can think of. When we consider what sort of things, a man's mind hath been exercised, and taken up about, through so long a course and tract of time; we may see what things he counted great, important, necessary to be insisted on, and most conducing to the ends, which one, of his calling, and station, ought to design, and aim at. And are thereupon to appeal to ourselves, whether he did not judge and design aright, and as he ought? As what could be of greater importance, than to discover the 'Harmony of God's Attributes,' in the work of saving sinners? 'The final happiness of man: the four last things,' &c. What more important than that of spiritual perfection? Which last he dropped, as Elijah, his mantle, when he was to ascend into that state, most perfectly perfect; wherein that which he had been discoursing of, finally terminates. Read it, and invoke the Lord God of Elijah! saying, 'Where is he?' Nor were his discourses of less consequence, that, in his stated course, he delivered to his constant hearers. They were always much allied to the lamp, and did not need to fear the brightest light. His last sermon in this place, (who of us thought it the last! Hearing it delivered, with so much life and spirit?) challenges our re-consideration over and over. It was about 'Sins against knowledge,' from Luke 12:47. A warning to the age, uttered (though not faintly) as with his dying breath. O that it could have reached ears, and hearts, as far as the concern of it doth reach. The sins of our days, of professors, and of others, are more generally, sins against knowledge, than heretofore, and may

make us expect and dread the more stripes, that text speaks of. As for his manner and way of handling what he undertook, we may use the words, which he recites from the incomparable bishop Wilkins, concerning Mr. Baxter; which, no doubt, if there had then been the occasion, he would have judged not unapplicable here also: 'That he cultivated every subject he handled, and had he lived in an age of the fathers, he would have been one.' His method in all his discourses, might be exposed to the most critical censurer. What could be more accurate! And for his style, it was even inimitably polite, and fine; but to him, so natural, that it was more uneasy to have used a coarser style, than to others; so neat a one as his was. Nor is it to be thought strange, that there should be in this, a peculiarity; style being, to any man, as appropriate, upon the matter, as his visage, or voice; and as immediately depending on the temper of the mind, in conjunction with fancy, as that is, more or less, brisk, lively, and vigorous; as the other do on the complexion of the body, or the disposition of the organs of speech. They that would, in this case, attempt to force nature, would, I suspect, be very awkward at it, would bungle scurvily, and soon find, they had better be content to creep on all four, than aim to fly and soar, with borrowed wings, or stolen feathers.

If God, with a man's nature, gives a disposition of this kind, it may, in his younger years, admit of innocent improvement: but that which is most peculiar to any, in this respect, is what one insensibly slides into, with no more design, than one hath to walk after this, or that manner; by which, yet, many persons are known, and distinguishable from other men. But I doubt not, that excellency in any such kind, as hath been anciently observed of poetry, and oratory, must have its foundation in nature; and they that will strive against that stream, will soon perceive, that such proverbial sayings were grounded upon prudent observation and long experience, that a mercury is not to be made of every log; and that nothing is to be attempted, *invita minerva*, or against one's genius, and natural inclination. Therefore that monition, *Lege historiam ne fias historia*, one may vary and say, *cave, &c.*; Take heed of a proverb, lest thou become a proverb. That is easy, and pleasant, which is natural. And now when the grace of God supervenes, and doth exalt, and sublimate nature, it makes that mean beginning, and its progress, into use and custom; which is said to be a second nature, subservient to very high and excellent purposes; as is eminently conspicuous in the doctor's peculiar way of preaching and writing: especially in his frequent, most apt, similitudes, and allusions; to be attributed to a brisk and vivid fancy, regulated by judgment, and sanctified by divine grace, so as greatly to serve his pious purpose; to illustrate the truth he designed to recommend, and give it the greatest advantage of entering into the mind, with light and pleasure; and at once both to instruct and delight his reader or hearer. And so much more grateful have his illustrations been, by how much the more they have been surprising, and remote from any forethought in them that read, or heard. And I may here freely put his most constant and attentive hearers, upon recollecting, whether he have not usually pleased them, by surprising them? (for I know there are surprisals ungrateful enough.) And in most sermons, whether they did not meet with what they did not expect from him; and might in vain have expected from any body else?

Some, it is possible, may find fault with that in this kind, to which they can do nothing like themselves; who yet, I hope, may admit of conviction of their own fault, herein, by gentler means, than by being put in mind of the fable. They might, upon the matter, as well find fault, that God had made him a taller man than the most; perhaps, than themselves, or of a more comely complexion,

or that all were not of one stature, size, or feature. If any do, it is most probably such, to whom one may truly say, they blame what they could not mend, nor he, help; at least, without much pain to himself, and to no purpose. One may venture to say, that in that fine way of expressing himself, which was become habitual to him, he much more pleased others than himself. For in the excellent Mr. Baxter, he highly commends much another way, saying of him, He had a marvellous felicity, and copiousness in speaking. There was a noble negligence in his style. For his great mind could not stoop to the affected eloquence of words. Very excellent men excel in different ways : the most radiant stones may differ in colour, when they do not in value. His judgment in ecclesiastical matters, was to be known by his practice; and it was such, that he needed not care who knew it. He was for entire union of all visible christians, (or saints, or believers, which in scripture are equivalent terms) meaning by christianity, what is essential thereto; whether doctrinal, or practical, as by humanity, we mean, what is essential to man, severing accidents, as not being of the essence. And by visibility, the probable appearance thereof. And for free communion of all such, of whatsoever persuasion, in extra-essential matters, if they pleased. And this design he vigorously pursued, as long as there was any hope; desisting, when it appeared hopeless, and resolving to wait till God should give a spirit suitable hereto; from an apprehension, that, when principles on all hands, were so easily accommodable, and yet that there was with too many, a remaining insuperable reluctancy to the thing itself, God must work the cure, and not man. Accounting also, in the mean time, that notwithstanding misrepresentations, it was better, to cast a mantle over the failings of brethren, than be concerned to detect and expose them. Knowing, that if we be principally solicitous for the name of God, he will in his own way and time, take care of ours. And in this sentiment he was not alone. But now is this great luminary, this burning and shining light, (not extinct, but) gone out of our horizon. We for a season rejoiced in this light, and are we not to mourn for its disappearance? Yet not without hope. O! the inconceivable loss of his domestical relatives ! Who, in respect of his most private capacity, and conversation, are deprived of such an head, father, and guide! yet in this lies their advantage, that since nothing that is mortal can fill up his room, they are under a necessity, to betake themselves thither where the surest and fullest relief is to be had. Having in the mean time, among mortals, a far greater number of fellow-sufferers and fellow-mourners, to bear a part with them in their sorrows, and ready to afford them all suitable consolation, than most in this world can be capable of expecting in such a case. Let those of his own peculiar charge; let those that were wont, though not so often, in a stated course, to hear him in this place, with all other his more occasional hearers, mourn, that they are to hear no more his weighty sentences, his sweet honey-dropping words: let them mourn, that never heard to purpose, that were never allured, never won, that were always deaf to this charmer, though charming so wisely. Let those that have got good by him, mourn, that, in this way, they are to get no more; those that have got none, that they have lost so much of their day; that they are to be addressed, by this persuasive advocate for Christ, and their own souls, no more. Let his brethren, all of us, mourn, that we have lost so prudent, so humble, so instructive, so encouraging a guide, so bright an ornament from among us. But let none of us mourn without hope. God will be a husband to the widow trusting in him, and the father of the fatherless, taking God in Christ for their father, and their God. He hath not forgot the titles he hath assumed. He can also find, or make for his widowed church, a pastor after his own heart. And the great shepherd and bishop of souls, that gave his life for the sheep, though he was dead, is alive, and lives for evermore. All his hearers, though they are no more to hear his pleasant human voice, sounding in their ears, if they

attend and listen, may hear a divine voice crying after them, 'This is the way, walk in it.' And let them know, that the gospel he preached, is immortal, and never dies, though all flesh is grass: and his own books, though he is dead, yet speak. We, his brethren, were to follow him, as he followed Christ; who will himself be with us, always to the end. The work wherein he was engaged, was common to him and us. Herein, if we follow him, though not with equal steps, faithfully endeavouring to 'turn many to righteousness,' we shall shine as he doth, like the stars in the firmament, we need not be solicitous, though not with equal lustre, as 'one star differs from another in glory.' 1 Corinthians 15:41. The cause wherein he was engaged unto his death, and from which no offered emoluments, or dignities, could ever draw him, was not that of a party; for he was of none, and was of too large a mind to be of any, but that noble cause of union and communion, with all christians that hold the head. That cause is not dead with him. Now that he is dead, we are to say, as that is the voice of the christian faith, of divine and brotherly love, 'let us die with him,' but not as it is the voice of despondency, or despair. Let us covet to be with him in that blessed state; the reality whereof we believe, and of which our faith is to be to us the substance and evidence.

I know no good man, that, knowing him, would not say, 'Let me die with him.' I very well know, who would. And, if breasts could be laid open to inspection, as by a glass, do know, in whose breast this sense would be found, engraven, as with the point of a diamond. O! that my soul were in his soul's stead, or, if the Supreme Disposer had thought fit, or seen an equal fitness for translation, that I had died with him, but, knowing his much greater usefulness in this world, O! that I had died for him. For since it is expressly said, 'We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' 1 John 3:16. A life, that could, regularly, and effectually, have redeemed his, had been laid down for many, in that one, of holy, prudent, heavenly Dr. Bates. This is the sense of one, not weary, blessed be God, of the business of life, and that enjoys as much of the comforts of life, as any man can reasonably wish, scarce any one more. But it must be confessed, as this world was not worthy of this servant of Christ; it is become far less worthy now so excellent a person hath left it. His love, his converse, was pleasant, beyond what can be expressed! It is now a grievance not to have a part with the silent mourners, when lamentations could freely have been poured forth, without noise or interruption! As the case is, necessity lays a restraint, and leaves it an easier thing to die, than weep out; otherwise, can one be shy in a way that can admit it, to tell the world, that to live in it, now he is dead out of it, much less deserves the name of life! It can be felt, that those words, among the many, divine raptures, of that holy man, have a most perceptible meaning. When I got health, thou tookest away my life; and more, for my friends die. If one may innocently borrow words, from so impure a mouth, they are very expressive: I scarce count myself a man, when without lamblichus.

Here were two souls knit together, as the soul of one man! What there is of present separation, shall be but for a little while. And by how much the separation is more grievous, the reunion will be with the stronger propension, and the more delightful, everlasting cohesion. As also, separation from this terrene clog will be much the easier. One great weight is added above, to pulley up what ought to ascend, thither. How can that but be a blessed state, into which, he that is essential love hath caught up such a man! One, in so great part, transformed before, into the same likeness, and fitted to dwell in love: And accordingly God took him, even kissed away his soul, as hath been said of those great favourites of heaven; did let him die without being sick; vouchsafed him that great

privilege, which a good man would choose before many, not to out-live serviceableness. To live till one be weary of the world, not till the world be weary of him! Thus he prayed wisely, thus God answered graciously.

2. But be it far from us to say, 'Let us die with him,' as despairing of our cause. If our cause be not that of any self-distinguished party; but truly that common christian cause, of which you have heard. While it is the divine pleasure to continue us here, let us be content, and submit, to live and own it, to live and serve it, to our uttermost.

If ever God design good days to the christian church on earth, this is the cause that must prevail, and triumph in a glorious conquest over death. But I must freely tell you my apprehensions, which I have often hinted, that I fear it must die first; I mean, a temporary death; I fear it, for it hath been long, gradually, dying already : and spiritual diseases, which have this tendency, are both sinful, and penal. Lazarus' death and resurrection, I think, to have been meant, for a sort of proluision, to the death, and resurrection of Christ, both personal, and mystical. I only say this for illustration, not for proof. That sickness and death of his, was not in order to a permanent death, but for the glory of God; that when the case was deplorate, and hopeless, and he four days buried, he might, surprisingly, spring up again alive. I know not, but the sickness and death, of this our incomparably worthy friend, and (for ought I know, of many more of us) may be appointed, the same way, to be for the glory of God; that is, as tending to introduce that death, which is to pass upon our common cause; which such men help to keep alive, by their earnest strugglings, though in a languishing, fainting, condition, every hour.

Think me not so vain, as to reckon, exclusively, the cause of dissenters, the cause I now speak of: No, no, I speak of the common cause, of all serious, sober-minded christians, within the common rule, or without it. I neither think any one party to include all sobriety of mind, or to exclude all insobriety. But I apprehend converting work to be much at a stand, within the pales, that men have set up, severing one party from another, and without them. Few are any where brought home to God, through Christ. And God knows, too few design it, otherwise, than to make proselytes, to their several parties. And this is thought a glorious conversion. Serious piety, and christianity, languishes every where. Many that have a name to live are dead, and putrefied, already stink! Common justice, and righteousness, are fled from among us. Sincerely good and pious men, die away in the natural sense, apace. You know, if deaths burials, should, in the weekly bills, exceed birth, and other accessions, to the city, whither this tends ! When so many great lights are withdrawn, both such as were within the national church constitution, and such as were without it. Is there no danger God should also remove the candlestick ? Our obduration, and insensible stupidity, portends a deadly darkness to be drawing on. And must such lives go, to make a way for God's anger? And lead on a more general, and more dreadful, approaching death! Oh! 'that God would rent the heavens, and come down!' He may yet melt our hearts, and make them 'flow at his presence,' notwithstanding their mountainous, rocky height, and hardness. This may be the means of saving some souls, and of deferring the common calamity. A great thing it would be, to have it deferred. What a privilege would many servants of Christ count it, not to live to the day, when the spirit of the living God, shall be generally retired and gone. And atheism, sceptism, infidelity, worldliness, and formality, have quite swallowed up our religion. While such men as we have lost, lived, they did, and such do, as instruments, keep somewhat of serious religion alive, under our several forms, but as ready to expire. But though it should seem generally to have expired, let us

believe it shall revive. When our confidences, and vain boasts cease, 'The temple of the Lord! The temple of the Lord!' Lo here is Christ, and there is Christ. And one sort ceases to magnify this church, and another that, and an universal death is come upon us, then (and I am not afraid, not till then) is to be expected a glorious resurrection, not of this or that party: for living, powerful religion, when it recovers, will disdain the limits of a party. Nor is it to be thought, that religion, modified by the devised distinctions, of this, or that party, will ever be the religion of the world. But the same power that makes us return into a state of life, will bring us into a state of unity, in divine light, and love. Then, will all the scandalous marks, and means, of division, among christians, vanish. And nothing remain as a test, or boundary of christian communion, but what hath its foundation, such, as in plain reason, or express revelation. Then as there is one body, and one Spirit, will that almighty spirit so animate, and form this body, as to make it every-where amiable, self-recommending, and capable of spreading, and propagating itself, and to 'increase with the increase of God.' Then shall the Lord be one, and his name one, in all the earth.

S. The Redeemer's Tears Over Lost Souls

The Redeemer's Tears Over Lost Souls 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 to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. —Luke 19:41-42.

Such as live under the gospel have a day, or a present opportunity, for the obtaining the knowledge of those 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 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 out-did 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 savoring of the abundant mercy of Heaven, so that every apprehensive mind might see the Deity was incarnate. God was come down to entreat 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 made concerning the same matter. The divine beams were somewhat obscured, but did yet ray through that veil; so that His glory was beheld of the only-begotten Son of His Father, full of grace and truth. 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 uttermost 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. No such day hath been seen this many an age. Yet whithersoever this 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 (tho to some it be proposed with more advantage, to some with less, still we have the same things immediately relating to our peace extant before our eyes.... This day hath its bounds and limits, so that when it is over and lost with such, the things of their peace are forever 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 prest to make use of the present

time. To-day if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. They are admonished to seek the Lord while He may be found, to call upon Him when He is nigh. It seems some time He will not be found, and will be far off. They are told this is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation.... As it is certain death ends the day of grace with every unconverted person, so it is very possible that it may end with divers before they die; by their total loss of all external means, or by the departure of the blest 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 become measure and proportion of time to make up this (or any) day, which is as the substratum and ground fore-laid. 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. 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 everywhere. 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—i.e., by the motions of His Spirit, which peculiarly can impart nothing but friendly inclination, as whereby men are personally applied unto, so that can not be meant; nor by the voice of the gospel, which may either be continued for the sake of others, or they contained 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. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses's law died without mercy, 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. "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," 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." 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 purpose: as that, "This child (Jesus) was set for the fall, as well as for the rising, of many in Israel"; as that, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling, and a rock of offense"; and, "The stone which the builders refused, is made a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, where-unto also they were appointed"; with that of our Savior Himself, "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, "But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, 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 God 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 a man in such circumstances, and to such a degree, sin against that Spirit, that He will never move or breathe upon him more, but leave him to a hopeless ruin; though I shall not in this discourse determine or discuss the nature of it. But I doubt not it 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 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 the question....

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 nor is there any He hath set unto 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 to the knowledge of it. As the case is then, viz.: 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 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, 'tis manifest it could be of 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 be finally 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 anything 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—i.e., 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 in the gospel, toward himself, by removing and shutting up, toward himself, the object of such a faith, and consequently brings the matter to this state that he perishes, not because he doth 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.... But though none ought to conclude that their

day or season of grace is quite expired, yet they ought to deeply 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 for them to know the former, and therefore they have no means appointed them by which to know it, 'tis of great use to apprehend the latter; and they have sufficient ground for the apprehension. All the cautions and warnings wherewith the Holy Spirit abounds, of the kind with those already mentioned, have that manifest design. And nothing can be more important, or opposite to this purpose, than that solemn charge of the great apostle: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"; considered together with the subjoined ground of it; "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, q. d., "Twere 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 can not be sure, because He now darts in light upon me, is now convincing me, now awakening 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, may let the work fall, and me perish? And there is more especial 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 not 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 vanished, and the sinner returns to his 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 the 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 check 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 of Christ, of death and judgment, and of a holy life, are reckoned superfluous and needless, are unsavory and disrelished—if he have learned to put disgraceful names upon things of this import, and the persons that most value them 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, admonished, exhorted and striven with, as formerly, no more. Oh, the fearful danger of that man's case! Hath he no cause to fear lest the things of his peace should be forever hid from his eyes? Surely he hath much cause of fear, but not of despair. Fear in this case would 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 seekings of God, cast down himself before Him, abase himself, cry for mercy as for his 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 if with any that have lived under the gospel, their day is quite expired, and the things of their peace now forever 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! Oh, sinner, from how high a hope art thou fallen! into what depths of misery and wo! 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, showed the true greatness of the cause. Here could be no exorbitancy or unjust excess, nothing more than was proportional 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 can not think heaven a place or state of sadness or lamentation, and must take heed of conceiving anything 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 everything of imperfection, and ascribe everything 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—viz., that, unaccompanied by the least commotion, that impart 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, "Oh, that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!" But we must take heed lest, under the pretense that we can not ascribe everything to God that such expressions seem to import, we therefore ascribe nothing. We ascribe nothing, if we do not ascribe 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.

We can not, 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 searcheth 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 treaties that have been prest upon thee for many years together, and how thou hast hardened thy heart against reproofs and threatening, against promises and allurements, and beholds the tendency of all this, what is like to come to 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 truly displeased at thy trifling, sloth, negligence, impenitency, hardness of heart, stubborn obstinacy, and contempt of His grace, and takes real offense at them.

3. He hath real kind propensions toward 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; 'tis a great reality that is signified by them, and that hath place here 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 that thou mayst 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 those things. Shall not the Redeemer's tears move thee? O hard heart! Consider what these tears import to this purpose.

1. 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 comfort 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," etc. 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.

2. 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 a 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 unartificial, the natural, genuine expression 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, 'tis 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.

3. They show 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 mayst 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, can not at length save thee, but only weep over thee, drop tears into thy flame, which assuage it not; but (tho they have another design, even to express true compassion) do yet unavoidably heighten and increase the fervor 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 mayst assure thyself the prospect His weeping eye had of lost souls did not include thee. His weeping over thee would argue thy case forlorn and hopeless; thy mourning over Him will make it safe and happy. That it may be so, consider, further, that,

4. 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 revolved in a like ruin with the unreconciled sinners of old Jerusalem,

shalt be enrolled among the glorious citizens of the new, and triumph together with them in glory.

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